

INTRODUCTION

The Japanese Business Novel

By *Chieko Mulhern*

In Japan, the business novel constitutes a distinct literary genre that boasts an impressive history harking back to feudal times. From the beginning, such novels have not only been marked by critical acclaim but have proved tremendously popular.

Japan's first writer of best-sellers, Ihara Saikaku (1642–1693), was born into an Osaka merchant family and became a superb chronicler of the business world, producing numerous fact-based stories as well as financial advice in fiction form. His 1688 work entitled *The Japanese Storehouse; or, the Millionaire's Gospel Modernized*, which was translated into English in 1959, offers thirty tales of business successes and failures. One traces the rise of Mitsui, a powerful merchant who was building his fortune with an innovative cash and carry discount in kimono retail along with a money exchange service. Saikaku proved prophetic: three years later, in 1691, Mitsui secured exclusive rights as the shogunate's official broker in bills of exchange, laying the foundation for the powerful Mitsui Group of today.

Two centuries later, when Japan opened its doors to the West, the 1870 Japanese translation of *Self Help* (1859) by Samuel Smiles (1812–1904) became one of the best-sellers of the Meiji period (1868–1912). This Victorian collection of success stories inspired a Horatio Alger-type of popular fiction as well as serious literature

dealing with social ambition and business ethics. A classic example is “The Five-storied Pagoda” (1892), available in translation in *Pagoda, Skull, and Samurai* (Tuttle, 1985). Written by a major novelist and scholar, Kōda Rohan (1867–1947), the story delves into decision making and psychological warfare among carpenter-architects over construction bids.

Today, the full-fledged business novel (*keizai* or *kigyō, shōsetsu*) encompasses various subgenres and enjoys high visibility thanks to many top-rated novelists and a dedicated “business novel critic”—Sataka Makoto (b. 1945), former chief editor of a business magazine. Sataka provides the most (and probably the only) comprehensive survey of this ever-growing field to date in two of his books. *How to Read Business Novels* (1980; revised paperback edition, 1986) discusses seventy authors and two hundred works. In the appendix, Sataka gives his selection of the best one hundred titles, grouping them by industry: *shōsha*, trading company, leads the list with nineteen, followed by banks (sixteen counting *Money Changers*) and the auto industry (ten with *Wheels*), Arthur Hailey being the only foreign author cited. *Guide to Corporate Anthropology* (originally serialized in the *Evening Fuji* newspaper in 1982 and 1983; revised paperback edition, 1986) elucidates the social significance of issues dramatized in major business novels and the lessons to be derived from them. The jacket of *Guide to Corporate Anthropology* whets the Japanese appetite for practical knowledge, undiminished since Saikaku’s days: “This book analyzes the world view and behavior patterns of the Business Tribe inhabiting the Japonesia archipelago, as substantiated by the data in the form of business novels; in short, it shines light deep into the collective unconscious of your superiors and colleagues.”

The Businessman as Literary Subject

The modern Japanese business novel established itself in the literary mainstream in 1957, when Shiroyama Saburō (b. 1927) won the coveted Bungakkai New Writer Award for his story “Export.” Ever since, the *shoshamen* have been eulogized by Shiroyama as courageous corporate warriors turned pathetic scapegoats, abandoned abroad or sacrificed for the sake of global economic expansion. Two of his works in this vein are introduced in *Made in Japan and*

Other Japanese Business Novels (M. E. Sharpe, 1989). The title story, "Made in Japan" (1963), describes the moral dilemma of Japanese exporters in the 1950s, caused by the U.S. government's requirement of the Made in Japan imprint. "In Los Angeles" (1972) traces the fate of shoshamen caught between impossible orders from their Tokyo office and the contractual demands of California fruit growers. During World War II Shiroyama had been a teenage Navy pilot trainee. This brief military experience predisposed him to turn into a "foot soldier of literature," skeptical of any system with the power to dehumanize and driven by a sense of mission to carry on his battle of resistance with the pen.

The war metaphor is closely associated with trade and industry, and Japanese business novels are often equated with *senki* (war chronicles). Fukada Yūsuke (b. 1931), a best-selling novelist since the late 1950s, traveled around the globe on business until 1983, when he left his job as a public relations manager with Japan Air Lines. He is a self-styled combat-zone correspondent of the trade wars. Among his many novels, *The Revolution Merchant* (1979) exposes the in-fighting among shōsha supporting the former or current administrations in Chile, at a time when Fukada's own cousin headed Mitsui's trading company there. *The Merchant of Scorching Heat* (1982), which deals with the Japanese rush to import Filipino lumber that triggered the 1971 murder of a shōsha executive in Manila, earned Fukada the Naoki Prize, the most prestigious award in popular literature.

