Japan Past & Present

Selected Works of Media About Disability in Japan

Editor's note: This list compiles a variety of works of media centered in some way around disability in Japan—literary works (fiction and nonfiction), film (documentary and narrative), anime, manga, and so on, as well as some academic writings on these topics.

Due to the scope of the subject matter, aiming for something comprehensive is impossible—the number of works of Japanese media related to physical disabilities, blindness, Deafness, developmental disabilities, and so on, easily numbers in the tens of thousands. Instead, we aimed to give a sense of the diversity of what's out there, with a particular prioritization of works that are available in English translation/with English subtitles for teaching purposes, as well as works that are particularly unique, well-known, and/or influential.

Another important note is that, in aiming to show a selection of as wide a range of works as possible, while there are many works here that might be considered "good" representation of disabled people—nuanced, complex, realistic, either by a disabled person or in thorough consultation with disabled perspectives—there are just as many works here that feature oversimplified, fraught, or even pernicious representations of disabled people by nondisabled creators. The works of this sort that were included here were done so due to their historical importance and influence—even if it was not a positive one—since they had a large role in shaping

dominant societal conceptions of disability, and generated the pool of tropes that later disabled creators used their work to push back against.

A Selection of Academic Writings on Media, Literature, Disability and Japan

Disability and Anime, Manga, and Games

Anderson, Steven R. "Powers of (dis) ability: Toward a bodily origin in Mushishi." *Mechademia* 9 (2014): 77–88.

Campana, Andrew. "Beyond Status Effects: Disability and Japanese Role-Playing Games." In *Japanese Role-Playing Games: Genre, Representation, and Liminality in the JRPG* (ed. Rachael Hutchinson and Jérémie Pelletier-Gagnon). Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2022.

Galbraith, Patrick W., and Mark R. Bookman. "Open Becoming: A Disabled VTuber and Her Community in the Era of COVID-19." In *The Coronavirus Pandemic in Japanese Literature and Popular Culture*, edited by Mina Qiao. Routledge, 2023. 78–96.

Hutchinson, Rachael. "Empathy for the Blind: Negotiating Disability in Final Fantasy XV." In *Japanese Role-Playing Games: Genre, Representation, and Liminality in the JRPG* (ed. Rachael Hutchinson and Jérémie Pelletier-Gagnon). Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2022.

Kaigo, Muneo, and Sae Okura. "Game Accessibility and Advocacy for Participation of the Japanese Disability Community." *Information* 11, no. 3 (2020): 162–177.

Kaminishi, Yuta. "Inclusive media mix: Shaping communication through A Silent Voice." *Journal of Anime and Manga Studies*, vol. 4 (2023).

Mondelli, Frank. "Access, Media, and Equity in a (Post-)COVID World", *SCMS+*, 2020.

Mondelli, Frank and Rachael Hutchinson. "Othering Masculinities: Disability and Chivalry in *Yakuza* and *Yakuza 0*," *The Handbook of Japanese Games* (ed. Rachael Hutchinson), 2024 (*forthcoming*).

Nagai Akira 永井哲. *Manga no naka no shōgaishatachi: Hyōgen to jinken* マンガの中の障害者たち 表現と人権 [Disabled people within manga: Representation and human rights). Tokyo: Kaihō shuppansha, 1998.

Okuyama, Yoshiko. *Reframing Disability in Manga*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2020.

Okuyama, Yoshiko. *Tōjisha Manga: Japan's Graphic Memoirs of Brain and Mental Health*. Springer: 2022.

Osenton, Sara. "Recasting the body: Self-production of Japanese disabled veterans' image." *Asian Studies Review* 46, no. 3 (2022): 437–454.

Percy, Corinna Barrett. ""I Hear You Just Fine": Disability and Queer Identity in Yuki Fumino's I Hear the Sunspot." *The Journal of Anime and Manga Studies* 1 (2020): 35–75.

Suzuki, Shige CJ. "Autism and Manga: Comics for Women, Disability, and Tobe Keiko's With the Light." In *International Perspectives on Shojo and Shojo Manga*, edited by Masami Toku. Routledge, 2015. 50–63.

Wood, Andrea. "Drawing disability in Japanese manga: Visual politics, embodied masculinity, and wheelchair basketball in Inoue Takehiko's REAL." *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 37 (2013): 638–655.

Disability and Film

Ban Yukie 塙幸枝. ″Eiga ni okeru shōgai hyōshō: komyunikēshon no mondai to shite byōsha sareru shōgai 映画における障害表象 : コミュニケーションの問題として描写される障害 [The representations of

disability in movies: disability depicted as a communication issue]". Nihon komyunikēshon kenkyū 43, no. 2 (2015): 109–24.

Drott, Edward R. "Aging bodies, minds and selves: representations of senile dementia in Japanese film." *Journal of Aging Studies* 47 (2018): 10–23.

