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In Remembrance of Kyoko Selden

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Kyoko Selden and Mizuta Noriko in Monterey, California. *Saitama shinbun*, circa 1975.

In Remembrance of Kyoko Selden

Mizuta Noriko

The *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* is publishing a special issue to honor the memory and contributions of Kyoko Iriye Selden. All of us at the *Review* feel, in equal measure, a profound sadness that Kyoko is no longer with us and a deep gratitude for how unstintingly she gave of herself over the nearly three decades since the *Review* began. That the *Review* has succeeded as a forum for discussion, bringing multiple perspectives to bear on contemporary Japanese culture, history, and social change, is due in large part to Kyoko's exceptional translations and insightful interpretations. The *Review* is now read by many scholars and students of Japanese culture throughout the English-speaking world. It was Kyoko's unflagging commitment to deepening the understanding of Japanese culture in that world, as a scholar in her own right, and as a mentor and translator, that gave the *Review* a foundation and a sense of purpose for which there can be no substitute.

This special issue edited by Alisa Freedman includes many of Kyoko's finest translations, including some not previously published. They reveal the range and depth of Kyoko's interests and knowledge. Her interpretations of modern literature, of writings about the atomic bomb, and of fiction and poetry by women writers, are well known—but her translations of the fourteenth-century *Taiheiki: The Chronicle of Great Peace* and the Tokugawa era *Hinin Taiheiki: The Paupers' Chronicle of Peace*, published for the first time in this issue, reveal her sure grasp of the classical canon as well. The power of Kyoko's translation work, her ability to bring a new text into being, and the subtle creativity of her expression, are hallmarks of her achievements.

Kyoko was a respected mentor from the time I arrived at Yale University in the early 1960s. Japan had not yet achieved its postwar economic recovery, and without a Fulbright (which Kyoko held) or other scholarship, study abroad was still impossible. Kyoko had come to Yale two years earlier, and her brilliance and diligence, her artistic

and musical talents, and the depth of her character, were already well known among faculty and students of the Graduate School.

Kyoko fell in love with and married Mark Selden. Mark and Victor Lippit, who later became my husband, were high school classmates, and Kyoko and I immediately became—and remained—close friends. I came to respect her deeply as a translator of Japanese women writers, and as a working partner on whom one could always rely. But Kyoko was more than that: she was also a life coach. She had unwavering trust and love for her husband, children, and friends, and brought a special humility and sincerity, as well as a mischievous sense of humor, to her work. She was a role model I still hope to emulate.

For *Japanese Women Writers* (published by M.E. Sharpe in 1982; reprinted 1991), we each chose and translated different works and thought hard about what we should convey to readers about each author's significance to modern women's literature. Working together to produce the first English-language anthology of Japanese women writers is an experience I have treasured all these years. All the new translations in subsequent editions are Kyoko's. The third edition, which includes translations of the earliest modern women writers, has become a reference for many Western students and scholars—an achievement of which we are very proud.

Kyoko and I also translated *The Funeral of a Giraffe* (Kirin no sōrei, M.E. Sharpe, 1999) by Tomioka Taeko. She planned to publish translations of the modernist writer Osaki Midori, and had started on *Wandering in the Realm of the Seventh Sense* (Dai nana kankai hōkō, 1931). I recall thinking that this was a very difficult work to translate, and that only Kyoko was capable of doing justice to it. We heard that it would soon be finished but then received the news of Kyoko's sudden passing. We are truly fortunate to be able to publish the work on this occasion, thanks to the efforts of Alisa Freedman, Kyoko's co-translator on several projects. Kyoko would have been pleased with this final collaboration.

Kyoko lived surrounded by her loving family and many friends and left behind a treasury of achievements. Hers was a rich and rewarding life—and I believe that she watches over and continues to inspire her students and many friends at Cornell University in Ithaca, her second home, even now, just as the warm light of her heart and soul inspires me.

Finally, I would like to express sincere gratitude to all who have contributed to this special issue, especially Alisa Freedman, who produced it in such a short time, and to Mark, Lili, Yumi, and Ken Selden and the many colleagues who helped prepare these texts and provide Kyoko's memoirs and art for inclusion.

(January 20, 2014)