Insider knowledge also enhances the fiction of Sakimura Kan (1930–1988), who gave up his twenty-three-year career with Sumitomo Warehouse Company in 1976, when he had risen to deputy chief of their Tokyo office. Following *Demotion* (1977), describing internal promotion wars, his 1983 novel *The Shōsha Tribe: The Grain War* seemed as if to take up where Frank Norris's *The Octopus* left off in 1901. Set at a time when extreme weather conditions threaten Japan with nationwide famine, Sakimura's apocalyptic novel describes shoshamen outbidding one another in a desperate logistical race to secure portside silos in the United States to circumvent the tight control of American giants known as the Grain Majors.

Preceding Sakimura by three decades was another Sumitomo manager, Genji Keita (1912–1985), twenty-six years in service. Before

Cameron Hawley's *Executive Suite* (1952) reached Japan in its 1954 movie version, Genji's first big success, *The Third-rate Executive* (1951), had already contributed the term "salaryman executive" to the popular vocabulary and created a subgenre of tragicomedy depicting the modest joys and sometimes biting sorrows of salarymen at work and at home. Typical of this subgenre are *The Ogre and Other Stories of Japanese Salaryman* and *The Guardian God of Golf* (both available in translation from Japan Times, Inc., 1972). Another middle-management writer, Nakamura Takeshi (b. 1909), who was with Japan National Railway for thirty years, began a series of salaryman novels in 1953 that delineated the mundane lives of underachievers. Nakamura's work paved the way for the 1956 movie based on Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* (1955) to become a hit in Japan.

The salaryman novel took on social significance and emotional firepower with the emergence of a blockbuster novelist who would join Shiroyama in dominating the market. A desk clerk at Hotel New Otani, Morimura Seiichi (b. 1933) made a spectacular debut in 1968 with *The False Castle of Silver*, which would sell over 700,000 copies. No cousin of Hailey's *Hotel* (1964), Morimura's business thriller is an incisive indictment of hotel management tactics such as, according to this fictional scenario, sending employees on undercover missions to sabotage rival establishments. Since winning the Edogawa Rampo Mystery Award in 1969 for *The Blind Spot in High-risers*, Morimura has been producing one best-seller after another, each spotlighting a business crime or a controversial social issue and focusing on victimized customers and salarymen—themes evident in titles such as *Corporate Slaves* and *Company Funeral* (a movie version of which was released in 1989).

The Law as Business

The first to write successful mysteries featuring industrial espionage was Kajiyama Toshiyuki (1930–1975), whose first novel, *The Trial Car in Black* (1962), not only ran up sales figures of 250,000 but also set off a business mystery novel boom ten years prior to *Wheels* and Harold Robbins's *The Betsy*. Formerly an investigative reporter, Kajiyama proved a prolific writer of great range. He was sued by Devi Sukarno for *The Human Offering* (1967), an exposé of the scandal

over war damage reparations to Indonesia that implicated the prime minister Kishi Shinsuke. It had sold 100,000 copies before it went out of print under the terms of an out-of-court settlement.

Representing Kajiyama in this defamation case was a prosecutor turned lawyer, Saga Sen (1909–1970), himself an established writer with a Rampo Award for *A Cheerful Corpse* (1962). Several of his murder mysteries also fall into the category of the business novel, including *A Diet Member under Arrest* and *The Prime Minister's Aide*, the latter about the death of Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato's aide during the investigation of a 1964 fund-raising scandal. The courtroom drama is popular: E. S. Gardner and his Perry Mason have their fans in Japan. Currently dominating this subgenre is lawyer-novelist Waku Shunzō (b. 1930), who gave up his job as a newspaper reporter, passed the bar in 1967, and has since been successful both in his private law practice and in creative writing. His innovative novels synthesize courtroom drama and the business thriller. Among them are the award-winning *Masqued Trial* (1972), about real estate fraud; *Billion-yen Invaders*, which pits computer hackers against a bank's on-line security specialist; *Murder in a Multinational Corporation*; and an economic mystery, *The Deflation Conspiracy*. Waku concentrates on the whodunit without corpses. Making use of civil and commercial laws still unfamiliar to the public in solving his hypothetical litigations and mundane crimes, Waku turns civil cases into the stuff of suspense stories.