Mithout, Anne-Lise. "Sayōnara CP: The First Filmic Representation of the Japanese Dis/ability Rights Movement". In *Dis/ability in Media, Law and History : Intersectional, Embodied AND Socially Constructed?*, edited by Micky Lee, Frank Rudy Cooper, and Patricia Reeve. Abingdon: Routledge, 2022. 134–149.

Mithout, Anne-Lise. "A Quest for Autonomy: Work and personal fulfillment in the Japanese film *37 Seconds*". In *Working Women on Screen*, edited by Poppy Wilde, Ellie Tomsett, and Nathalie Weidhase. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2024.

O'Reilly, Sean. ""Disarmed": Disability, Trauma, and Emasculation in Contemporary Japanese Cinema." *Arts* 7, no. 1 (2018): 10–20.

Disability and Literature

Arai Yūki 荒井裕樹. *Matomaranai kotoba o ikiru* まとまらない言葉を生きる (*Living words that do not cohere*). Tokyo: Kashiwa shobō, 2021.

Arai Yūki 荒井裕樹. *Shōgai to bungaku—'Shinonome' kara 'Aoi shiba no kai' e* 障害と文学ー「しののめ」から「青い芝の会」へ (*Disability and literature—From 'Shinonome' to 'Aoi shiba no kai'*). Tokyo: Gendai shokan, 2011.

Burns, Susan L. "Making Illness into Identity: Writing" Leprosy Literature" in Modern Japan." *Nichibunken Japan Review* (2004): 191–211.

Campana, Andrew. *Expanding Verse: Japanese Poetry at the Edge of Media.*

Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming in December 2024.

Campana, Andrew. "You Forbid Me to Walk: Yokota Hiroshi's Disability Poetics." positions 30, no. 4 (2022): 735–762.

Hanada Shunchō 花田春兆. *Nihon bungaku no naka no shōgaisha zō—kin/gendai hen* 日本文学のなかの障害者像ー近・現代篇 [The representation of disabled people in Japanese literature—modern/contemporary edition]. Akashi shoten: 2002.

Ireland, Benjamin Hiramatsu. "A Frenchman in Tokyo: Theology of Disability and Cultural Ableism in Endō Shūsaku's Wonderful Fool." Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies 16, no. 2 (2022): 197–214.

Kurahashi, Yuko. "Creating a Tapestry of Voice and Silence in Michiko Ishimure's Kugai jōdo (Paradise in the Sea of Sorrow)." Journal of Narrative Theory 33, no. 3 (2003): 315–334.

Mashimo, Yayoi. "If Lessons Are to Be Learned: Depiction of Disability in Mienai Bakudan (The Invisible Bomb)." *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 12, no. 3 (2018): 269–285.

Matisoff, Susan. *The Legend of Semimaru: Blind Musician of Japan*. Originally 1978, updated edition from Cheng & Tsui, 2006.

Mithout, Anne-Lise. "Narrating Disability in Contemporary Japan: [One Liter of Tears] and [A Therapeutic Sexy Trip]". In *Le corps dans les littératures modernes d'Asie orientale : discours, représentation, intermédialité*, edited by Gérard Siary, Toshio Takemoto, Victor Vuilleumier, and Yinde Zhang. Paris: Collège de France, 2022.

Shek-Noble, Liz. "A (Not So) Personal Matter: Understanding Disability in

Kenzaburō Ōe's Early Novels." *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 13, no. 4 (2019): 429–443.

Tanaka, Kathryn M. "Hansen's Disease and Patient Writing in Colonial Taiwan's Sanatorium, 1934–1944: The Affect of the Institution." *International Journal of Korean History* 27, no. 1 (2022): 99–136.

Tanaka, Kathryn. "Writing Ties in Japan: Family, Familialism, and Children's Writing in an Early Twentieth-century Hansen's Disease Hospital." Japanese Studies 36, no. 2 (2016): 231–250.

Disability and Paralympics Media

Frost, Dennis J. "Sporting disability: official representations of the disabled athlete at Tokyo's 1964 Paralympics." *Asia Pacific Journal of Sport and Social Science* 2, no. 3 (2013): 173–186.

Shek-Noble, Liz. "Supercrip in Motion: A Critical Visual Analysis of Promotional Materials for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games." *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 16, no. 4 (2022): 405–422.

van der Veere, Anoma. "The Tokyo Paralympic Superhero: Manga and Narratives of Disability in Japan." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, 18 (5, 8), 2020.

Disability and Television

Ban Yukie 塙幸枝. “Enjiru shintai / enjirareru shintai no kyokōsei: 'Baribara' ni okeru shōgaisha performance wo rei ni 演じられる身体の虚構性をめぐって．――『バリバラ』における障害者パフォーマンスを例に [The fictionality of playing/played bodies: the example of the disabled people's performances in 'Baribara']”. Nihon komyunikēshon kenkyū 46, no. 2 (2018): 151–67.

