

 Print Profile

Sorry,
no image is
available
at this time.

THE HOUSEKEEPER AND THE PROFESSOR

AUTHOR: Yoko Ogawa
PUBLISHER: Picador, February 2009
WEBSITE: www.macmillan.com
AVAILABLE IN: Trade Paperback, 192 pages
 \$14.00 USD
 ISBN: 978-0-312-42780-1
SUBJECT: Relationships / Family / Personal
 Challenges
 (Fiction)

"Ogawa's disarming exploration of an eccentric relationship reads like a fable, one that deftly balances whimsy with heartache."

—**Kirkus Reviews**

"Ogawa weaves a poignant tale of beauty, heart and sorrow in her exquisite new novel. . . . In this gorgeous tale, Ogawa lifts the window shade to allow readers to observe the characters for a short while, then closes the shade. [Translator Stephen] Snyder . . . brings a delicate and precise hand to the translation."

—**Publishers Weekly** (starred review)

"[A] mysterious, suspenseful, and radiant fable . . . The smart and resourceful housekeeper, the single mother of a baseball-crazy 10-year-old boy the Professor adores, falls under the spell of the beautiful mathematical phenomena the Professor elucidates, as will the reader, and the three create an indivisible formula for love."

—**Donna Seaman, Booklist**

"Alive with mysteries both mathematical and personal, The Housekeeper and the Professor has the pared-down elegance of an equation."—O, The Oprah Magazine

SUMMARY:

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Yoko Ogawa's fiction has appeared in The New Yorker, A Public Space, and Zoetrope. Since 1988 she has published more than twenty works of fiction and nonfiction, and has won every major Japanese literary award.

CONVERSATION STARTERS :

1.

The characters in *The Housekeeper and the Professor* are nameless ("Root" is only a nickname). What does it mean when an author chooses not to name the people in her book? How does that change your relationship to them as a reader? Are names that important?

2.

Imagine you are writer, developing a character with only eighty minutes of short-term memory. How would you manage the very specific terms of that character (e.g. his job, his friendships, how he takes care of himself)? Discuss some of the creative ways in which Yoko Ogawa imagines her memory-impaired Professor, from the notes pinned to his suit to the sadness he feels every morning.

3.

3. As Root and the Housekeeper grow and move forward in their lives, the Professor stays in one place (in fact he is deteriorating, moving backwards). And yet, the bond among the three of them grows strong. How is it possible for this seemingly one-sided relationship to thrive? What does Ogawa seem to be saying about memory and the very foundations of our profoundest relationships? *Importance of the Moment*

4.

The Professor tells the Housekeeper: "Math has proven the existence of God because it is absolute and without contradiction; but the devil must exist as well, because we cannot prove it." Does this paradox apply to anything else, beside math? Perhaps memory? Love?

5.

The Housekeeper's father abandoned her mother before she was born; and then the Housekeeper herself suffered the same fate when pregnant with Root. In a book where all of the families are broken (including the Professor's), what do you think Ogawa is saying about how families are composed? Do we all, in fact, have a fundamental desire to be a part of a family? Does it matter whom it's made of?

6.

2
, Did your opinion of the Professor change when you realized the nature of his relationship with his sister-in-law? Did you detect any romantic tension between the Professor and the Housekeeper, or was their relationship chaste? Perhaps Ogawa was intending ambiguity in that regard?

7.

The sum of all numbers between one and ten is not difficult to figure out, but the Professor insists that Root find the answer in a particular way. Ultimately Root and the Housekeeper come to the answer together. Is there a thematic importance to their method of solving the problem? Generally, how does Ogawa use math to illustrate a whole worldview?

8.

Baseball is a game full of statistics, and therefore numbers. Discuss the very different ways in which Root and the Professor love the game.

9.

How does Ogawa depict the culture of contemporary Japan in *The Housekeeper and the Professor*? In what ways does it seem different from western culture? For example, consider the Housekeeper's pregnancy and her attitude toward single motherhood; or perhaps look at the simple details of the story, like Root's birthday cake. In what ways are the cultures similar, different?

10.

- Ogawa chooses to write about actual math problems, rather than to write about math in the abstract. In a sense, she invites the reader to learn math along with the characters. Why do you think she wrote the book this way? Perhaps to heighten your sympathy for the characters?

11.

Do numbers bear any significance on the structure of this book? Consider the fact that the book has eleven chapters. Are all things quantifiable, and all numbers fraught with poetic possibility?

BOOK ESSENTIALS

[Book Summary](#)
[Praise](#)
[About the Author](#)
[Conversation Starters](#)

PURCHASE

[Indie Bookstores](#)
[Amazon.com](#)

SUMMARY

In *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, Yoko Ogawa tells an intimate story about family, the nature of memory, and the poetry of mathematics. It is also, in a sense, a story about the simple experience of getting to know someone, but with a twist: the person forgets everything in eighty minutes. How do you form a relationship with a person who cannot remember? In this uplifting and often poignant novel, Ogawa seems to ask whether our immediate experiences are more important than our memories, since memories inevitably fade, and the eponymous Professor's condition of limited short-term memory allows the author to explore this question with great creativity. At the same time, Ogawa invites the reader into the world of mathematics, using complex equations as a metaphor for the themes running throughout her book. *The Housekeeper and the Professor* is a rich, multilayered novel that offers much to discuss.

