

The Mita Campus

KEIO UNIVERSITY
1858
'calamus gladio fortior'

"Without doubting there is no seeking; without seeking there is no gaining"—Yukichi Fukuzawa

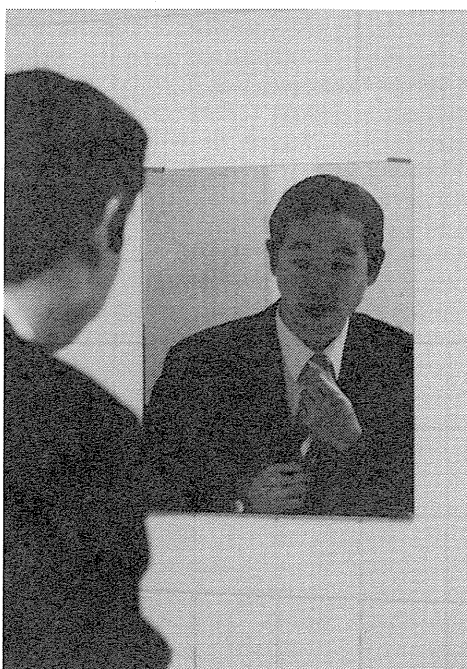
In this issue...

The Mita Campus features, besides this season's pick of music, movies, and political issues, the pain-in-the arse (seen **Trainspotting** yet?...page 8) subject of job-hunting and recruiting. The soon-to-be senior editors and lay-out assistants at the Mita Campus, who were sick of hearing seniors moan about lousy interviews can yawn no more when the word "*shuushoku* (getting a job)" is mentioned.

All the *shuushoku*-related hype set aside, ur interest focuses on other aspects, like the corporate recruiting systems in Japan and the still-prevalent discrimination against women and the physically challenged.

Question: how can students learn and be encouraged to make independent choices (whatever the issue) when they are forced to "be on the safe side" of things, giving up their sense of right and wrong in the process of acquiring social and political adroitness? The job hunting process is just an example of how individuals are discouraged from taking the unpaved road, and told to take the quicker and safer highway with the rest. If you don't join the others at the right time with the right attitude, you will surely lose your chances of getting on the right track.

In this sense, the problems concerning "recruiting" can also be related to the recent bureaucratic corruption in our nation. While cases of corruption can be seen in other countries as well (**Belgium**, see page 6), Japan's case is perhaps distinct in that the anger of the citizens against the corrupt politicians and bureaucrats is usually too mild to bring about any substantial or systematic change. Sadly, society itself, along with private corporations, have played along with, and become a part of, that irresponsibility, taking compliance over personal and responsible decision-making.



Keio University, Tokyo, Japan

Vol. 220.5

Winter-Spring Edition, 1997

Inside...

Letter from
the editor: next page

Feature article:
Job hunting and
discrimination

... page 3

Dialogue between
Anxiety and Relief

...page 4

News Brief ...page 5

Delegate from
European Union vis-
its Keio ...page 6

Political and Bureau-
cratic corruption in
Belgium ...page 7

Keio FM ...page 8

Destination China
...page 9

Theatre:
Oriza Hirata's
quiet stage ...page 10

Trainspotting:
the soundtrack
...page 12

Exchange students at
Keio ...page 13

A letter

from the editor

An editorial in a recent Japanese newspaper described today's college students as being "apathetic and aimless" and unprepared and unskilled for the coming age of "international competition." Also, according to the article, we are too self-centered and irresponsible to be trusted to bring about any change in the nation's political, economic, and corporate systems to meet the demands of the next decade.

But how can students learn and be encouraged to make independent choices (whatever the issue) when they are forced to "be on the safe side" of things, giving up their sense of right and wrong in the process of acquiring social and political adroitness? Students, especially in this so-called "ice-age for job hunters," are the weaker party, and few can blame them if they seem to be licking recruiters' feet. The job hunting process is just an example of how individuals are discouraged from taking the unpaved road, and told to take the quicker and safer highway with the rest. If you don't join the others at the right time with the right attitude, you will surely lose your chances of getting on the right track.

Yes, today's college students may seem aimless at times, but we are aware of many things our parents weren't; we know that stable lifetime employment does not insure lifetime happiness, that there are career options outside of metropolitan Tokyo, and outside of Japan as well. More students (many of them women) are seeking higher education in graduate schools as a means of

working in international institutions and civil service. Especially at Keio, where students enjoy relatively more options, there is a feeling that in the end, there are many possibilities when it comes to finding the right job, the right lifestyle, the right choices.

But when *shuushoku* season rolls around, this optimistic sentiment is crushed by the conservative and unflexible recruiting system taken by corporations. Some companies have incorporated flexible and unique forms of recruiting, such as hiring year-round, or not questioning the name of the student's college. Also, some companies, mostly those that require a more skilled and professional work force, are preferring experienced individuals over fresh-out-of-college applicants. However, most companies are still using the same methods as before.