To expand the possibilities of the mystery genre in this way is no small contribution to the field, since Japan's judicial system—with no jury trials or plea bargaining—leaves little room for courtroom grandstanding. The titles of American lawyer-novelist Scott Turow's best-sellers *Presumed Innocent* (1987) and *The Burden of Proof* (1990) are pure fantasy in a country where a 1989 TV-movie about an elderly attorney fighting for a not-guilty verdict is entitled *The One-percent Wall*. The figure is rounded out: Japanese legal statistics show a conviction rate of 99.9 percent over the years. To stand trial, at least in a Japanese criminal court, is to be presumed guilty. Only civil courts provide a fair ground for the legal battle of wits and offer the chance to win a reversal in higher courts.

Turow happened to spark great interest ten years ago, when his first published work, *One L* (1977), chronicling his days as a first-year

law student at Harvard, sold 25,000 copies in Japan (see *Time* magazine, June 11, 1990). There, if one hopes for an elite career in government or business, a Todai (Tokyo University) degree, particularly in law or economics, is seen as the greatest single asset, if not an absolute prerequisite. Hence, Turow's insider view of the American equivalent of Todai Law was avidly consumed by businessmen who hoped to gain a valuable perspective on their own superiors and rivals as well as the government officials in charge of various business fields.

Small wonder, then, that a Japanese publisher paid \$300,000 for the translation rights to Pat Choate's *Agents of Influence* (1990), which the Japanese can read as a how-to book on lobbying for Japanese interests in the United States, one which offers case studies replete with exact dollar figures and relevant names. Likewise, Americans have turned to Japanese literature for insights into business. *A Book of Five Rings* (1625; tr. Kodansha International, 1974), in which legendary swordsman Miyamoto Musashi (1584?–1645) reveals the cosmic significance of swordplay, was not only adapted by Eric van Lustbader and Trevanian in their ninja action adventures but also studied by American executives as a text in business strategy. A fictionalized life of this undefeated samurai duelist written by the historical novelist Yoshikawa Eiji (1892–1962) became a top earner among translated Japanese novels in its English edition, *Musashi* (1935–1939; tr. Kodansha International, 1981).

The Bureaucrats

As can be deduced from the fact that John Ehrlichman's *The Company* (1976) is often counted as a business novel in Japan because it depicts the White House's interaction with the CIA, government agencies and key officials are a conspicuous component in Japanese business fiction. Ever since Matsumoto Seichō (b. 1909) followed his Freeman Crofts-style alibi-cracking trail in *Points and Lines* (1957–1958; tr. 1970) to the evil inherent in a system that allows corrupt bureaucrats to enjoy the spoils of office with impunity, Japanese mystery of the "post-Seichō" era has strived for realism, immediacy, and social concern. Convincing glimpses of the central bureaucracy shrouded in a tantalizing mist of prestige, sometimes tinged with the black of

political intrigue, make for suspenseful and enlightening reading. A notable example is *Bank of Japan* (1963) by Shiroyama Saburō, who previously taught economic theory at university. It remains a long-standing best-seller because of, rather than in spite of, lengthy quotations from official documents and German treatises on monetary policies, woven into a plot that centers on the struggle of Japan's state bank through postwar fiscal crises, culminating in the arrival of Joseph Dodge to put his anti-inflation measures to effect.

Shiroyama won the Mainichi Cultural Publication Award as well as a popular fiction award for *War Criminal: The Life and Death of Hirota Kōki* (1974; tr. 1977). In portraying this career diplomat and wartime prime minister, who was the only civilian Class-A defendant of the Tokyo Trials to be executed (along with six Army generals), this documentary novel sheds light on the decision-making mechanisms within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the dynamics of its relation to the Cabinet and party leaders. In *The Summer of Bureaucrats* (1974), Shiroyama steps inside the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, modeling his protagonist on a former vice minister whose real-life byname was Mr. MITI. Neither laudatory nor censorious, this well-researched novel highlights MITI's precarious position within the government hierarchy and the desperate power game its senior managers must play with and against their own short-term ministers and the tight-fisted Ministry of Finance. In so doing, it belies the common image prevalent in the West of MITI as an all-powerful dictator of trade policies.