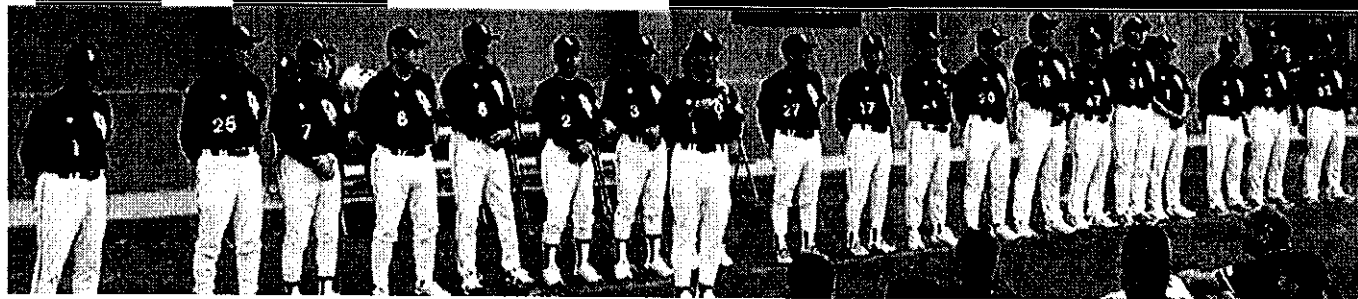
The Orphan Train

お問い合わせ サイトマップ

名球会とは

名球会の活動

会員選手名鑑



CONTENTS

➡ 投手

➡ 打者

➡ 名誉会員

会員選手名鑑

YUTAKA ENATSU

江夏 豊

えなつ ゆたか

投手



生年月日	1948.5.15
出身地	兵庫県
出身校	大阪学院大学高校
在籍球団	阪神～南海～広島～日本ハム～西武
背番号	28
ポジション	投手
利き腕	左投左打
通算成績	206勝158敗193セーブ・奪三振2987・防御率2.49

球歴

- 1966 阪神タイガース入団
- 1976 南海ホークス
- 1978 広島東洋カープ
- 1981 日本ハムファイターズ
- 1984 西武ライオンズ
- 1984 現役引退

成績

- 生涯防御率 2.49 (3196投球回数)
- 829試合
- 206勝
- 158敗
- 193セーブ
- 154完投
- 45完封
- 2987奪三振
- 21無四死球
- 936与四球
- 46与死球
- 299被本塁打
- 2340被安打



A WELL-READ ONLINE COMMUNITY

Housekeeper and the Professor (Ogawa)

Labels: Asia

[Summary](#) | [Author Bio](#) | [Book Reviews](#) | [Discussion Questions](#) | [Full Version](#) | [Print](#)

The Housekeeper and the Professor
 Yoko Ogawa, 2003 (Eng. trans., 2009)
 Macmillan Picador
 192 pp.
 ISBN-13: 9780312427801

Summary

He is a brilliant math Professor with a peculiar problem—ever since a traumatic head injury, he has lived with only eighty minutes of short-term memory.

She is an astute young Housekeeper, with a ten-year-old son, who is hired to care for him.

And every morning, as the Professor and the Housekeeper are introduced to each other anew, a strange and beautiful relationship blossoms between them. Though he cannot hold memories for long (his brain is like a tape that begins to erase itself every eighty minutes), the Professor's mind is still alive with elegant equations from the past. And the numbers, in all of their articulate order, reveal a sheltering and poetic world to both the Housekeeper and her young son.

The Professor is capable of discovering connections between the simplest of quantities—like the Housekeeper's shoe size—and the universe at large, drawing their lives ever closer and more profoundly together, even as his memory slips away.

The Housekeeper and the Professor is an enchanting story about what it means to live in the present, and about the curious equations that can create a family. (From the publisher.)

About the Author

- Birth—March 30, 1962
- Where—Ikayama, Okayama Prefecture, Japan
- Education—Waseda University
- Awards—Kaien Prize; Akutagawa Prize; Yomiuri Prize; Isumi Prize; Tanizaki Prize
- Currently—lives in Ashiya, Hyogo

Ogawa was born in Okayama, Okayama Prefecture, graduated from Waseda University, and lives in Ashiya, Hyōgo, with her husband and son. Since 1988, she has published more than twenty works of fiction and nonfiction. Her novel *The Professor's Beloved Equation* (aka *The Housekeeper and the Professor*) has been made into a movie. In 2006 she co-authored *An Introduction to the World's Most Elegant Mathematics* with Masahiko Fujiwara, a mathematician, as a dialogue on the extraordinary beauty of numbers.

Kenzaburo Oe has said, "Yoko Ogawa is able to give expression to the most subtle workings of human psychology in prose that is gentle yet penetrating." The subtlety in part lies in the fact that Ogawa's characters often seem not to know why they are doing what they are doing. She works by accumulation of detail, a technique that is perhaps more successful in her shorter works; the slow pace of development in the longer works requires something of a *deus ex machina* to end them. The reader is presented with an acute description of what the protagonists, mostly but not always female, observe and feel and their somewhat alienated self-observations, some of which is a reflection of Japanese society and especially women's roles within it. The tone of her works varies, across the works and sometimes within the longer works, from the surreal, through the grotesque and the —sometimes grotesquely— humorous, to the psychologically ambiguous and even disturbing. (*Hotel Iris*, one of her longer works, is more explicit sexually than her other works and is also her most widely translated.) (From Wikipedia.)