A wake up call is in order, we believe, to the Japanese corporate system. If companies are to stay above water when government restrictions are done away with, when competition includes foreign companies and there isn't much protection... the wise decision would be to adopt policies that make their human resources a more competitive work force.

The goal for any corporation or business is gaining profit, so they can't be blamed for being selctive or for choosing students who are most likely to contribute to that sum. But clearly, the way Japanese recruiters discriminate students is not just about choosing a competitive work force. Most prefer

students who are more likely to "blend" with the old boys' club atmosphere of the company and those who are less likely to cause any cohesion with the company's policies.

As a result, those who decide to take time off to study a particular field of interest after graduation, those who need a longer time before deciding on future career plans, those who venture to be themselves before someone else's business partner or employee, are branded as non-conformists- which may come as a compliment in western societies, but not so in Japan, where assimilation and allegiance have greater merit than individuality.

In this sense, the problems concerning "recruiting" can also be related to the recent bureaucratic corruption in our nation. While cases of corruption can be seen in other countries as well (Belgium, see page 6), Japan's case is perhaps distinct in that the fury of the citizens against corrupt politicians and bureaucrats is usually too mild to bring about any substantial and systematic change. Instead, a general feeling of distrust towards their elected leaders and civil servants prevails. This is, perhaps, because few people have experienced any direct loss as a result of an unaccountable bureaucratic and political system. Sadly, society itself, along with private corporations, have played along with, and become a part of, that irresponsibility, taking compliance over personal and responsible decision-making.

R. Ando

-the sex factor

"He told me to come closer, which I did," recounts Mariko Kobayashi*, currently a senior in the Literature department at Keio.

"Then he told me to turn around slowly, so he could get a good look at my legs. I remember feeling frightened, and thinking, 'so this is what they call *sekuhara* (sexual harassment).'"

Before this interview at a major food corporation, Kobayashi had heard plenty of horror stories about recruiters harassing female applicants. But having never experienced it, she had thought it would be relatively easy to deal with. But it wasn't.

"I thought I would be ready for that kind of thing, that if someone made sexual remarks or jokes, I would be able to brush it off. I thought that if I wanted to work in an office, I would have to be able to handle such rude behavior," she says.

Since she failed to get a job at any of the publishing houses she had applied to in the Spring, she was feeling both desperate and miserable about the *shuushoku* process. She felt her options were down to zero, and that "if letting the old man look at my legs would get me a job, *what the heck*."

She regretted this, however, when she learned she had not been accepted.

"My first reaction was, 'okay, so my legs were fat,' but then I became angry because I knew I had clearly been taken advantage of."

If she were to take the interview over, she says, she would walk out of the interview room immediately.

Kobayashi was later accepted into a children's clothing company, where many of the workers, including those in management, are women.

"Though I hadn't really been thinking of working in the clothing business, I am happy with how things turned out. At least my workplace will be more comfortable than those of my friends."

Unfortunately, Mariko's case is not a particularly unusual one. According to surveys, many female students encounter forms of sexual harassment. Though many point out the difficulty of clearly defining what kind of behavior constitutes "sexual harassment," any behavior or comments, besides having nothing to do with an applicant's ability with fulfilling a job) on the part of recruiters and interviewers which make an applicant uncomfortable can be taken as sexual harassment, and should not be condoned. Such cases should be reported to the school's career guidance office, and claims should be filed to *Keidanren* (Federation of Economic Organisations). To support action against corporate discrimination against female applicants, contact *Joshigakusei no nakineiri shinai kai* (group for female students who won't give in).

Discrimination

Can any other, milder word aptly explain the experiences of these students?

-the visual handicap

Donning a *haori-hakama* and yielding a *sensu*, a young comic sits on a *zabuton* recounting Japanese comic stories (*rakugo*). His stage name is 'Indian Elephant' (*Indo-zou*) and behaves like any other *rakugo* performer. With one slight exception - he is vision-impaired.

He entered Keio in 1995 and specialised in economics. His trademark is a white stick which acts as his guide. He has room provided by the university equipped with table and computer for braille.

He started looking for jobs well before his friends for he knew he possessed a natural disadvantage. Despite all his efforts, though, he was refused by every company he applied for. He needed not be told of the reason(s). "Some companies were really rude... you should hear them on the phone. And even the polite ones turned me down in any case," he grumbled.

Some sympathetic friends told him that he would somehow manage to find a job. As the "recruiting season" drew to a close late last summer, however, *indo-zou's* lone search for a job showed no sign of ending. Regardless of knowing that he could not gain a position at telecommunications companies such as NTT, which he had hoped, he showed no sign of relent. However, by this time, most companies had finished recruiting students, and were already getting ready for next year's batch.