Mithout, Anne-Lise. "Disabled heroines: représentations of female

disability in Japanese television drama". In : Diana Garrisi, Jacob Johanssen (eds.), *Disability, Media, and Representations: Other Bodies*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2020, 27–48, .

Saito, Shinichi, and Reiko Ishiyama. "The Invisible Minority: Under Representation of People with Disabilities in Prime Time TV Dramas in Japan." *Disability & Society* 20, no. 4 (2005): 437–451.

Stibbe, Arran. "Disability, Gender and Power in Japanese Television Drama." *Japan Forum* 16, 2004, 21–36.

Valentine, James. "Disabled discourse: Hearing accounts of deafness constructed through Japanese television and film." *Disability & Society* 16, no. 5 (2001): 707–727.

Valentine, James. "Naming and narrating disability in Japan." *Disability/postmodernity: Embodying Disability Theory*, edited by Mairian Corker and Tom Shakespeare (Bloomsbury: 2002): 213–27.

van der Veere, Anoma. "The Tokyo Paralympic Superhero: Manga and Narratives of Disability in Japan." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, 18 (5, 8), 2020.

Films Centering Disability

Documentary Films (available with English subtitles)

Cozens, Heath, director. *Doglegs*. FilmBuff. 2015.

- A documentary about a disabled janitor who joins an underground amateur pro wrestling league, where disabled wrestlers regularly face off against nondisabled wrestlers.

Hara Kazuo 原一男, director. *Goodbye CP* [*Sayōnara CP* さようならCP]. Dimension. 1972.

- An enormously important documentary capturing protests, tensions, and poetry within the burgeoning disability movement in Japan, focused on the activist group Aoi Shiba no Kai, all of the members of which had cerebral palsy. See also the Lesson Plan about this film.

Kasatani Yoshiaki 笠谷圭見, director. *JIZOLIBIDO*. Atelier Yamanami. 2018.

- An documentary about Atelier Yamanami in Shiga prefecture, a studio and residential facility for artists with mental and developmental disabilities who create radical and innovative visual art.

Makihara Eri 牧原依里 and DAKEI 雫境, directors. *LISTEN リッスン*. Uplink. 2016.

- An art documentary by two Deaf directors about sign language music; features several performances of sign music, dance, and poetry, as well as interviews with practitioners.

Nakamura, Karen, director. *Bethel: Community and Schizophrenia in Northern Japan*. 2007.

- An anthropological documentary about a vibrant intentional community of people with schizophrenia in a small fishing town in Hokkaido.

Takizawa Masaharu 瀧澤正治, director. *The Last Goze*［瞽女GOZE]. Movie GOZE Production Committee. 2020.

- A documentary about the life, training, and art of Kobayashi Haru, one of the last remaining goze (blind female musicians and singers), who passed away in 2005.

Tsubota Yoshifumi 坪田義史, director. What Can You Do About It? [*Datte shōganai janai* だってしょうがないじゃない]. Sundy. 2019.

- A highly personal documentary about the director, who after receiving a late in life ADHD diagnosis, interviewing his elderly autistic uncle.

Documentary Films (available only in Japanese)

Aoyagi Taku 青柳拓, director. *Fujiyama Cottonton*［フジヤマコットントン］. Nondelico. 2024.

- A documentary about the lives lived by the inhabitants of a welfare facility for disabled people, Mirai Farm (Future Farm).

Hashimoto Mariko 橋本真理子, director. *Ii-Chan's White Cane*［イーちゃんの白い杖］. Terebi Shizuoka. 2018.

- A documentary that covers two decades in the lives of Konagaya Iori, a blind woman, and her younger brother Sabuki, who is developmentally disabled.

NHK. Tomodachi hyakunin dekiru ka na 友だち百人できるかな [Will I be able to make a hundred friends?]. NHK. 1976.

- A documentary about the childhood of the first blind child in Japan to enroll in a public elementary school.

Nihon terebi. *Mōjin no tabibito – Kobayashi Haru no hyakunen* 盲人の旅人～小林ハルの百年. Nihon terebi. 2000.

- A television documentary about the life of Kobayashi Haru, the last prominent goze (blind female musician) who was also the subject of the more recent *The Last Goze* detailed above.

TBS and Mōrō kyōiku kenkyūkai 盲ろう教育研究会. *Ningen Kaihatsu* 人間開発. TBS. 1964.

- A documentary about early efforts in the education of Deafblind children at the Yamanashi School for the Blind in the 1950s and 1960s.

Narrative Films (available with English subtitles)

Hamaguchi Ryūsuke 濱口竜介, director. *Drive My Car* [*Doraibu mai kā* ドライブ・マイ・カー]. Bitters End. 2021.