Japan's central government can count several prominent novelists in its upper echelons. In 1956 an economic research official, Kojima Naoki (b. 1919), was nominated for the top award in serious fiction, the Akutagawa Prize, for his story "Human Chair" dealing with enforcement of the black market law. Subsequently serving for ten years as a manager of the Bridgestone Tire Company, Kojima has continued to produce business novels of high caliber. The 1956 winner of the prize over Kojima was Ishihara Shintarō (b. 1932), who would succeed in simultaneous careers as a leading novelist of serious literature, a Diet member since 1968, and most recently a self-appointed advocate of national rights, coauthoring *Japan That Can Say No* with Sony's Morita Akio, which provoked heated debates both in Tokyo and on Capitol Hill. One MITI manager shocked the

Japanese public in 1975 with his first novel entitled *Yudan!*—which means “caught off guard” as well as “out of oil.” Three years after this “panic” novel built on an imaginative use of statistics conjured up the dire consequences of an oil shortage, its author, Sakaiya Tai-chi (b. 1935), launched on his second and even more influential career to emerge as a versatile writer of television drama and fiction, a sample of which, “Baby Boom Generation,” can be found in *Made in Japan and Other Japanese Business Novels*.

The Stock Market

The same collection also introduces a peculiar Japanese profession that borders on economic crime: “Kinjō the Corporate Bouncer” (1958) brought the Naoki Prize to its author Shiroyama and threw light on the darker side of the business world. Such feats as Michael Douglas’s scathing oration in *Wall Street* (1989) and Judy Holliday’s innocently lethal questioning in *Solid Gold Cadillac* (1956) could never take place at all, let alone wreak havoc, at a general meeting of stockholders (*sōkai*) in Japan. Until a recent law took effect, corporate managements had been forced to hire or pay off *sōkai-ya*, gangsterlike professional filibusterers cum heckler guards, if they wanted to conclude their annual meetings expeditiously and without disturbance. The dread duty of handling *sōkai-ya*, black journalists, and patent thieves fell to the head of the department of general affairs, commonly called the CIA of corporations. The harrowing experiences that can result are the subject of an autobiographical business novel with the straightforward title *The Chief of General Affairs Dies in Rage* (1978), by Odakane Jirō (b. 1911), who held that position in Nihon Rayon Company until 1970, while building his literary reputation as poet and biographer (for example, of artist Munakata Shikō).

The stock market itself provides the arena for a former reporter on its turf, Shimizu Ikkō (b. 1931). In 1966, the same year Louis Auchincloss published *The Embezzler*, its main character modeled on an acting head of the New York Stock Exchange who was sent to Sing Sing in 1938, Shimizu’s first novel became a runaway hit. It sold 18,000 copies in one day to go into twenty-five printings in the first month, its total sales mounting to 200,000. Named for Japan’s equiv-

alent to Wall Street, his *Kabutochō* (“the Island” in jargon) features a stockbroker of the lone wolf-type. The character is cast in the mold of a sales executive of Nikkō Securities who played an unbroken series of winning bets on then little-favored stocks like Honda and Ricoh to become a legend on Kabutochō as the last of the great speculators, before the modern methods of the big brokerage houses took over the market. Shimizu is a relentless vivisector of the big business that he scrutinized from the back door in his youth as a radical trade union organizer traveling around the country. With his fifteen titles he tops the chronological list of the 107 notable business novels published between 1956 and 1985 in the appendix of *Guide to Corporate Anthropology. Made in Japan and Other Japanese Business Novels* contains one of his stories, “Silver Sanctuary.”

Kabutochō has produced another writer with more orthodox credentials. A second-generation stock analyst running an investment consultant firm founded with his celebrated father, Yasuda Jirō (b. 1949) is considered the bane of brokerage houses for his novels such as *The Black Wolf of Kabutochō*. This work lays bare an underground economy in which strategic buy and sell maneuvers are used to launder great quantities of funds for wealthy clients wishing to evade taxes, while *The Collapse of Kabutochō* (1982) warns against the exploitation of the stock market by political fund-raisers. Yasuda has had little to lose ever since his first novel, which would later appear as *Money Hunter* (1980), was abruptly returned by a major publisher under pressure from securities companies alarmed by its uncomfortably realistic plot. The novel revolves around a scheme of Ministry of Finance officials to turn Kabutochō into what amounts to a state-operated casino through the methodical manipulation of stock prices.