Last November, he finally decided on his future course: a school for masseurs. How his four-year education at Keio, including his knowledge in Economics, will influence his life in the long run is not yet clear. However, one thing is clear: as for his future career options, they did not prove to be useful in overcoming his visual handicap.

By Yuko Iwata

-Interviewed by
Ritsuko Ando

Anxiety meets a bit of advice

A third-year's account prior to shuushoku

Once Winter began, I, a junior, became aware of a certain anxiety setting on the minds of my peers. As on-campus seminars and meetings related to career hunting begin, I wonder what kind of future awaits me after graduation. I don't want to be those fatigued or drunken *salarymen* on the train. I cannot help but wonder whatever happened to my childhood dreams, those pure emotions of youth...

I certainly entered college as a footstep towards a successful and happy future. But I cannot say that I took this opportunity to its full advantage. Four years in college did offered us ample time to get ready for the real world. Some students, in fact, took this opportunity to strive for their own goals. Some have decided to study on their own for the bar exams, CPA (certified public accountant), and other licenses. Some have chosen to study for state and national examinations. But I really haven't been able to grasp the reality of becoming *shakaijin*, and have spent the past three years rather aimlessly. However exciting extracurricular activities and chasing the other sex can be, it most probably won't be of much help when faced with future career choices.

Unless choosing to take a state exam or to go on to graduate school, I will have to face with a colossal amount of anxiety that comes with the experience of job-hunting. Simple but hard-to-answer questions like, "what will job-hunting be like?" or "will I actually find a job?" are what go through my mind. "what kind of career choice should I make?" ; "do I really have to do this?!" ; "am I only doing this because everyone else is doing it?" They say job-hunting is like a social movement; maybe that is why I have to cope with feeling anxious and alienated at the same time.

By Kuniyuki Horiuchi

Post-shuushoku: the relieved fourth-year

We asked Tadatsugu P. Matsutani, who succeeded in finding a position at a trading and manufacturing company, which was his first choice. He also applied to banks and broadcasting corporations, so we think his advice might be useful to students applying to various career fields.

The *shuushoku* process is about finding your career choice and making it a reality. In this process, the important thing is to be conscious of who and how you are, and who you want to be. Also important is the ability to mobilize your thoughts into action.

The first step is to assess how you are intellectually and personality-wise. Also, you should be conscious of our own value system: what is most important to you? The next step would be, then, to figure out in what area you can utilize your thoughts and incorporate your values in what you do. Most importantly, one should try to think, "what kind of place would I be happiest to work in?"

Once you figure that out, the only thing is to try your best. The question is how, of course, but that should be left up to the students, and there is never a definite way to go about it, especially since everyone doesn't apply to the same company. Perhaps the biggest reason students are frightened of the *shuushoku* process is because there is no definite manual for success. Most students got into Keio by successfully passing the admissions exams. For admission into colleges and high schools in Japan, one just needs to study the required materials. However, for *shuushoku*, no one tells you what you have to do. You have to figure out things on your own what job is best suited for you, and what skills are required of applicants.

In applying to corporations, the important thing is not about knowing who

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Shuushoku kyotei to be abolished

A group consisting of representatives of Universities and major corporations in Japan met on January 10 early this year, and announced that the current agreement on student recruiting ("*shuushoku kyotei*") will soon be abolished.

As a result of this decision, corporations will no longer be bound to the agreement which set official dates for when corporations could start recruiting, and when they could inform candidates on acceptance. Therefore, it is predicted that corporations will begin the process of recruiting earlier than before, and that students will likewise begin job hunting a few months earlier than before.

The agreement had originally been only a *de facto* existence, since most students and companies contact each other before the official date. However, some voice fears that when both sides (Universities and corporations) officially announce the dislvement of the agreement, students will "be forced to scramble about amidst the *shuushoku* confusion without much help or protection," according to Hanako Ueda*, a

junior who is studying Sociology in the Department of Literature.

"Without any kind of ethical standard or rule in the recruiting process, individual corporations will probably try to begin recruiting and deciding on students earlier in attempts to get the best students," comments another junior, studying Law. "There will probably be a lot of confusion."

However, some students' reactions were relatively calm.

"There may not be much of a difference if this decision goes through (officially or not)... companies can only handle a certain amount of applicants at a time, so there probably will not be too much of a difference in the *shuushoku* process itself," says Kazutaka Saito, a junior studying Political Science. "The important thing, I think, is for students to think and act on their own, even if the abolishment of the previous agreement is enough to make all of us a bit nervous."

However, he is not all too optimistic, commenting, "The fact remains that the 'ice age' for job hunting hasn't melted away quite yet."

*actual name withheld

advice continued...

the chairman or president is and what other companies they work with, but is about knowing why you should be accepted into that company, and to have the people there agree with you.