- One of the most prominent recent Japanese films (and the first ever to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Picture); features a (non-Deaf) character who uses Korean Sign Language.

Hayase Kentarō 早瀬憲太郎, director. *Smile* [*Emu* 笑む]. Zen nihon rōa renmei. 2020.

- A film by a Deaf director with a Deaf cast (and produced by the Japanese Federation of the Deaf) about a woman, Mizuki, who takes a nursing job at a small town clinic.

HIKARI, director. *37 seconds* [*37 sekanzu* 37セカンズ]. Knockonwood / Hikari films, distributed by Netflix. 2019

- A drama about a woman with cerebral palsy (played by Kayama Mei, an actress with cerebral palsy) who wishes to become a professional romance manga artist, and is tasked by her editor to gain experience in sexual matters to make her work more "convincing."

Imai Mika 今井ミカ, director. *Until Rainbow Dawn* [*Nijiiro no asa ga kuru made* 虹色の朝が来るまで]. JSLTime, 2018.

- A film featuring a Deaf cast and crew about two Deaf women who fall in love after meeting at a sign language group; directed by a Deaf lesbian director.

Kawase Naomi 河瀬直美, director. *Radiance* [*Hikari* 光]. Kino films. 2017.

- A romance between a woman who writes audio descriptions for films for blind and low vision viewers, and a photographer who is becoming blind.

Kawase Naomi 河瀨直美, director. *Sweet Bean* [*An* あん]. Elephant house. 2015.

- Features a subplot about a woman who is discriminated against due to the shape of her hand and having once had Hansen's disease (leprosy).

Kitano Takeshi 北野武, director. *The Blind Swordsman: Zatoichi*. Shochiku. 2003.

- A highly popular remake of one of the most well-known period film series, featuring experimental musical sequences.

Masumura Yasuzō 増村保造, director. *Blind Beast* [*Mōjū* 盲獣]. Daiei. 1969.

- A romantic drama and psychologically thriller based on an Edogawa Ranpo short story, about a blind sculptor with highly sinister intentions.

Matsumoto Junpei 松本准平, director. Perfect revolution [パーフェクト・レボリューション]. Tōhoku shinsha. 2017.

- A love story between a woman living with personality disorder and a man who has cerebral palsy. The movie especially tackles the issue of sexuality and access to sexual services. The male character is played by the activist Kumashino Yoshihiko and the story is based on his life.

Matsumoto Junpei 松本准平, director. *A Mother's Touch* [*Sakurairo no kaze ga saku* 桜色の風が咲く]. Gaga corporation, 2022.

- A narrative film about the life of Fukushima Satoshi—Deafblind researcher, writer, activist, and professor at the University of Tokyo. The film, however, focuses more on his mother, Reiko; the two together developed yubitenji, "finger braille," as a method of communication.

Misumi Kenji 三隅研次, director. *The Tale of Zatoichi* [*Zatōichi monogatari* 座頭市物語]. Daiei. 1962.

- The period film that started a phenomenon; an incredibly long and popular series of swordfighting films featuring a blind protagonist.

Shibata Gō 柴田剛, director. *Late Bloomer* [*Osoi hito* おそいひと]. Shima Films. 2004.

- A disturbing and controversial horror film about a man with cerebral palsy who becomes a serial killer.

Shinoda Masahiro 篠田正浩, director. *Ballad of Orin* [*Hanare goze orin* はなれ瞽女おりん]. Tōhō. 1977.

- A period drama about a *goze* (blind female musician and singer) in early 20th century Japan. Based on a novel.

Shiota Akihiko 塩田明彦, director. *I Just Wanna Hug You* [*Dakishimetai—shinjitsu no monogatari* 抱きしめたい ー真実の物語ー]. Toho. 2014.

- A romantic drama, based on a true story, centered on a woman who has memory issues and becomes a wheelchair user after a car accident.

Wajima Kōtarō 和島香太郎, director. *The Lone Ume Tree* [*Ume kiranu baka* 梅切らぬバカ]. The Lone Ume Tree Film Project. 2021

- Tadao, a middle-aged man with autism, undergoes an unexpected transition to a group home, facing challenges during the transition.

Television Dramas Centering Disability

Kunimoto Masahiro 国本雅広 and Ōkubo Tomomi 大久保智己, directors. *Charenjido* チャレンジド［*Challenged*]. NHK. 2009.

- About a school teacher who goes back to work after becoming blind.

Higashiyama Mitsuhiro 東山充裕, director. *Kokoro no ito* 心の糸［*Thread of*

Our Hearts]. NHK. 2010.

- About a high school student who has a fraught relationship with his Deaf mother, and eventually falls in love with a Deaf classmate.

Murakami Shōsuke 村上正典 and Kinoshita Takao 木下高男, directors. *Ichi rittoru no namida* 一リットルの涙［*One Liter of Tears*]. Fuji terebi. 2005.