Book Reviews

This is one of those books written in such lucid, unpretentious language that reading it is like looking into a deep pool of clear water. But even in the clearest waters can lurk currents you don't see until you are in them. Dive into Yoko Ogawa's world (she is the author of more than 20 works of fiction and nonfiction) and you find yourself tugged by forces more felt than seen.

Dennis Overbye - New York Times

We don't pay much attention to literary news from Japan unless it's bizarre: businessmen on crowded subways reading pornographic manga, teenage girls buying cell-phone romance novels by the millions. But here's an example of Japanese reading habits that's just as odd, if less sexy: Yoko Ogawa's *The Housekeeper and the Professor* has sold more than 2.5

25

Lethal by Sandra Brown

million copies in the small island nation. Oprah would have to recommend a book about Harry Potter's dying Labrador to move that many copies in the United States.... *The Housekeeper and the Professor* is strangely charming, flecked with enough wit and mystery to keep us engaged throughout. This is Ogawa's first novel to be translated into English, and Stephen Snyder has done an exceptionally elegant job.

Ron Charles - Washington Post

This sweetly melancholy novel adheres to the Japanese aesthetic that finds beauty in what is off-center, imperfect.... In treating one another with such warm concern and respect, the characters implicitly tell us something about the unforgiving society on the other side of the Professor's cottage door. *The Housekeeper and the Professor* is a wisp of a book, but an affecting one.

Amanda Heller - Boston Globe

Gorgeous, cinematic...*The Housekeeper and the Professor* is a perfectly sustained novel...like a note prolonged, a fermata, a pause enabling us to peer intently into the lives of its characters.... This novel has all the charm and restraint of any by Ishiguro or Kenzaburo Oe and the whimsy of Murakami. The three lives connect like the vertices of a triangle.

Susan Salter Reynolds - Los Angeles Times

Lovely.... Ogawa's plot twists, her narrative pacing, her use of numbers to give meaning and mystery to life are as elegant in their way as the math principles the professor cites.... Ogawa's short novel is itself an equation concerning the intricate and intimate way we connect with others—and the lace of memory they sometimes leave us.

Anthony Bukoski - Minneapolis Star Tribune

(Starred review.) Ogawa (*The Diving Pool*) weaves a poignant tale of beauty, heart and sorrow in her exquisite new novel. Narrated by the Housekeeper, the characters are known only as the Professor and Root, the Housekeepers 10-year-old son, nicknamed by the Professor because the shape of his hair and head remind the Professor of the square root symbol. A brilliant mathematician, the Professor was seriously injured in a car accident and his short-term memory only lasts for 80 minutes. He can remember his theorems and favorite baseball players, but the Housekeeper must reintroduce herself every morning, sometimes several times a day. The Professor, who adores Root, is able to connect with the child through baseball, and the Housekeeper learns how to work with him through the memory lapses until they can come together on common ground, at least for 80 minutes. In this gorgeous tale, Ogawa lifts the window shade to allow readers to observe the characters for a short while, then closes the shade. Snyder—who also translated *Pool*—brings a delicate and precise hand to the translation.

Publishers Weekly

First published in Japanese in 2003, this gem won the prestigious 2004 Yomiuri Prize and in 2006 was adapted for film (*The Professor's Beloved Equation*). The story evolves around a young housekeeper and her ten-year-old son, who have an esoteric link to a retired university professor through "amicable numbers." Ogawa (*The Diving Pool*) deliberately avoids any hint of romance between the two adult protagonists. Instead, she delves into the educational process between the housekeeper, a high school dropout, and the professor, a mathematical genius. With a prose style justly acclaimed as gentle yet penetrating, Ogawa gives mathematical theories from Eratosthenes to Einstein a titanic wink; under her pen, they no longer are solely a topic of conversation among academics but a tool that facilitates conflict resolution, communication between commoner and intellectual, and appreciation for the nobility and individuality of everyday objects; they also help us establish our worth in a chaotic world. This novel evokes the joy of learning, and, with its somewhat eccentric yet lovable protagonists, is a pleasure to read. Highly recommended for both public and academic libraries. —

Victor Or, Surrey P.L. North Vancouver Lib., BC

Library Journal

Discussion Questions

1. The characters in *The Housekeeper and the Professor* are nameless ("Root" is only a nickname). What does it mean when an author chooses not to name the people in her book? How does that change your relationship to them as a reader? Are names that important?
2. Imagine you are writer, developing a character with only eighty minutes of short-term memory. How would you manage the very specific terms of that character (e.g. his job, his friendships, how he takes care of himself)? Discuss some of the creative ways in which Yoko Ogawa imagines her memory-impaired Professor, from the notes pinned to his suit to the sadness he feels every morning.
3. As Root and the Housekeeper grow and move forward in their lives, the Professor stays in one place (in fact he is deteriorating, moving backwards). And yet, the bond among the three of them grows strong. How is it possible for this seemingly one-sided relationship to thrive? What does Ogawa seem to be saying about memory and the very foundations of our profoundest relationships?
4. The Professor tells the Housekeeper: "Math has proven the existence of God because it is absolute and without contradiction; but the devil must exist as well, because we cannot prove it." Does this paradox apply to anything else, beside math? Perhaps memory? Love?

* p. 115 "the mathematical order is beautiful precisely because it has no effect..."

p. 52 trying to figure out Roots challenge - battle between the prob. & her
p. 63 I wondered why ordinary words...



p. 7 Talking about #3's when we were out to the woods - how many of us were aware of comfort
p. 31 - her "dictionary"

his lack of memory - she could ask over & over till she got a topic

p. 42 as he cut & combed... did the Barber suspect that the brain inside this snowhead could cut...