But I must admit that there were times when I felt hopelessly lost. Especially before the *shuushoku* process began, I was afraid anyone would accept me, since I hadn't had much experience of being judged in the real world. Also, since there are always people with connections, I wondered if companies would really be

fair in judging my abilities compared to others'. Perhaps I can say this because I am male, but I found Japanese corporations to be fairer than I had thought before starting the *shuushoku* process. 100 times more so, in fact.

On a final note, my advice to next year's seniors would be to look at how society, and the world at large, is changing. The entire Japanese system is waiting for large-scale changes that have been long overdue. I think that appealing to recruiters that you are the kind of person that can achieve such changes will become important.

Delegate from European Union visits Japan

an interview

In mid-July of last year, a delegation of young representatives from the member states of the European Union (EU) was invited by the Japanese Foreign Ministry for two weeks. During their stay, they were guided typically in Japanese fashion (in other words in a group) around the country; namely Hiroshima, Kyoto, Nara and our very own Keio University. The German representative, James Gaessler, a doctorate student at Oxford University, took time to speak of his experience at the end of his stay with *The Mita Campus*.

As a group their aim was to foster greater mutual understanding and cooperation with the Japanese Civil Service. Various gatherings were coordinated to offer an accurate first-hand insight into society. They were, for example, introduced to Japanese culture and history at Kyoto and Hiroshima, and likewise her economics and politics through discussion with the various ministries in Tokyo -- all at the expense of the Japanese taxpayer.

The image inclined to have been picked up in the West is that Japanese are excessively industrious, technologically advanced and regimentally educated. Mr. Gaessler's impression before arrival had not been far off this mark. Luckily he seemed pleasantly surprised to discover that Japanese were humans after all! Japan's greatest merit as he understood it was in her successful maintenance of links to her heritage past. "Evident in places like Kyoto and Nara, the Japanese have retained their habits, their rituals and have not subjected themselves to flat-out western consumerism," he recounted. Then he went further in saying "Our misconception seems to stem from our expectation of a similar kind of principle and service. Indeed, just as the Japanese took home the idea of manufacturing en-masse from abroad and promptly added a new dimension to it, her modern society seems also to have evolved by compromising and adjusting the western model to fit snugly into the domestic mentality. This mixture has produced a distinct way of conducting business that has been unjustly criticised for being unfair," he maintained.

Precisely due to these slight adjust-

ments to the western system of society, the group seemed to encounter contradictions. In due respect, contradiction was an understatement -- 'disbelief' defined approximately Mr. Gaessler's immediate reaction to the Japanese bureaucracy.

"I was in particular shocked when we were invited to the Ministry of Finance and an important looking man addressed us in his guffawed voice. He stated that he 'could not trust the politicians' and dubbed the electorate as '...dumb; we just feed the electorate with whatever minimal necessities they require, while we take control of the rest....We are the ones who really rule the country.' In response, a colleague of mine challenged, 'Who are you then accountable to?' to which he could only give a stuttered, unconvincing answer."

He is convinced that it is essential in a democratic state, that civil servants do as their name demands of them: to serve the public, which entails carrying out the wishes of the democratically elected leaders. He also stated that "...the more efficiently and accurately these wishes are implemented, the better." The basis, he concluded, seemed to have been left wanting or discarded when compromising between domestic tradition and foreign influences and it was a point worth taking to heart when he repeated how unbelievable the situation with the bureaucracy was.

However, all things considered, it was evident that he thoroughly enjoyed his stay and felt, above all, indebted to the Japanese taxpayer!

Written by Motoko Kawakami and Tatsuya Mitsuda based on their conversation with Mr. Gaessler on July 20, 1996, in Shinjuku.

Belgium- coming to terms with political and bureaucratic corruption

By Tatsuya Mitsuda

International view

Jan (pronounced yan) is an engineering student at the University of Leuven located in the north-east of Belgium. He is fluent in several European languages (a national norm) and on first encounter you would find difficulty deciding whether he was Scandinavian or Dutch. In fact, he turns out to be Belgian and seemed curiously adamant about the accuracy of his identity, adding that he was Flemish. To the untutored ear, him saying this would trigger little. However, behind his restrained insistence to be precisely identified lies a domestic feud between the North and South that is seldom reported in the overseas press.

Belgium is said to be a country which lacks a definite image. People generally



Citizens take to the streets in Brussels, Belgium... "White March" became a symbol of anger against corruption

seem to associate her capital Brussels with the European Union than with the motherland, while others confuse her geography with neighbouring countries. There is no shape that we visualise as we do boot-shaped Italy, burger-shaped America or even cucumber-shaped Japan. Moreover, we would hesitate naming any Belgian specialities or designer labels.

Given the chance to cast our own opinions on the country, most of us would miserably fail: there is neither a positive nor negative image to name of and certainly no known prejudice nor popular jokes to help transmit either image. One would be careful to attribute this to "irrelevance" but would, if pressed, admit to a lack of knowledge that drives one to be nothing other than neutral. Recent events, however, have left us without such excuses.