- Based on the real-life diaries of Kitō Aya, whose memoirs about her life with a degenerative condition (spinocerebellar ataxia) sold millions worldwide.

Shimazaki Toshiki, Kaneko Yoshiichi and Sasaki Masayuki, directors. *Dokuhime to watashi* 独姫と私［*The Poison Princess and I*]. Fuji terebi. 2011.

- Features a wheelchair-using protagonist who is a writer.

Takemura Kentarô, Hori Hideki and Tsukahara Ayuko, directors. *Daisuki!!* だいすき□□[I Love It!]. TBS. 2008.

- Centers the daily life of a young single mother with an intellectual disability.

Manga Centering Disability

Manga (available in English translation)

Aruga Rie 有賀リエ. *Perfect World* [*Pāfekuto wārudo* パーフェクトワールド]. Kodansha. 2014–2021.

- A popular romantic manga about a woman who falls for a man who uses a wheelchair.

Fumino Yuki 文乃ゆき. *I Hear the Sunspot* [*Hidamari ga kikoeru* ひだまりが

聴こえる]. One Peace Books (English edition). 2013–Present.

- A romance between two male protagonists, one of whom is hard of hearing.

Inoue Takehiko 井 雄彦. *REAL*［リアル]. Viz Media. 1999–present.

- A sports manga series about wheelchair basketball and the lives and masculinities of a central group of players.

IWATOBINEKO 岩飛猫. *The Invisible Man and His Soon-to-Be-Wife* [*Toumei otoko to ningen onna: Sonouchi fuufu ni naru futar*i 透明男と人間女~そのうち夫婦になるふたり~]. Seven Seas Entertainment. 2023–present.

- Centers a fantastical romance between an invisible man and a blind woman who work at a detective agency.

Kida Bisco 季田 ビスコ. *After We Gazed at the Starry Sky* [*Hoshizora o mitsumeta sono ato de* 星空を見つめたそのあとで]. Yen Press. 2023–present.

- A romance between two male protagonists, one of whom uses a wheelchair.

Oda Tomohito オダトモヒト. *Komi Can't Communicate* [*Komi-san wa, komyushō desu* 古見さんは、コミュ症です] Viz Media/Shogakukan. 2016–present.

- A highly popular manga (and later anime) about a high school girl with extreme social anxiety.

Ōima Yoshitoki 大今 良時. *A Silent Voice* [*Koe no katach*i 聲の形]. Kodansha. 2013.

- An enormously popular manga (and later animated film) about a Deaf

girl who is bullied by the male protagonist, who himself becomes socially anxious and depressed as he grows older. See the Lesson Plan on the film.

Midori Wataru. *Run on Your New Legs* [*Atarashii ashi de kakenukero* 新しい足で駆け抜けろ] Yen Press/Shogakugan. 2019–2020.

- A sports manga about a high school student who becomes a runner using a leg prosthesis.

mori moyori もりもより. *Touch Within the Abyss* [*Kimi no yoru ni fureru* 君の夜に触れる]. ShuCream BL, 2023.

- A dark romance between two male protagonists, one who is blind, and one who is a professional hitman.

Morishita suu 森下suu. *A Sign of Affection* [*Yubisaki to renren* ゆびさきと恋々]. Kodansha. 2019–present.

- A popular recent romantic manga and anime with a Deaf female protagonist.

Takarai Rihito 宝井理人. *Ten Count* [*Ten kaunto* テンカウント]. SuBLime. 2013–2017.

- A fraught queer romance between a male protagonist with OCD and his therapist.

Tezuka Osamu. *Dororo*［どろろ]. Vertical. 2009 (originally 1967–1969).

- A classic manga about a warrior, cursed at birth to not have limbs, internal organs, facial features, and so on; using prostheses and magic, he must kill a demon to regain each one.

Tobe Keiko 戸部けいこ. *With the Light: Raising an Autistic Child* [*Hikari to tomoni… ~jiheishōji o kakaete~* 光とともに…～自閉症児を抱えて～].

Tokyo: Yen Press. 2007–2011 (original run 2000–2010).

- A well-known series about two (neurotypical) parents raising their young autistic son, starting from his birth.

Manga (available only in Japanese)

Aimoto Mizuho 愛本みずほ. *Daisuki!! Yuzu no kosodate nikki* だいすき!! ゆずの子育て日記 [I love it!! Yuzu's parenting diary]. Kōdansha. 2005–2012.

- A series (made into a live action TV drama detailed above) about a young single mother with an intellectual disability.

Asou Mitsuaki 麻生ミツ晃. *Sekai de ichiban tōi koi* 世界でいちばん遠い恋 [The farthest love in the world]. Kaiohsha. 2021.

- A romance between two male protagonists, one a violinist and one hard of hearing.

