



Kurodahan Press is proud to announce:

Phantom Lights Miyamoto Teru

Translated by Roger K. Thomas

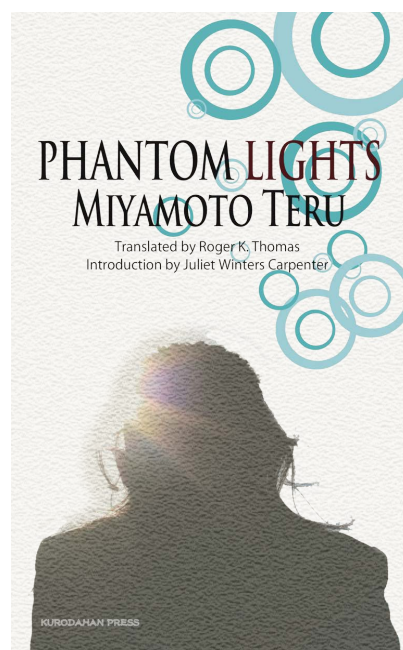
Preface by Juliet Winters Carpenter

ISBN: 978-4-902075-42-7

Pages: xix+ 159

Size: 5" x 8" (127mm x 203mm), softcover

List Price: US\$13.00



Presenting a new collection of stories exploring the perennial themes of Miyamoto Teru's fiction, narrative sketches of the world-class world of the Osaka-Kobe region of his childhood

employing memory to reveal a story in layered frames of time with consummate skill. His work examines the mutual proximity—or even the identity—of life and death, often touching on such grim topics with a touch of humor. Stories of personal triumph and hope are often set in situations involving death, illness, or loss, but what might be the stuff of tragedy in the hands of some writers turns into stepping stones for his characters to climb upward and onward.

Miyamoto's considerable and devoted following in Japan has come increasingly to be mirrored in other Asian countries and parts of Europe as his fiction has been translated into various languages. With renditions of only three of his works currently available in English, however, Anglophone readers have for the most part been unaware of the "Teru" literary phenomenon. The present collection aims to fill part of this lack by offering a selection of some of his finest short stories along with one of his most admired novellas—Phantom Lights—which was made into the internationally acclaimed 1995 movie *Maborosi* by Koreeda Hirokazu.

The will to live, karma, and death are themes developed through the lives of Miyamoto's fictional characters, who struggle to achieve closure with their respective pasts and in their often difficult relations with others. The comments of Washington Times writer Anna Chambers in her review of *Kinshu: Autumn Brocade* aptly apply to the works presented here as well: ". . . existential crisis after existential crisis force the characters to question whether one can shape one's own karma—rather than construct one's own soul, as a Western reader might have put it. And herein lies the Westerner's entree into the book as more than an observer of Japanese culture." And like *Kinshu*, the stories in the present collection provide "a satisfying taste of what it means to grapple with fate at the intersection of modernity and tradition."

Miyamoto deftly weaves his tales using scenes and settings from his native Kansai region, and all are flavored with the language of western Japan. Like the depressed areas described in much of his fiction, his characters too are "left behind" by post-war Japan's rapid economic growth, by unexpected changes in their lives, or by the deaths of loved ones. His heroes are ordinary people who, as he puts it, "are trying to lift themselves up, who are struggling to live," and who achieve quiet triumphs.

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