Women Writers with Clout

Shaking up a specific industry or even the central government with a work of fiction is by no means a male monopoly in Japan. Men are actually latecomers to the field, centuries behind the court ladies who produced the sophisticated prose literature epitomized by *The Tale of Genji* of Lady Murasaki Shikibu (fl. ca. 1000), which rivals Proust in its volume and Joyce in its narrative technique.

Contemporary American authors such as Judith Krantz, Barbara Taylor Bradford, Danielle Steel, and the late executive novelist Helen van Slyke have loyal followers in Japan, who derive vicarious pleasure from epics in which Western women build glorious careers and fabulous fortunes. But the modern Japanese women who appear consistently on the best-seller lists are quite different from these authors, and from the romance queens Janet Dailey and Joanna Lindsey, who also command a steady Japanese readership. Women are conspicuous in the mainstream of serious literature and have in recent decades been earning more than half the major literary prizes and new writer awards as their ranks continue to swell with ever younger and more innovative members. Suffice it here to cite a few business-related novels of several major writers whose works are already accessible in the West.

An acknowledged leader in business fiction is Yamazaki Toyoko (b. 1924), who makes frontal attacks on the corruption of bureaucrats and the abuse of power by big businesses. Daughter of a venerable Osaka merchant family, she worked as a fashion reporter for the *Mainichi* newspaper before winning the Naoki Prize for *Flower Curtains* (1958), about a widowed owner-manager determined to keep her *yose* theater for traditional storytellers open. After earning the Osaka Culture Award for *Bonchi* ("the spoiled heir," 1959; tr. University of Hawaii Press, 1982), an insider account of the lifestyle of Osaka's commercial elite, Yamazaki weighed in with heavy, hard-line novels often featuring powerfully realistic villains.

Predating Hailey's *Money Changers* by two years, Yamazaki's *The Magnificent Clan* (1973) delves into the great evil that a strong-armed banker can breed in collusion with corrupt bureaucrats. One of her million-sellers is *The Barren Zone* (1973–1978; tr. University of Hawaii Press, 1985), a *shōsha* story of epic proportions based solidly on intensive research including interviews with 377 people. Her hero is modeled on a vice president of C. Itoh & Company who brought about the affiliation of General Motors and Isuzu Motors; the model for his nemesis, a character involved in procuring planes for the Defense Agency, is the vice president of Nissho-Iwai Trading Company. He was convicted in the Douglas-Grumman scandal that came to light in 1979, a year after the conclusion of Yamazaki's serialized

work that dealt with the same subject, depicting the fierce competition among trading companies.

More traditional roles provide a domestic focus for heroism in the socially significant works of Ariyoshi Sawako (1931–1984). Her celebrated *River* tetralogy features married women who single-handedly carry on their family trades: silk weaving in *The River Kinu* (1950) and tangerine growing in *The River Arida*. Ariyoshi's personal observations during a ten-month research stay at Sarah Lawrence College on a Rockefeller grant from 1959 to 1960 yielded *Not Because of Color* (1963; translated in *Heroic with Grace: Legendary Women of Japan*, M. E. Sharpe, 1991). In this novel Ariyoshi tackles the issue of race and class discrimination in America as manifested in the problems facing four Japanese GI brides employed at a Japanese restaurant in New York City. Her best-seller *The Doctor's Wife* (1967; tr. Kodansha International, 1978), which features a cast of historical figures, focuses on the wife's contributions as assistant and human guinea pig in the development of a herbal anesthetic by samurai surgeon Hanaoka Seishū (1760–1835), who made medical history in 1805 by performing the world's first successful operation using general anesthesia.

Ariyoshi was also instrumental in prompting the tax bureau to liberalize restrictions on charitable donations. Her 1972 novel, *The Twilight Years* (tr. Kodansha International, 1984), about a legal secretary's courageous endeavor to take independent care of her senile father-in-law for lack of adequate nursing homes, stirred up criticism of the government's inaction on this issue and earned more than 100 million yen in royalties in the first half year. When tax agents stopped Ariyoshi from donating the entire sum to facilities for the aged, the ensuing public furor led to a change in the tax law. *The Twilight Years* rendered an immeasurable social service in raising public consciousness about the imminent problem of an aging population, at a time when the average life span in Japan was becoming the world's longest. It not only spurred scholarly researchers to take up gerontology but prompted legislatures and government agencies to study the conditions in proprietary nursing homes and take measures to remedy the woeful shortage of public facilities for the aged.

