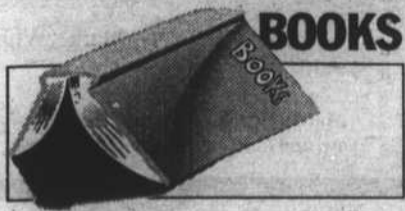


Book cooks up tales of women's losses



"Kitchen"
By Banana Yoshimoto
Grove Press

"Those women lived their lives happily. They had been taught, probably by caring parents, not to exceed the boundaries of their happiness regardless of what they were doing. But therefore they could never know real joy."—Yoshimoto, "Kitchen"

This book is really two books, two short works, which were both phenomenally successful in Japan, a country whose people are not known for buying large numbers of books.

In gathering large numbers of literary awards and selling millions of copies of "Kitchen," Yoshimoto stormed Japan in a wave of "Bananamania," which through the grace of Grove Press carried her at last to the shores of the United States.

Yoshimoto brings us a view of a Japan that continues to struggle with the competing tensions of tradition and modernity.

It may be that Japanese women, long bound in subservient roles by tradition, feel such tensions more keenly than men, and their stories seem more lively for it.

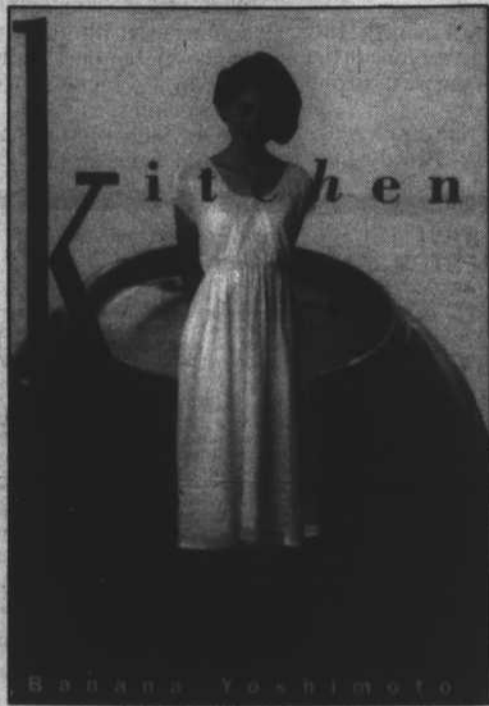
Both the works in "Kitchen" ("Moonlight Shadow" and the title piece) are tales of women dealing with loss in their lives.

The title piece tells the story of Mikage Sakurai, a young woman orphaned as a girl and raised by her grandparents until they died.

The final death, that of her grandmother, leaves Mikage stranded in a daze from which she does not emerge until a chance meeting with Yuichi Tanabe. This childhood acquaintance takes Mikage home to live with him and his transsexual mother/father, Eriko.

"Moonlight Shadow" is Yoshimoto's first story and is much shorter than its companion piece in this volume. The plot, however, remains much the same.

The tragic death of her lover Hitoshi leaves



Courtesy of Grove Press

a woman (Satsuki) in paralysis, drifting through life but not really living.

But her vitality is restored after a chance encounter with the mysterious woman Urara, who guides Satsuki to a unification with her past.

Also helping Satsuki is Hiiragi, the young brother of Hitoshi who is going through his own reconciliation with loss: Hiiragi's girlfriend Yumiko was killed in the same auto accident that killed Hitoshi.

Hiiragi wears the school uniform of his girlfriend to preserve her memory and to deal with the loss. But he and Satsuki both find their own forms of reconciliation.

But unlike the similarly first-person protagonist of "Kitchen," Satsuki reaches reconciliation on her own terms, by herself, and thus seems to presage a triumph of modernity over tradition for herself and for Japanese women in general.

"We've been very lonely, but we had it easy. Because death is so heavy — we, too young to know about it, couldn't handle it."

— Bryan Peterson

French collection

UNL professor edits critic's work

The Early Film Criticism of Francois Truffaut
by Wheeler Winston Dixon
Indiana University Press

"The Early Film Criticism of Francois Truffaut" brings for the first time into English translation more than 50 articles written by Truffaut, chiefly for "Cahiers du Cinema" in the mid-1950s.