Karube Junko 軽部潤子. *Kimi no te ga sasayaite iru* 君の手がささやいている [Your hands are whispering]. Kōdansha. 1992–1997.

- A highly influential manga about a romance between a Deaf woman and a hearing man; later made into a popular TV drama.

Kitō Aya 木藤亜也 and KITA. *Ichi rittoru no namida* 一リットルの涙 [One liter of tears]. Gentōsha komikkusu. 2008.

- Based on the real-life diaries of Kitō Aya, whose memoirs about her life with a degenerative condition (spinocerebellar ataxia) sold millions worldwide; also made into a TV drama.

Rin Teku 厘てく. *Kamereon wa te no hira ni koi o suru* カメレオンはてのひらに恋をする［*Chameleons fall in love with the palm of your hand*]. Square Enix. 2023.

- A romance between two male protagonists, one Deaf, one hearing.

Sasou Akira さそうあきら. *Hana ni toitamae* 花に問ひたまへ [Ask, lo, the flowers!]. Futabasha. 2015–2016.

- A slice of life story about a blind protagonist who eventually becomes an advocate for blind and low vision-accessible art galleries.

Sasuke サスケ. *Itsuwari no marigōrudo* 偽りのマリィゴールド [False marigold]. Kadokawa. 2023–present.

- A dark period romance between two female protagonists, one of whom is blind.

Yamamoto Osamu 山本おさむ. *Donguri no ie* どんぐりの家 [House of acorn]. Shōgakukan. 1993–1997.

- A pioneering work about a family with a Deaf and developmentally disabled daughter, who eventually begin a community workshop for disabled people. Eventually made into an anime series and film.

Yamamoto Osamu 山本おさむ. *Wagayubi no ōkesutora* わが指のオーケストラ [Finger orchestra]. Akita shoten. 1991.

- Centers on a music teacher who begins work at a school for the blind and Deaf.

Yoshimoto Kōji 吉本浩二. *Sabishii no wa anta dake ja nai* 淋しいのはアンタだけじゃない [You're not the only lonely one]. Shōgakukan. 2016–2017.

- A documentary manga based on the controversial true story of a composer who claimed to be Deaf, as well as several interviews with Deaf and hard of hearing community members.

Anime Series and Films Centering Disability

Hara Keiichi 原 恵一, director. *Miss Hokusai* [Sarusuberi 百日紅]. Production I.G. 2015.

- Centered on Katshushika Ōi, the artist and daughter of the famous Edo-period artist Katsushika Hokusai, the film prominent features her younger stepsister, who is blind.

Hatta Yōsuke 八田洋介, director. *Ranking of Kings* [Ōsama rankingu 王様ランキング]. Wit Studio. 2021–2022.

- Originally a manga, this series is about the adventures of a Deaf prince who is also tiny in stature.

Ishiguro Kyōhei, director. *Your Lie in April* [Shigatsu wa kimi no uso 四月は君の嘘]. A-1 Pictures. 2014–2015.

- Originally a manga, this is a romantic drama centered around a male pianist protagonist who, due to a metal breakdown, becomes unable to hear his own piano, and a female protagonist who is a violinist with a degenerative illness.

Tamura Kōtarō タムラ コータロ□, director. *Josee, The Tiger, and the Fish* [*Joze to tora to sakana tachi* ジョゼと虎と魚たち]. Shochiku/Kadokawa. 2020.

- A comedy/drama, centered on a romance between a nondisabled character and a wheelchair using character with paraplegia.

Various directors. Animation x Paralympic. NHK. 2017–2022.

- A series of animated shorts created in anticipation of the Tokyo 2020/2021 Paralympics, some featuring original characters and some featuring protagonists from well known pre-existing series; each short

features a different paralympic sport.

Yamada, Naoko 山田尚子, director. *A Silent Voice* [*Koe no katachi* 聲の形]. Kyoto Animation. 2016.

- An enormously popular manga (and later animated film) about a Deaf girl who is bullied by the male protagonist, who himself becomes socially anxious and depressed as he grows older. See the Lesson Plan on the film.

Yuasa Masaaki 湯浅政明, director. *Inu-Oh* [犬王]. Science SARU. 2021.

- A film set in the 14th century featuring the friendship between a dancer who has a variety of congenital physical differences, and a blind musician/singer. Based on a novel by Furukawa Hideo.

Fiction Centering Disability

Available in English Translation:

Akasaka Mari 赤坂真理. *Vibrator* [*Vaiburēta* ヴァイブレータ]. Translated by Michael Emmerich. Soft Skull, 2007. Original Japanese version published in 1998.

- An intense and experimental novel from the perspective of a woman who hears voices and has an eating disorder.

Furui Yoshikichi 古井由吉. "Yoko" [杳子]. Translated by Donna Storey. *Child of Darkness: Yoko and Other Stories*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies, 1997). Original Japanese version published in 1970.