The next time Ariyoshi entered the ring, the impact of her punches reached the Diet floors and corporate executive suites. Her meticulous investigative novel *Compound Pollution* (1974–1975) warns against the untold effects of industrial pollutants that may not be immediately harmful but may very well prove lethal when they accumulate and combine in the environment and in human bodies. Her annotated data and persuasive caveats were quoted by opposition party politicians firing questions at the Cabinet members during the Diet session. They have also been often introduced as evidence in court by attorneys representing industrial pollution victims such as those afflicted by mercury poisoning in the Minamata case in Kyushu, which is so vividly presented by Ishimure Michiko (b. 1927) in her *Paradise in the Sea of Sorrow* (1969; tr. Yamaguchi-shoten, Kyoto, 1990).

Natsuki Shizuko (b. 1938) made her name with sensitive domestic mysteries such as “Cry from the Cliff,” published in *Japanese Golden Dozen* edited by Ellery Queen (Tuttle, 1978), and *The Third Lady* (tr. Ballantine Books, 1987). In honor of *The XYZ Murders* (1961) by Ellery Queen, with whom (or, more precisely, with one of whom, Frederick Danney) she was personally acquainted, Natsuki wrote *The W Murder* in 1982. The initial is for Women and the female psychology at work in the death of a business patriarch. In the novel’s English translation, the title is rendered *Murder at Mt. Fuji* (St. Martin’s, 1984).

Before the usury law capped the interest rate that *sarakin*, or the “salaryman financing service,” could charge on loans to individuals, Natsuki called attention to the human toll claimed by these institutionalized loan sharks, who were free to set the rate as high as 200 percent and collect on schedule with the help of gangsters. Her *End of the Way Home* (1981) portrays a couple of modest income driven to family suicide by mushrooming mortgage obligations and relentless collectors.

In her acclaimed business novel, *Distant Promise* (1977), she takes up the field of life insurance. The backdrop for her plot, which centers on the stock acquisition race in an internal power struggle, is fictional: only four of the twenty-three life insurance companies then operating in Japan were joint stock corporations, the rest being mutual companies (aside from the foreign-funded Sony Prudential and Seibu Allstate). But her well-researched delineation of the

plight and moral dilemma of employees who must rely on sweet promises to sell life insurance policies filled with loopholes received a grateful accolade from the outside sales force working on commission, comprised mostly of mature, unskilled women. What interested Natsuki most, however, was the executive (or enterprise) insurance that medium to small businesses took out, as if using their officers as human collateral against default.

Executive Novels

Japanese business fiction can thus be categorized by subject matter. One type features a particular industry as its virtual protagonist, as in many of Hailey's works and, for example, Kojima Naoki's popular *Mitsui Corporation* (1969), which sold 200,000 copies. The second dramatizes a specific incident in the public domain, such as succession disputes involving corporate leaders, mergers, bankruptcy, financial feats, and criminal indictment. But the particular Japanese favorite is a type that can be called the executive novel. Aside from Theodore Dreiser's *The Financier* (1912) and its sequel *The Titan* (1914), stories about historical figures of the managerial class have not exactly been a mainstay of modern American fiction, even counting F. Scott Fitzgerald's unfinished work, *The Last Tycoon* (1941). But modern Japanese fiction abounds in novels about contemporary business leaders.

Just to cite a few that may be of interest to Western readers, *Operation Colors* (1963) by Kunimitsu Shirō (b. 1922) recounts the meteoric career of an executive dubbed the "Rainbow Vendor" who set fashion trends through his marketing coups at Toray Textile Corporation, crowned by the success of the miniskirt campaign (with Twiggy as their image girl) and the "peacock revolution" that put businessmen into colored shirts. This novel recaptured attention in 1982, when the undisguised model for its protagonist moved to Kanebo, Toray's rival, in the biggest executive trade in textile merchandising, albeit within the Mitsui Group. Many Japanese novels of this type dramatize the heroic endeavors and professional craft of high-ranking executives who appear under their real names, as in Shimizu Ikkō's *Burn to the Limit* (1972). This novel is a requiem for President Makita Yōichirō of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, who had died in office the year before, leaving the legend of "Fighting Maki" as testimony

to the aggressive progressivism he demonstrated in pulling off ventures such as Mitsubishi's affiliation with Caterpillar and Chrysler.