5. The Housekeeper's father abandoned her mother before she was born; and then the Housekeeper herself suffered the same fate when pregnant with Root. In a book where all of the families are broken (including the Professor's), what do you think Ogawa is saying about how families are composed? Do we all, in fact, have a fundamental desire to be a part of a family? Does it matter whom it's made of?
6. Did your opinion of the Professor change when you realized the nature of his relationship with his sister-in-law? Did you detect any romantic tension between the Professor and the Housekeeper, or was their relationship chaste? Perhaps Ogawa was intending ambiguity in that regard?
7. The sum of all numbers between one and ten is not difficult to figure out, but the Professor insists that Root find the answer in a particular way. Ultimately Root and the Housekeeper come to the answer together. Is there a thematic importance to their method of solving the problem? Generally, how does Ogawa use math to illustrate a whole worldview?
8. Baseball is a game full of statistics, and therefore numbers. Discuss the very different ways in which Root and the Professor love the game.
9. How does Ogawa depict the culture of contemporary Japan in *The Housekeeper and the Professor*? In what ways does it seem different from western culture? For example, consider the Housekeeper's pregnancy and her attitude toward single motherhood; or perhaps look at the simple details of the story, like Root's birthday cake. In what ways are the cultures similar, different?
10. Ogawa chooses to write about actual math problems, rather than to write about math in the abstract. In a sense, she invites the reader to learn math along with the characters. Why do you think she wrote the book this way? Perhaps to heighten your sympathy for the characters?
11. Do numbers bear any significance on the structure of this book? Consider the fact that the book has eleven chapters. Are all things quantifiable, and all numbers fraught with poetic possibility?
(Questions issued by publisher.)

top of page (summary)

© BOOM!  

Site by BOOM (<http://www.boomsuper.com>)  (<http://www.boomsuper.com>)

LitLovers © 201

Paul Erdős

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Paul Erdős (Hungarian: *Erdős Pál* [ˈerdøːʃ paːl]; 26 March 1913 – 20 September 1996) was a Hungarian mathematician. Erdős worked with hundreds of collaborators, pursuing problems in combinatorics, graph theory, number theory, classical analysis, approximation theory, set theory, and probability theory. He was also known for his eccentric personality.^{[2][3]}

Contents

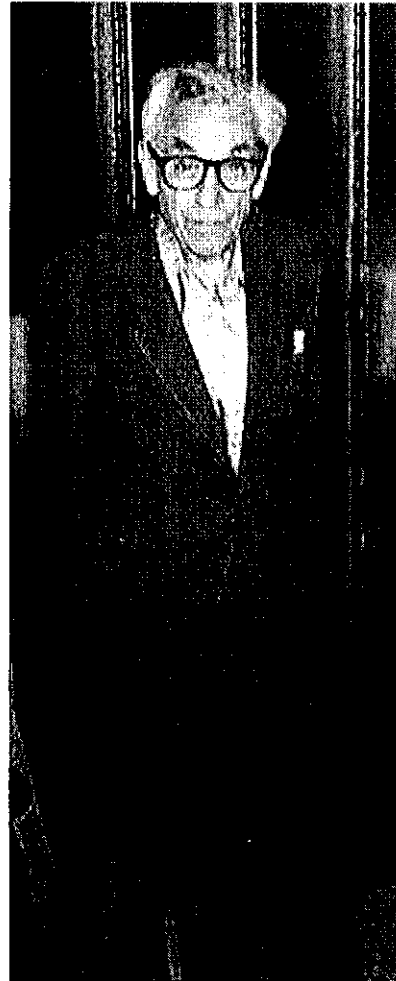
- 1 Early life and education
- 2 Career
 - 2.1 Mathematical work
 - 2.2 Erdős' problems
- 3 Collaborators
- 4 Personality
- 5 Erdős number
- 6 See also
- 7 Notes
- 8 References
- 9 External links

Early life and education

Paul Erdős was born in Budapest, Austria-Hungary, on March 26, 1913.^[4] He was the only surviving child of Anna and Lajos Erdős (formerly Engländer);^[5] his siblings died before he was born, aged 3 and 5. His parents were both mathematics teachers from a vibrant intellectual community. His fascination with mathematics developed early—at the age of four, he could calculate in his head how many seconds a person had lived, given their age.^[6]

Both of Erdős's parents were high school mathematics teachers, and Erdős received much of his early education from them. Erdős always remembered his parents with great affection. At 16, his father introduced him to two of his lifetime favorite subjects—infinite series and set theory.