After the uncovering of the paedophile killings last August by a known child mo-

lester, Marc Dutroux, and the incompetence of the state at preventing such an atrocity, who would not forgive anyone for having second thoughts about a summer vacation in Brussels? Jan himself admits he was plunged into an abyss of disbelief and sadly confesses "I am at the moment ashamed to be Belgian."

Jan is not alone in mourning the many victims of Dutroux, in particular the eight year-olds Julie and Melissa, whose deaths led to the arrest. Three months on, the nation's grief has turned into unremitting anger, demanding explanations for how such horrors could have been allowed to happen. With revelations of police cover-ups and judges turning a blind eye, the nation seems now to be experiencing shame on a hitherto unimaginable scale in their history.

Their anger in turn uncovered the corrupt nature of Belgium politics. The unsolved murder case of the former Deputy Prime Minister, Andre Cools, in 1991, apparently in a political feud connected to organised crime, has led to the arrest of several leading political figures, who are said to be responsible for the killings. To make things worse, the gay politician, Eli Di Rupo, who allegedly had sex with an under-age male prostitute, has sent shock-waves and Belgians onto the streets.

Unpleasant reality is now being confronted and papers have begun the painful task of revealing the other sides to the stories, putting it in a proper context: a context that the nation preferred to have kept hidden. In the past, the country positively ignored its now widely accepted "dysfunctionality"; they were prepared to play along with the corrupt system of government and could not care less who was elected. Instead they would deceive themselves by quarreling over Flemish separatism, or turn their attention to the hopes of the European Union, of which Belgium has been the most enthusiastic member.

Belgians are now temporarily abandoning these comparatively "unimportant" issues and are finally focusing on why they do not have a proper, accountable political culture. The tragic irony is, however, that the nation was awoken from its spell at the expense of innocent lives. Lives that had to be forfeited due to indifference and negligence on behalf of adults. The sudden realisation that they had created a state which could not protect its own children

continued on page 11

Keio-FM participates in the radio program "College DJ Network". Prior to its weekly program being aired, a keyword is chosen by the makers for a certain theme. On-air, the DJs talk about their opinions on this and play song related to the theme. On Sunday, October 6th, the keyword was "Change". The main speakers were first-year students from Tokai and Kanagawa Universities. Talking progressed smoothly and efficiently and was amazed to learn after the broadcast that it was the first time they had worked together. The mixing was initially left in the hands of a third year student, then passed on to a first year later in the program. In this way, seniors could teach and assist their juniors in the running of the program.

The Mita Campus (TMC) had the opportunity interview Kei Kato, a second year student at Keio and producer of this broadcast.

TMC: Tell us briefly about your activity.

Kei Kato(Kato): Keio-FM is a student-run broadcasting service, formed about two years ago. The organisation consists of around thirty members, all Keio students. We host programs at local radio stations in Musashi-Kosugi, Kichijoji, and Hiratsuka. At Hiratsuka, we participate in "College DJ Network" on Shonan FM; a program organised by college students interested in broadcasting. Recently, we have begun collaborating with Tokai and Kanagawa Universities.

TMC: What is your program like?

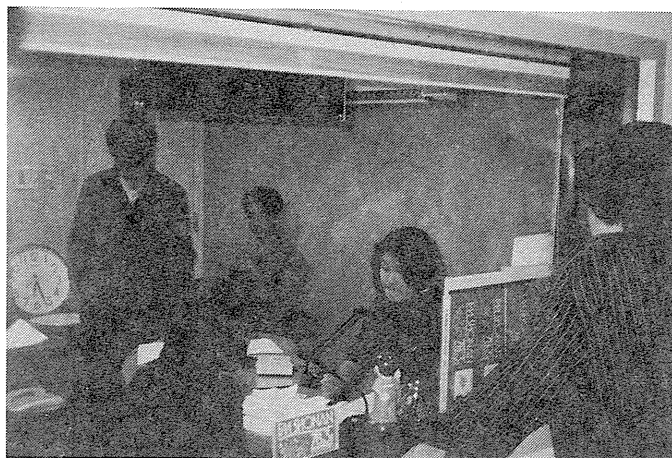
Kato: Each week, we select a keyword and try to form our opinions on the topic from a college student's point of view. For example, speakers act as though they were hanging around the campus. They talk about fashion, lectures or anything students might have an interest in. We recommend some books, music, movies, or shops that are "in". We even do a little counseling on love problems! The speakers invite the listeners to join in by faxing their stories.

TMC: Any responses from listeners?

Kato: Oh, yes. Today we received some fax telling us about recent changes in life.

Keio F.M.

*- a totally student-motivated,
student-oriented radio station -*
hits the air



For a program that is one-year-old, I think we are doing a fairly good job so far.

TMC: And that is your ultimate goal?