- A well-known short novel exemplary of the "introverted generation" (*naikō no sedai*) of writers, centered around the protagonist's relationship with a woman who has mental illness.

Hearn, Lafcadio. *Kwaidan: Stories And Studies Of Strange Things* (Miminashi hōichi). Clarendon : Tuttle publishing. 2005 (1904).

- An early English-language glimpse into folkloristic representations of a variety of types of non-normative embodiment and cognition, most famously the blind monk protagonist of "Hōichi the Earless"; Hearn himself was blind in one eye.

Murata Sayaka 村田沙耶香. *Convenience Store Woman* [*Konbini ningen* コンビニ人間]. Translated by Ginny Tapley Takemori. Grove Press. 2018. (Original Japanese version published in 2016.)

- An extraordinarily popular novel about a person whose life centers around her work at a convenience store; while the protagonist is not explicitly named to be on the autism spectrum or have any specifically-named condition, she has been embraced by a variety of communities as a striking example of neurodivergency.

Ōe Kenzaburō 大江健三郎. *A Personal Matter* [*Kojinteki-na taiken* 個人的な体験]. Translated by John Nathan. Grove Press, 1968. Original Japanese version published in 1964.

- A semi-autobiographical novel about a protagonist whose son is born with a mental disability. The most famous example of a recurring central topic throughout the Nobel Prize-winners' work.

Ōe Kenzaburō 大江健三郎. *A healing family* [*Kaifuku suru kazoku* 恢復する家族]. Translated by Stephen Snyder. Kodansha international, 1996. Original Japanese version published in 1995.

- An intimate portrait of Ōe's life with his son Hikari. Much softer than "A personal matter", it discusses the difficulties of raising an autistic child in Japan, but also describes the tenderness of a father-son relationship.

Tanizaki Jun'ichirō 谷崎 潤一郎. "Portrait of Shunkin" [*Shunkinshō* 春琴抄]. Translated by Howard Hibbett in 1965. Original Japanese version published in 1933.

- A controversial and well-known short story centered around a blind female figure in the mid-19th century.

Available Only in Japanese:

Furukawa Hideo 古川日出男. *Heike monogatari Inu ō no maki* 平家物語 犬王の巻 [Heike monogatari Inu ō's roll]. Tokyo: Kawade shobo shinsha. 2017.

- A novel set in the 14th century featuring the friendship between a dancer who has a variety of congenital physical differences, and a blind musician/singer. Made into a recent animated film.

Ichikawa Saō 市川沙央. *Hunchback* [*Hanchibakku* ハンチバック]. Bungei shunju, 2023.

- A recent Akutagawa prize-winning novel, a dark comedy centered around a female protagonist with a congenital muscle disorder who uses a wheelchair. The author, who has congenital myopathy, is also a wheelchair user, and wrote a thesis at Waseda on representations of disability in Japanese literature. Acquired last year for translation and release in English.

Mizukami, Tsutomu 水上 勉. *Hanare goze Orin* はなれ瞽女おりん. Tokyo, Shinchōsha. 1975.

- A period drama about a goze (blind female musician and singer) in early 20th century Japan; later made into a live action film.

Biographies of Disabled Japanese People

Available in English/ English Translation:

De Ferranti, Hugh. *The Last Biwa Singer: A Blind Musician in History, Imagination, and Performance*. East Asia Program, Cornell University, 2009.

- A biography of the blind singer and biwa player, Yamashika Yoshiyuki (1901–1996), who is often framed as the "last" of his tradition.

Available Only in Japanese:

Arai Yūki 荒井裕樹. *Rin toshite tomoru* 凛として灯る. Tokyo: Gendai shokan, 2022.

- A biography and critical analysis of the life and thought of Yonezu Tomoko, who was part of both Japan's disability activist movement and the radical feminist *ūman ribu* (women's lib) movement, and gained notoriety for trying to vandalize the Mona Lisa with spray paint in 1974 to draw attention to the inaccessibility of the gallery space.

Kōyama Norio こうやま のりお. *Yo no naka e no tobira—piano wa tomodachi: Kiseki no pianisuto Tsuji Nobuyuki no himitsu* 世の中への扉 ピアノはともだち 奇跡のピアニスト 辻井伸行の秘密 [The gates within this world; The piano is a friend: Secrets of the miracle pianist Tsuji Nobuyuki]. Kōdansha, 2011.

- A biography of the well-known blind pianist.

Awazo Kiyo. 粟津キヨ *Hikari ni mukatte sake* 光に向かって咲け[Bloom towards the light]. Iwanami shoten, 1986.

- A biography of Saitō Yuri, a pioneering blind activist.

Shimojū Akiko 下重暁子. Hagane no hito – Kobayashi Haru 鋼の女—最後の瞽女・小林ハル [Steel Woman—The Last Goze: Kobayashi haru]. Shueisha Bunko. 2003.