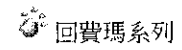
Paul Erdős



Paul Erdős at a student seminar in Budapest (Fall 1992)

Born	26 March 1913 Budapest, Austria-Hungary
Died	20 September 1996 (aged 83) Warsaw, Poland
Residence	Hungary United Kingdom United States Israel Then itinerant
Nationality	Hungarian
Fields	Mathematics

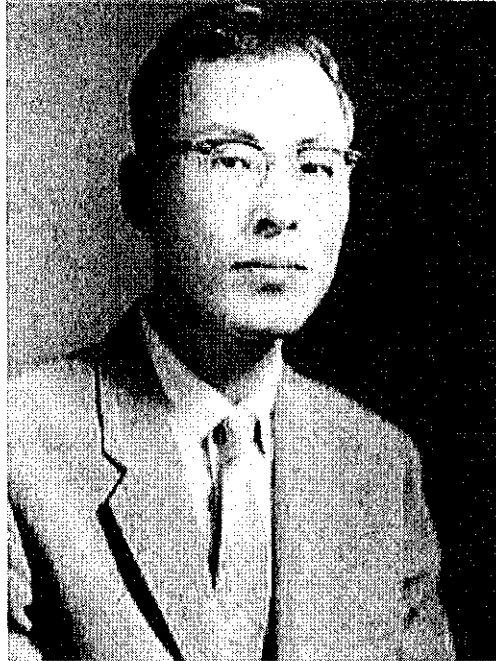
谷山豐與志村五郎



谷山-志村猜想: 每一個橢圓方程式都是一個模形式.

這一個猜想沒有費瑪最後定理如此的清晰易懂, 但是, 它的價值卻在費瑪定理之上.

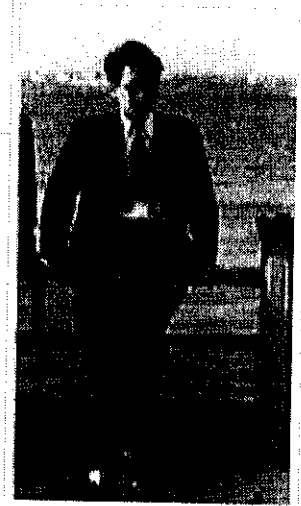
關鍵猜想: 谷山豐(Yutaka Taniyama)與
志村五郎(Goro Shimura)



Yutaka Taniyama

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Yutaka Taniyama (Japanese: 谷山 豊 *Taniyama Yutaka*,^[1] November 12, 1927, Kisai near Tokyo – November 17, 1958, Tokyo) was a Japanese mathematician known for the Taniyama–Shimura conjecture.



Contents

- 1 Contribution
- 2 Depression and death
- 3 Notes
- 4 References
- 5 External links

Contribution

Taniyama was best known for conjecturing, in modern language, automorphic properties of L-functions of elliptic curves over any number field. A partial and refined case of this conjecture for elliptic curves over rationals is called the Taniyama–Shimura conjecture or the modularity theorem whose statement he subsequently refined in collaboration with Goro Shimura. The names Taniyama, Shimura and Weil have all been attached to this conjecture, but the idea is essentially due to Taniyama.

In 1986 Ribet proved that if the Taniyama–Shimura conjecture held, then so would Fermat's last theorem, which inspired Andrew Wiles to work for a number of years in secrecy on it, and to prove enough of it to prove Fermat's Last Theorem. Due to the pioneering contribution of Wiles and the efforts of a number of mathematicians the Taniyama–Shimura conjecture was finally proven in 1999. The original Taniyama conjecture for elliptic curves over arbitrary number fields remains open, and the method of Wiles and others cannot be extended to provide its proof.

Depression and death

On November 17, 1958, Taniyama committed suicide. He left a note explaining how far he had got with his teaching duties, and apologizing to his colleagues for the trouble he was causing them. His mystifying suicide note read:

Until yesterday I had no definite intention of killing myself. But more than a few must have noticed that lately I have been tired both physically and mentally. As to the cause of my suicide, I don't quite understand it myself, but it is not the result of a particular incident, nor of a specific matter. Merely may I say, I am in the frame of mind that I lost confidence in my future. There may be someone to whom my suicide will be troubling or a blow to a certain degree. I sincerely hope that this incident will cast no dark shadow over the future of that person. At any rate, I cannot deny that this is a kind of betrayal, but please excuse it as my last



About the Author

Full text biography:

Ogawa Yoko

Birth Date : 1962

Place of Birth : Japan,Okayama

Nationality: Japanese

Occupation : Novelist

Table of Contents:

Awards
 Personal Information
 Career
 Writings
 Media Adaptions
 Sidelights
 Related Information



about this author

Awards:

Kaizen Prize, 1988, for *Agehacho ga kowareru toki*; Akutagawa Prize, 1990, for *Ninshin Karenda*; Yomiuri Prize, 2004, for *Hakase no aishi ta sushiki*; Izumi Prize, 2004, for *Burafuman no maiso*; Tanizaki Prize, 2006, for *Mina no koshin*; Shirley Jackson Award, 2008, for *The Diving Pool*.

Personal Information:

Born March 30, 1962, in Okayama, Japan; married; children: one son. **Education:** Graduated from Waseda University.
Addresses: Home: Ashiya, Japan.

Career Information:

Writer. Actress in the movie *Okoge*, 1992.

Writings:

FICTION

- *Kanpekina byoshitsu*, Fukutake Shoten (Tokyo, Japan), 1989.
- *Samenai kocha*, Fukutake Shoten (Tokyo, Japan), 1990.
- *Shuga taimu*, Chuo Koronsha (Tokyo, Japan), 1991.
- *Yohaku no ai*, Fututake (Tokyo, Japan), 1991.
- *Ninshin Karenda* (novella), Bungei Shunju (Tokyo, Japan), 1991, translated as *Pregnancy Diary* (also see below), and published in *New Yorker*, 2005.
- *Anjirina sano motoharu to 10 no tanpen*, Kadokawa Shoten (Tokyo, Japan), 1993.
- *Yosei ga mai oriru yoru*, Kadokawa Shoten (Tokyo, Japan), 1993.
- *Kusuriyubi no hyohon*, Shinchosha (Tokyo, Japan), 1994.
- *Hisoyaka na kessho*, Kodansha (Tokyo, Japan), 1994.
- *Anne Furanku no kioku*, Kadokawa Shoten (Tokyo, Japan), 1995.
- *Shishusuru shojo*, Kadokawa Shoten (Tokyo, Japan), 1995.
- *Hoteru Airisu*, Gakushu Kenkyusha (Tokyo, Japan), 1996.
- *Koritsuita kaori*, [Japan], 1998, French translation by Rose-Marie Makino-Fayoile published as *Parfum de glace*, Actes Sud (Arles, France), 2002.
- *Kamoku na shigai midara na tomurai*, Jitsugyo no Nihonsha (Tokyo, Japan), 1998.