Kato: Yes. We try hard to make our show better by practicing regularly in our clubroom, taking part in study sessions for students which is sponsored and held by FM Tokyo annually. But, that does not mean our organisation demands a lot from the members. We strive together to do good job. We don't plan so-called "events" like other clubs. Each of us enjoys our own spare time and concentrate our efforts when it comes to broadcasting. I think this is mature way to manage an organisation. Moreover, it is not necessarily the case that we want to be professionals. You can say we are doing this just for the fun of it.

TMC: Lastly, do you have any messages for Keio students?

Kato: We always welcome guest speakers, especially exchange students, because we want to hear their thoughts. If you are interested, don't hesitate to drop by our clubroom No.208 in Jukusei Kaikan. And, if you have any chance visiting Shonan area, (around Hiratsuka, Atsugi, Fujisawa), tune into 78.3 FM Shonan. We are on air every Sunday evening from five o'clock to six-thirty.

Interviewed, written, and
photo taken by Motoko Kawakami

China seems to be a favorite travel spot for college students in Japan. Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, the Silk Road... With "Chikyuunoarukikata" (a Japanese version of Baedekkers) on hand, students are finding China a more and more appealing destination.

Is it the geographical proximity, or a sense of cultural familiarity that attracts these students? Perhaps it is the excitement particular to a country that is going through such rapid change (socially, politically, and economically), or maybe it is the social climate of a country that is moving backward as much as it is moving forward, that is so interesting. Sachiko Yakashiro (Junior, studying Political Science) attended a Shanghai cruise seminar along with 300 others as a part of a trip sponsored by the prefecture of Chiba and its Ministry of Education. Here was her impression:

The first surprise upon arriving at Shanghai was that there were so many cars, bicycles, and people on the same road. Seeing the chaos of rush-hour traffic makes one understand the extent of the population problem in China.

But the experience which had the greatest impression on me was when we had an opportunity to have a cross-cultural gathering with Chinese students living in Shanghai. When I asked them about their future goals, many mentioned wanting to work for a good corporation, to make life easier for their parents. It was quite a surprise to learn that Confucianism and filial piety were still important to them.

Also surprising was that I was able to see the effects of China's one-child policy first-hand. Throughout Shanghai I saw parents doting on their daughter or son. I saw parents recording their kid on portable camcorders in the city. During a home-stay experience, I noticed that the child's room was equipped with a television and video player, a stereo, and an air conditioner, while the parents didn't have any of these equipments.

Several other students who said they had been to China were interviewed. They had all gone to different destinations, and gave different reasons for their visit. While one went to Hong Kong for a "gourmet and shopping" tour, another went to cruise the Yangtze River. One student visited Peking and the Great Wall, while another said he had taken a

bus along the silk road.

The one thing they agreed on was that they found China an exciting place to visit, not only because it was culturally and socially stimulating.

"Since China is changing so rapidly," comments one student, "if you want to see remnants of an older age, you should go right away."

destination China



an invitation to the quiet world of Oriza Hirata

No lead characters. No music. No elaborate stage sets. Actors talking on stage before the audience takes their seat. Actors with their backs to the audience. Two separate dialogues being spoken at the same time. Conversations in incomplete sentences, without subjects and with dangling modifiers. Stillness and silence...

Produced by Oriza Hirata and performed by the theatrical group *Seinendan*, the quietness of this stage is what makes it so radical.

Small theatre productions in the eighties, reflecting the economy of the time, were represented by theatrical groups who performed upbeat and humorous acts. However, with the end of the bubble economy, many of these groups without clear concepts diffused, giving rise to a new age of Japanese drama in which theatre groups separated into mainly three different genres. While some returned to classic drama such as Shakespeare and Chekhov, and some went on to contemporary concepts (such as "well-made plays," underground theatre, and social criticism), some began experimenting with "quiet" drama, which challenged the concepts of acting and drama altogether. Leading this movement in "quiet" drama was the *Seinendan* group, led by Oriza Hirata.

What makes Hirata's stages so quiet? First of all, there is no background music, and there is no shouting- most of the lines are spoken in normal speaking tones. Any nose-blowing or coughing in the audience could make the actors' voices inaudible. But there is also a different type of stillness to the *Seinendan* stage. While this is, of course, related to the physical "quietness" of the performance, it also comes from Hirata's vision of drama and performing art.

Hirata's belief is that there should be as little "excess" in the acting and producing of drama as possible. Hirata also believes

that drama should not be a means of sending messages. Contemporary drama has become both a place of expressing, with anti-establishment overtones, sociopolitical ideals and frustrations related to the failure of the student movement

against the U.S.-Japanese Security Treaty, and a place of depicting the power relationships in more personal and ordinary circumstances. Drama is often an art of ex-

pressing and questioning both personal and political thought, a tendency Hirata perceived as being "excessive" in the sense that it forces messages and values on audiences.