An executive perspective from a different vantage point informs the fiction of Takasugi Ryō (b. 1939). His debut work, *The False Castle* (1976), clearly modeled on Idemitsu Oil Company, led the press to surmise that an inside whistle-blower had written it under a pen name, and rumor attributed its sale of 30,000 copies within the first three months to the effort of Idemitsu employees to take it out of circulation. Takasugi indeed was an insider of the oil industry but as chief editor of a trade paper. His 1981 novel, *The Tower of Bandal*, follows the president of Mitsui Corporation through the ill-fated Iran-Japan Petrochemical Project. But Takasugi is also concerned with the tribulations and pitfalls of middle management: his story "From Paris," included in *Made in Japan and Other Japanese Business Novels*, evokes Joseph Conrad's study of moral degeneration in *Heart of Darkness*. As befits its Japanese title, which literally means "The Breakdown of a Civilian Bureaucrat," its shoshaman protagonist falls victim to the taste of managerial power on his ten-year tour of duty in France and eventually finds himself banished to a dead-end post in Africa.

Good and evil are not readily distinguishable in business fiction any more than they are in real life, and characters of dubious reputation tangle with prominent public figures in many fact-based novels. One example is *The Tiger and the Wolf* (1960) by Kumaō Tokuhei (b. 1906), which covers the dramatic exchange of transportation stocks between two takeover kings. The tiger is the nationalist-connected money man behind Tanaka Kakuei, who was to become postwar Japan's youngest prime minister in 1972 only to be ousted and convicted in the Lockheed graft case. The wolf is Tsutsumi "Pistol" Yasujirō (1889–1964), a Diet member since 1924 (he served thirteen terms), president of the House of Representatives in 1953, and the railroad baron who established the Seibu financial kingdom to bequeath to his two sons.

Today, the younger son is head of Seibu Railroad, president of Prince Hotels, and owner of a major league baseball team, the Seibu Lions. But his elder brother, Tsutsumi Seiji (b. 1927), who commands the Seibu Saison Group (consisting of ninety-eight companies), the Seibu Department Stores, and the Seiyū market chain, is

also an award-winning author of serious literature under the pen name Tsujii Takashi. His long autobiographical novel, *In the Season of Wandering* (1969), maps out the ideological trail that took him from active student communist (he left the Party in 1951) to crack capitalist leader.

Among executive novelists of contemporary Japan, Tsutsumi Seiji is probably the highest in social rank, but he has an illustrious predecessor who may outrank him in many regards—Kikuchi Kan (1888–1948). Kikuchi was a prolific novelist who wrote many best-sellers including *Lady Pearl* (1920) about a beautiful woman's revenge on her nouveau riche husband that established an archetype of popular fiction in Japan in the style of Sidney Sheldon and Shirley Conran. In 1923 Kikuchi founded the publishing house Bungeishunjū and inaugurated the magazine by that name; in 1935 he established parallel literary awards, the Akutagawa Prize for serious literature and the Naoki Prize for popular literature; and in 1943 he became president of Daiei Motion Picture Company. In his 1918 story, "On the Conduct of Lord Tadanao" (published in *Modern Japanese Stories*, Tuttle, 1987), Kikuchi depicted the loneliness of command that drove a young feudal lord to inflict all manner of cruelties on his loyal retainers. This historical tale can be read as an allegory of modern salarymen, who must endure the unendurable at work in a social milieu where the lifetime employment system leaves individuals little choice but to die in their company's service.

Foreign novelists who are also experienced business leaders command respect and popularity in Japan for their professional knowledge, regardless of the ultimate fate of their careers. The author of *Kane and Abel* (1979), Jeffrey Archer (b. 1940), who became the youngest member of the House of Commons and then Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party, was the promoter of a business venture that soon collapsed. And Paul Erdman (b. 1932), vice chairman of the failed United California Bank in Basel, Switzerland, is often cited as an executive novelist of business fiction for *The Billion Dollar Sure Thing* (1973), which he completed in Swiss prison to win a new mystery writer award, and *The Crash of 1979* (1976), his very popular business suspense novel on oil politics.

Perhaps next only to Tsutsumi Seiji in the Japanese business hierarchy of today stands executive novelist Arai Shinya (b. 1937; pen