- *Fukaki kokoro no soko yori*, Kairyusha (Tokyo, Japan), 1999.
- *Guzen no shukufuku*, Kadokawashoten (Tokyo, Japan), 2000.
- *Chinmoku hakubutsukan*, Chikuma Shobo (Tokyo, Japan), 2000.
- *Mabuta*, Shinchosha (Tokyo, Japan), 2001.
- *Kifujin a no sosei*, Asahi Shinbunsha (Tokyo, Japan), 2002.
- *Hakase no aishita sushiki*, Shinchosha (Tokyo, Japan), 2003, translation by Yosei Sugawara published as *The Gift of Numbers*, Picador (New York, NY), 2006, translation by Stephen Snyder published as *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, Picador (New York, NY), 2008.
- *Burafuman no maiso*, Kodansha (Tokyo, Japan), 2004.
- *Inu no shippo o nade nagara*, Shueisha (Tokyo, Japan), 2006.
- *Otogibanashi no wasuremono*, Hattubaimoto Shueisha (Tokyo, Japan), 2006.
- *Mina no koshin*, Chuo Koron Shinsha (Tokyo, Japan), 2006.
- *Monogatari no yakuwari*, Chikuma Shobo (Tokyo, Japan), 2007.
- *The Diving Pool: Three Novellas* (includes *Dormitory*, *Pregnancy Diary*, and *The Diving Pool*), translation by Stephen Snyder, Picador (New York, NY), 2008.
- (Translated by Stephen Snyder) *Hotel Iris*, Picador (New York, NY), 2010.

Also author of *Agehacho ga kowareru toki*, 1989; *Rokukakukei no sho heya*, 1994; *Yasashi uttae*, 1996; and *Umi*, 2006.

NONFICTION

- (With Masahiko Fujiwara) *Yo ni mo utsukushi sugaku nyumon*, [Japan], 2005, translated as *An Introduction to the World's Most Elegant Mathematics*, 2006.
- *Ogawa Yoko taiwa shu* (conversations), [Japan], 2007.

Contributor to periodicals, including the *New Yorker*, *A Public Space*, and *Zoetrope*.

Media Adaptions:

Hakase no aishita sushiki was adapted as a film of the same title, 2003.

Sidelights:

Prolific author Yoko Ogawa has been successfully publishing novels in Japan since the late 1980s. Over the years, she has won several major Japanese literary awards, including the Kaiken Prize, Akutagawa Prize, Yomiuri Prize, Izumi Prize, and the Tanizaki Prize. Her work has also appeared in the *New Yorker*, *A Public Space*, and *Zoetrope*. As Ogawa's popularity has grown, her work has started to appear in English translation. One such work, *Hakase no aishita sushiki*, was adapted as a film of the same title in 2003. The book has also been translated into English as both *The Gift of Numbers* and *The Housekeeper and the Professor*. The story is about a single mother and a well-known professor of mathematics. The professor was in an accident that left him with amnesia, and the single mother is hired on as his caretaker. The story portrays their growing relationship as the mother and her son learn to understand their mysterious employer.

Ogawa's most widely reviewed work in English translation to date is *The Diving Pool: Three Novellas*. The collection, published in 2008, features novellas titled "Dormitory," "Pregnancy Diary," and "The Diving Pool." All of the stories are set in urban Japan and feature female protagonists in their late teens or early twenties. The book's title novella portrays Aya as she falls for Jun, who is essentially her foster brother. Aya's parents run an orphanage, and she is raised alongside her parents' charges. Aya's complicated love for Jun is also offset by her cruelty towards Rie, the youngest girl in the orphanage. In "Pregnancy Diary," Ogawa tells the tale of a woman who tracks her sister's pregnancy in her journal. The woman's sister endlessly craves homemade grapefruit jam, which in the end, may turn out to be poisonous to the fetus. The third novella, "Pregnancy Diary," features the landlord of a college dormitory. The landlord, an amputee, is fascinated by the students' intact limbs. When one of the students goes missing, the landlord becomes the main suspect.

Aside from the similarity of the settings and protagonists in each story, critics remarked that all three novellas are suspenseful and strange tales. Furthermore, the work was universally acclaimed, and critics lamented that Ogawa's work has not been more widely translated. They also looked forward to additional translations amid Ogawa's growing popularity in the United Kingdom and the United States. Although Victoria James, writing in the London *Independent*, felt that the stories are "perhaps too similar in structure and conceit," she nevertheless called the book "a welcome introduction to an author whose suggestive, unsettling storytelling speaks volumes by leaving things unsaid." Joanna Briscoe, writing in the London *Guardian*, was also pleased by the tales. She noted that "women in Ogawa's work are essentially impassive, numbed, even dazed. ... Their disconcerting inertia in response to their restricted roles is counterpoised with eruptions and vicious twists." Furthermore, Briscoe added, Ogawa's "exquisite, controlled prose avoids becoming brittle through her depth of emotional understanding. To read Ogawa is to enter a dreamlike state tinged with a nightmare, and her stories continue to haunt. She possesses an effortless, glassy, eerie brilliance."