- A biography of the last prominent *goze* (blind female musician/singer).

Honma Ritsuko 本間律子. Shikaku shōgaisha no shokugyōteki jiritsu e no ayumi – Iwahashi Takeo o chūshin ni 視覚障害者の職業的自立への歩み ―岩橋武夫を中心に― [Progress towards employment independence for those with visual disabilities—centered on Iwahashi Takeo]. Suita, Kansai daigaku shuppan kai, 2017.

- A biography of the groundbreaking blind rights and labor activist Iwahashi Takeo.

Non-Fiction Books and Memoirs by Disabled Japanese Authors

Available in English Translation:

Higashida Naoki 東田直樹. *The Reason I Jump: The Inner Voice of a Thirteen-Year-Old Boy With Autism* [*Jiheishō no boku ga tobi haneru riyū ~ kaiwa no dekinai chūgakusei ga tsuzuru uchinaru kokoro* ~ 自閉症の僕が跳びはねる理由～会話のできない中学生がつづる内なる心～]. Translated by K.A. Yoshida and David Mitchell. Random House, 2013. Original Japanese version published in 2007.

- A series of essays by the largely non-verbal autistic author Higashida. Subject to some controversy over whether or not the essays were written by him, or by a caregiver using Facilitated Communication (FC). Made into a film.

Ototake Hirotada 乙武洋匡. *No One's Perfect* (*Gotai fumanzoku* 五体不満足). Translated by Gerry Harcourt. Kodansha USA, 2000. Original Japanese version published in 1998.

- An autobiography of the early life of a prominent writer, educator, and activist born without arms or legs. Made into a film.

Takahashi Chikuzan 高橋竹山. The spirit of Tsugaru: blind musicians, Tsugaru-jamisen, and the folk music of northern Japan, with the autobiography of Takahashi Chikuzan. [Tsugaru jamisen hitori tabi 津軽三味線一人旅]. Translated by Gerald Groemer. Harmonie Park Press. 1999. Original Japanese version published by Chūō kōron shinsha in 1991.

Available Only in Japanese:

Arai Takako 新井たか子. *Aijō no niwa* 愛情の庭 [Garden of affection]. Tokyo, Ounkai, 2014.

- A reprinted and edited version of an extraordinarily rare diary kept by a blind female student in prewar Japan.

Asaka Yūho. *Iyashi no sekushī torippu* 癒しのセクシー・トリップ　わたしは車イスの私が好き [Sexy healing trip—I like the me with a wheelchair]. Tarōjirōsha, 1993.

- A first-person account of a disabled woman who goes on a journey to gain self-confidence as a sexual being.

Kitō Aya 木藤亜也 *Ichi rittoru no namida* 一リットルの涙 [One liter of tears]. Tokyo: FA shuppan, 1986.

- The real-life diaries of Kitō Aya, about her life with a degenerative condition (spinocerebellar ataxia); sold millions worldwide, and made into a live action drama and manga series.

Kumashino Yoshihiko. *Tatta 5 senchi no hādoru* 1969–2017. たった5センチのハードル 1969–2017 [An obstacle of just 5 centimeters]. Loft books, 2017.

- An autobiography by a man with cerebral palsy, focusing on love and sexuality.

Iwahashi Takeo 岩橋 武夫. *Hikari wa yami yori* 光は闇より [Light is from darkness]. Tokyo: Nihon tosho sentā, 2000.

- An autobiography by a blind pioneer of welfare work and employment rights activism in Japan.

Ogata Eiaki 緒方英秋. *Watashi, watashi—Rōsha de seidōitsusei shōgai 27-sai no kokoro no katō* 私、わたし－ろう者で性同一性障害27歳の心の葛藤 [Myself and myself: 27 year-old conflicts in my heart as a Deaf person with gender dysphoria]. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2000.

- A unique memoir by a Deaf trans woman.

Yonezu Tomoko 米津 知子. "Josei to shōgaisha – Onna de shōgaisha de aru watashi ga, onna no undō no naka kara kangaeru koto" 女性と障害者－女で障害者である私が女の運動の中から考えること [Women and disabled people—My thoughts from within the women's movement as a disabled woman]. In *Botai hogo hō to watashi tachi* 母体保護法と私たち [The Maternal Body Protection Law and Us], edited by Saitō Yukiko 斎藤 有紀子. Tokyo: Akashi shoten, 2002.

- An important essay by a key figure in both the disability movement and the radical feminist movement in Japan in the 1970s and onwards.

Notes

The foundations of this list were generously provided by **Andrew Campana** and **Anne-Lise Mithout**. Additional thanks to Kae Tran for suggesting many of the manga that appear on this list.

Suggest Additions

If you would like to suggest additions to this list, you may do so **on this page**.