"What messages should art, or drama, convey?" questions Hirata. "I believe there really is nothing that must be conveyed. As for drama, the only important thing is to depict people and the world as they really are. My perception of art is that it is just a means of grasping reality... and to do that one should take a step away from values and mores based on ideas like truth, virtue, and beauty."

So how does Hirata realise this concept in his plays? The performances by *Seinendan* seem like cut-outs from everyday life, so much so that the viewer feels as though he or she is witnessing, or even peeking at a particular scene (whether it be a waiting room in a hospital, a hotel lobby). Hirata's reconstruction of reality is so skillful that at a point it can even be chilling.

Then, is his work really void of any messages or ideas? Is it a mere subjective depiction of everyday life? The answer is no. There are messages fragmented and dispersed throughout his pieces. His ideas and perceptions of reality are revealed in bits of conversations, and the expressions of actors. There would be no point in drama if it were just a replay of real life, void of story lines and ideas. His choice in lines and subject matter are revelations of both his personal and objective vision of reality. Therefore, the choice given to the audience is to choose whether or not to ac-



-Oriza Hirata

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beauty."

cept that particular view of the world.

The *Seinendan* performances often give the impression that Hirata has succeeded in combining his perceptions of everyday life and his particular concepts of drama with relative ease. Not that his works do not face certain dilemmas, though. For instance, the more Hirata succeeds in reconstructing his personal vision of reality, and the more he inserts his own messages between the lines, his audiences may find it more difficult to relate to. The stage spun by

Oriza Hirata would then face the danger of becoming an unappreciated and thus detached existence. *Hokugen no saru* (*The monkeys of the northern limit*), which was first staged in 1992, is a story of Biology students at a university who are experimenting with monkeys. In it, Hirata has incorporated "situation comedy"-like scenes where the audience is actually expected to laugh. This step (away from the concept of "un-intending" "un-expecting" playwriting) can be interpreted as Hirata's attempt to make a connection between the varied views of the audience and that of the writer. In this sense, Hirata may face, more than other contemporary playwrights, the difficulty of balancing his own vision with that of the audience.

But what is it exactly that attracts audiences to Hirata's plays? What comes to mind is that certain strangeness and fragility unique to the stage created by Hirata- once the viewer begins to question whether the depictions acted out on stage matches his or her view of reality, Hirata's works face the danger of crumbling to dust. But it is precisely this precarious nature and the tension between the audience and Hirata (created by the differences between each others' visions of reality and perceptions of the "everyday") that make the *Seinendan* performances irresistibly entertaining.

continued from page 6

has put every citizen to shame and at the same time gave birth to community spirit and a sense of responsibility which was hitherto scarce.

Initially few Belgians had any explanations of what was going wrong, still less any solutions. Those outside would see it as nothing but a one-off-event perpetrated by a deranged madman. People now realise that faults lay within the horrendously complex political system; they became aware that jobs are carved up by the Mafia and conveniently left in border free Europe to wreak havoc. History would reveal to them how this area of the Low Countries, as a result of perpetual occupation by foreign powers, developed in the minds of the people an aversion to "government" which was simply something to be maneuvered around, not respected.

Analysts have begun to draw parallels with corruption in Italy. "In Italy, there was, at a certain moment, a blurring of morality, politics and justice," the Mayor of Palermo said. "The confusion caused an explosive cocktail, which provoked a short-circuit which ended by paralysing the whole system." Italy was fighting the disease with a renewal of civic responsibility. Belgians should do the same, he said.

However, we need look no further than our own borders and bureaucracy to understand these parallels. The awkward system of government that Japan has can easily be compared to Belgium's; corruption and links to organised crime must ring familiar bells. The murder case of Julie and Melissa as a result of bureaucratic incompetence easily provokes images of our very own Ministry of Health and Welfare. Both ended in uncompromising deaths. Both drew relentless criticism.

However, similarities sadly end here. Whereas Belgians have stood up, albeit late, against the establishment, we seem incapable of getting our own act together; as we continue to be indifferent irresponsibles mumbling "shikatanai." The biggest shikatanai of them all being the recent general election result. How many more sacrifices do we have to endure before we come to our senses, before we feel action on an unprecedented scale is needed?

Upon explaining this similarity, Jan reacted, undeniably to an extent relieved to find a country in potentially more trouble than his own. Raising his eyebrows he muttered "...how unbelievable."

By Kota Inami

T rainspotting

The Soundtrack

Already having received raving reviews from all over the world when it was first released back in February of 1996, the movie *Trainspotting* has finally made its way into Japanese theatres in this country, attracting an increasing number of British-music fans in this country. The film gives us just a glimpse of what is nowadays labeled as British pop culture, so it's no wonder that the soundtrack is being promoted with much hype in Japan as well, coming at a time when the British music scene is at the center of a music media spotlight. Featuring such Brit-pop darlings of today as Blur, Pulp, and Elastica, as well as long-loved veterans like Iggy Pop and Lou Reed, *Trainspotting* combines a variety of upbeat and slow, in-depth songs and mellow instrumentals to reflect the movie's hilarious and harrowing undertones.