Reviewers in the United States were just as impressed as those in England. Indeed, Cherie Thiessen, reviewing *The Diving Pool* in *January*, remarked that "the three pithy works contained in this new publication are ... sleek and muscular." She also stated: "Lucky this book is slim. It's a collection you are probably going to be driven to read more than once." A *Kirkus Reviews* contributor also applauded the book, calling it "a masterfully twisted triptych of dark novellas [that] marks the American debut of a critically acclaimed Japanese fiction writer."

Ogawa's *Hakase no aishita sushiki* was translated and published as *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, a story "about chosen family, relationships, mathematics and baseball (okay, baseball is a small part of it, but I loved this added bonus)," explained Rachel Baker on the *Old Musty Books* Web site. "While reading this book, I was simply amazed at how enticing mathematics could be." The characters are nameless (they are known simply as "the Professor," "the Housekeeper," and "Root," the housekeeper's young son). "Names are inconsequential because so few characters play within the plot," wrote Karen D. Haney on the *Curled Up with a Good Book* Web site. "After a devastating accident," Baker explained, "the professor only has eighty minutes of short term memory. This means, every single morning, the Housekeeper has to reintroduce herself to the Professor before she can go into his house. One would think there would be no way to build a relationship with this sort of setback. This book shows it's possible." "Feelings intertwine with numbers," Haney stated, "and before readers know it, they feel the same fascination with mathematics that the Professor and the Housekeeper come to cherish together as her own interest in numbers draws her to him."

"They also bond over baseball," explained Jim Higgins in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. "Root is nuts about it. The Professor, too, is a fan. He has never seen a game, but he has a tin of prized baseball cards, including his favorite player, left-handed Hanshin Tigers pitcher Yutaka Enatsu, whose perfect number twenty-eight is so pleasing." "Dive into Yoko Ogawa's world (she is the author of more than twenty works of fiction and nonfiction) and you find yourself tugged by forces more felt than seen," declared Dennis Overbye in the *New York Times Book Review*. "What is the problem with all the men in the housekeeper's life? Who is the woman in the photograph buried under baseball cards in a tin on the professor's desk? Can the professor love somebody he can't remember?" "Ogawa never minimizes the professor's limitations or the difficulty of caring for him, but she has a sublime sense of his value, his enduring capacity for affection and his ability to illuminate the world of numbers," stated Ron Charles in the *Washington Post Book World*. "Of course, befriending a man who forgets who you are every day inspires a heart-breaking kind of pathos, but the housekeeper never dwells on that sadness. She's more impressed by the professor's special insight into the mathematical underpinnings of the universe."

"Soon, the satisfaction taken in mathematics creates a soothing music between all three characters, echoing that of their relationship, which finds ways, like an equation, to restate, strengthen, correct and balance itself against various trials," declared Joan Frank in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. "As the professor ages he grows frailer, and what remains of his memory begins to sputter." "The smart and resourceful housekeeper ... falls under the spell of the beautiful mathematical phenomena the Professor elucidates," stated *Booklist* contributor Donna Seaman. "The trio begins to resemble a family," wrote a *Kirkus Reviews* contributor, "with an unspoken understanding of each other that transcends language and convention." Ogawa's account of their "eccentric relationship," concluded the *Kirkus Reviews* contributor, "reads like a fable, one that deftly balances whimsy with heartache."

"The book as a whole is an exercise in delicate understatement, of the careful arrangement of featherlight materials into a surprisingly strong structure. The pure mountain air of number theory blows gently through all its pages," wrote Steven Poole in the London *Guardian*. "Only at length does the reader wonder whether the touching illusion that Ogawa creates--of a lasting friendship with a man whose memory only lasts eighty minutes--was just that, an illusion." "There are also severe narrative drawbacks in placing a character with anterograde amnesia at the centre of a story," wrote *Spectator* reviewer Charles Cumming. "But Ogawa largely overcomes these through the clarity of her prose and the originality of her approach." "I adored this wonderfully book. It's certainly one of my favourites this year and probably one of the best books I've ever read," declared a contributor to the *Daisy's Book Journal* Web site. "To say it's beautifully written is an understatement."

In Ogawa's next novel, *Hotel Iris*, a seventeen-year-old named Mari helps her mother run a shady seaside hotel. Mari becomes strangely attracted to a man who was thrown out of the hotel for loudly abusing a prostitute, and who also may or may not have killed his wife. Soon enough Mari becomes involved in a sadomasochistic relationship with the man, and she is also dragged into his web of lies.

Reviewing the work for National Public Radio's *Fresh Air*, contributor Maureen Corrigan put forth: "This is a novel you find yourself reluctantly transfixed by. Ogawa is a writer capable of seducing readers against their will. ... Using spare strokes and macabre detail, Ogawa creates an intense vision of limited lives and the twisted ingenuity of people trapped within them. You'll be glad you read *Hotel Iris* and also glad to check out." M.A. Orthofer, a contributor to the *Complete Review* Web site, remarked: "*Hotel Iris* moves along and comes together in an intriguing fashion, but ultimately feels underdeveloped, just like its protagonist. The physical is presented in graphic (and shocking) detail, but the psychological is not explored nearly enough." London *Independent* contributor Daniel Hahn opined: "It's brave territory for Ogawa, and she manages it with sharp focus; she creates moments of breathtaking ugliness, often when least expected." A *Kirkus Reviews* contributor reported: "Minimalist Ogawa ... trades the eccentric relationships of her debut novel for a much darker affair in her latest plumbing of human experience." A *Publishers Weekly* contributor labeled the work a "haiku-like fable of love contorted into obsession."

Related Information:

PERIODICALS

- *Booklist*, February 1, 2008, Ray Olson, review of *The Diving Pool: Three Novellas*, p. 26; January 1, 2009, Donna Seaman, review of *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, p. 46.
- *Guardian* (London, England), August 2, 2008, Joanna Briscoe, review of *The Diving Pool*; May 2, 2009, Steven Poole, "Prime Reading."
- *Independent* (London, England), August 8, 2008, Victoria James, review of *The Diving Pool*; June 28, 2010, Daniel Hahn, review of *Hotel Iris*.
- *January*, January, 2008, Cherie Thiessen, review of *The Diving Pool*.
- *Kirkus Reviews*, December 1, 2007, review of *The Diving Pool*; December 1, 2008, review of *The Housekeeper and the Professor*; March 15, 2010, review of *Hotel Iris*.
- *Library Journal*, April 1, 2009, Victor Or, review of *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, p. 71.
- *Los Angeles Times*, January 25, 2009, Susan Salter Reynolds, review of *The Housekeeper and the Professor*.
- *Mainichi Daily News*, April 27, 2007, "Novelists Yoko Ogawa, Hiromi Kawakami to Join Akutagawa Literary Prize Nomination Committee."
- *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 15, 2009, Jim Higgins, review of *The Housekeeper and the Professor*.
- *New Yorker*, February 9, 2009, review of *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, p. 109.
- *New York Times Book Review*, March 1, 2009, Dennis Overbye, "You Must Not Remember This," p. 9.
- *Publishers Weekly*, October 29, 2007, review of *The Diving Pool*, p. 30; November 17, 2008, review of *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, p. 40; February 8, 2010, review of *Hotel Iris*, p. 28.
- *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 15, 2009, Joan Frank, review of *The Housekeeper and the Professor*.
- *Spectator*, June 6, 2009, Charles Cumming, "Strength in Numbers," p. 36.
- *Washington Post Book World*, February 15, 2009, Ron Charles, "Infinite Loop: A Woman Cares for a Mathematician Who Never Remembers Who She Is," p. 6.

ONLINE

- *Complete Review*, <http://www.complete-review.com/> (December 19, 2009), M.A. Orthofer, review of *Hotel Iris*.
- *Curled Up with a Good Book*, <http://www.curledup.com/> (October 7, 2009), Karen D. Haney, review of *The Housekeeper and the Professor*.
- *Cyberhobo.net*, <http://www.cyberhobo.net/> (October 7, 2009), review of *The Housekeeper and the Professor*.
- *Daisy's Book Journal*, <http://lazydaisy0413.blogspot.com/> (October 7, 2009), review of *The Housekeeper and the Professor*.
- *January*, <http://januarmagazine.com/> (October 7, 2009), Cherie Thiessen, review of *The Diving Pool*.
- *National Public Radio. Fresh Air*, <http://www.npr.org/> (April 14, 2010), Maureen Corrigan, "In a Seaside Town, Hidden Desires Surface."
- *Old Musty Books*, <http://www.oldmustybooks.com/> (October 7, 2009), Rachel Baker, review of *The Housekeeper and the Professor*. *

Source: *Contemporary Authors Online*, 2011

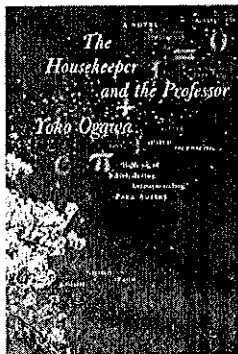
Gale Database: Contemporary Authors Online

Gale Document Number: GALE|H20797613

Source Citation: "Ogawa Yoko." 2011. *Books & Authors*. Gale. Gale Internal User 2 May 2013 <<http://bna.galegroup.com/bna/start.do?p=BNA&u=gale>>

©2008 Cengage Learning

Read-a-Likes



Community Rating ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Softcover

0312427808 Trade Paper
9780312427801 Trade Paper**The Housekeeper and the Professor: A Novel (2009)****The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (2008)** AWARD WINNER

This novel, published posthumously, is the first of a trilogy of crime novels set in modern-day Sweden.

**The Help (2009)**

The 1960s civil rights movement serves as the backdrop for *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett, a historical

**Olive Kitteridge (2008)** AWARD WINNER

Elizabeth Strout's *Olive Kitteridge* is a short story collection that includes 13 stories about Olive

**The Elegance of the Hedgehog (2008)**

The Elegance of the Hedgehog is told by two narrators: Renee Michel and Paloma Josse. At age 12, Renee

**City of Thieves: A Novel (2008)** AWARD WINNER

Young Lev stays in Leningrad even after his father is taken away by the Soviet secret police and his

**Beijing Coma (2008)**

Ma Jian's historical fiction centers on a young man who awakes from a coma after ten years. Dai Wei was