The opening song by Iggy Pop, "Lust for Life," is a noisy, cymbal clanging jumble blaring with ostentatious lyrics that seem to be the perfect beginning to a story in which the characters enjoy a high and wild time before their demise into self-destruction. The soundtrack offers three instrumentals: Brian Eno's "Deep Blue Day," Primal Scream's title track, and Leftfield's "A Final Hit." Of the three, Eno's trip into a melodic dream of careful, but inexcessive synthesizer work triumphs as one of the best tracks on the album. He uses quiet accents of the guitar, reminiscent of the intricate guitar sounds of U2, one of the bands he produces. Primal Scream's ten-minute-plus attempt at composing background music for perhaps a shot of heroine sounds boring in comparison, although they should be given credit for being more creative than Leftfield. Pulp scores better with "Mile End," making up for its nagging contribution to this summer's *Mission: Impossible* soundtrack. Here, Pulp presents a light pop tune with a playful air.

The much anticipated first solo attempt by Blur's Damon Albarn is overshadowed by his band's strong single, which proves that Blur is more than just a Kinks-wannabe. While Albarn's "Closet Romantic" sounds as if he wrote it when he fell asleep in a closet next to his toy piano, the

The Movie

Directed by Danny Boyle; written by John Hodge; based on the novel by Irvine Welsh; released by Miramax Films. Starring Ewan McGregor (Renton), Ewen Bremner (Spud), Kelly Macdonald (Diane), Robert Carlyle (Begbie), and others. Currently showing at Cinema Rise (Parco) at Shibuya.

Reckless lowlifes in Great Britain's underbelly deliver a vile yet "potent" kick. Though the subject matter and scenes are often dark (AIDS, drug overdoses, crib death), the film turns out to be upbeat and fiercely funny.

Expect: lots of profanity in Scottish most of us can't catch, graphic drug use, frontal nudity, excrement, violence, and plenty of humor.



foursome's "Sing" delves deeper, exploring the more musical side of their talents, keeping Albarn's self-absorbed vocals at a minimum. The best track on this soundtrack, though, is unquestionably Elastica's "2:1," which revolves around an irresistible flair of British-inflected lyrics. With a straight, honest guitar rhythm and the sharp vocal line of Donna Matthews, it captures the true essence of British pop that has attracted the attention of millions of music lovers all over the world again in the past year. Bands like Elastica convince us that the British Invasion won't be retreating any time soon.

music reviewed by
Chisa Fujioka

Sophia Scott attended Keio University from the fall semester of 1995 until the end of spring semester in 1996. After graduating from Harvard University in 1995, she had been chosen as a Fulbright fellow to study in Japan.

She earned a bachelor's degree in environmental science and public policy. Since her concentration was an interdisciplinary one, she studied a wide range of subjects, ranging from Economics to Chemistry.

While at college, besides academics, she put her energy in extracurricular activity. She was involved in a theater group at Harvard. Many students involved in the group were sons and daughters of celebrities. Sophia wrote scripts, made costumes, and even produced, but never took a role in the theater.

"I did everything but act," she says.

As for Harvard, she says, "there's nothing special about people from Harvard. There are all kinds of people there."

Sophia sees Japan as her second home country, since she is half-Japanese. But her first impression Japan was not too good. But now, she says she loves living in Japan, since it is both convenient and safe."

Currently, she is employed at a research company in Tokyo.

Exchange Students at Keio

interviewed by
Midori Owaki

Etienne Raynaud

graduated from the University of Paris (Sorbonne) in France, and was visiting Keio until the end of last semester.

Etienne was interested in the Japanese economy at first. However, after visiting Japan two years ago, he became fascinated by the Japanese culture and also with the Japanese people, and decided to study in Japan after graduation.

Etienne fell in love with Japan more and more each day. He enjoyed his stay in Japan. He especially loved shopping and checking out new places in Tokyo. On weekends, friends could find him hanging out at cafes in Omotesando, or clubbing in Roppongi or Aoyama.

As for the Japanese culture, he said he admired the social culture of the Japanese people. He was especially surprised at how people were so well-organized and punctual.

"I appreciated the kindness of the Japanese people very much," he said. Upon being asked if he had any problems with Japanese customs, he mentioned,

"People came close to me on the train even when there was not much space."

This difference between the French and the Japanese concerning the sense of space and distance may be just a matter of habit.

"In France, people like to stare at each other, while in Japan, people try not to have eye contact so much," he said, mentioning another cultural difference.

"Even after leaving Japan, I would like to visit Japan... many times, hopefully," Etienne said before leaving Tokyo for his hometown, Paris.

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Special Thanks to Mrs. Sakiko
Mogami and Language House,
our sponsors, and graduates
who have lent their generous support
to the publishing of this issue.

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