This landmark publication would be enough in itself without the bonus of a rigorous critical commentary by the book's author/editor, UNL Professor Wheeler Dixon.

This volume is really two books in one: Dixon's text, illustrated by the Truffaut pieces, weave a telling history of Truffaut's critical life.

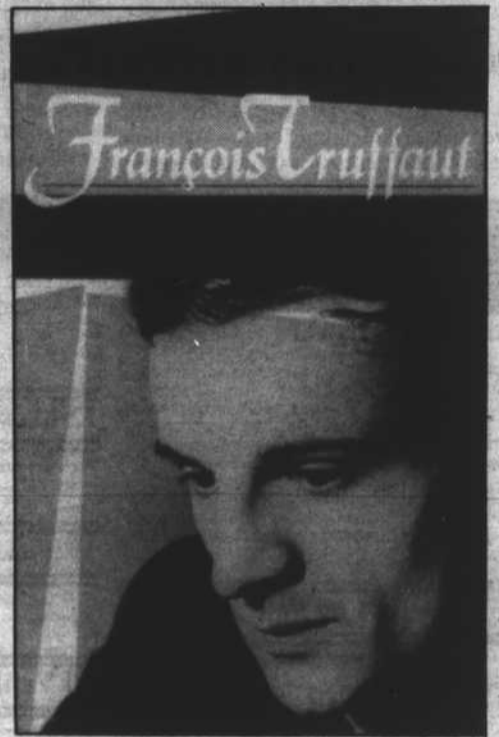
Between the articles and the commentary there emerges a fascinating study of how Truffaut, an outspoken revolutionary in his youth, became more complacent with age, less desirous to rock the boat and more inclined to repent what he perceived to be past sins of callousness and arrogance.

Truffaut was the first to advocate the auteur theory, which acknowledges the director as the dominant creative force in telling a story on film.

Truffaut also laid the foundation for the French New Wave, which prized location shooting, non-scripted dialogue, and films made quickly and cheaply, intentionally similar to Hollywood B pictures of the '40s and '50s.

Referred to by some defensive fellow critics as the "gravedigger" of French cinema, Truffaut fought what he perceived to be the real death of cinema: Big-budget, star-stuffed movies "which announce their importance so aggressively, so ponderously in every frame."

At the same time, Truffaut didn't condemn filmmakers for seeking profit and he acknowledged that audiences often went to see films because of their stars, not their directors. Such double-edged attitudes foreshadow Truffaut's eventual backing away



Courtesy of Indiana University Press

from earlier criticisms of directors and the film-going public.

Dixon also examines Truffaut's sexist tendencies, another contradiction equally apparent in Truffaut's films and writings. When he reviewed films starring Brigitte Bardot and Marilyn Monroe, his focus moved from the films themselves to the stars' bodies and acting abilities.

Dixon's book, indispensable for film students and admirers of Truffaut and French cinema, is important reading in an age where, commercially speaking, style is valued over substance, and style itself is in danger of becoming subsumed by total shallowness.

Dixon's arrangement of Truffaut's writings offers an intimate view of how and why someone's views on these issues can change over time.

— Calvin Clinchard

Beatnik's bible

The Portable Beat Reader
by Ann Charters
Viking Portable Library

If you're looking for a happening summertime read and some substance with your style, pick up a copy of "The Portable Beat Reader."

It's just the right size to carry around in your hand, lies open nicely so you can sip cappuccino while you read, and has a cool cover with a snapshot of Bill Burroughs talking to Jack Kerouac on the front.

At first I avoided buying this book because I'd rather own works in their entirety than a collection of excerpts, but a second look revealed the incredible range of beat sensibility crammed into one volume.

Editor Ann Charters worked with Jack Kerouac in compiling a complete bibliography of his writings and, after his death in 1969, wrote his first biography.

Here, Charters provides biographies for every notable figure in the beat movement, with multiple bios for the progressive phases of durable greats like Kerouac, Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Gary Snyder.

The excerpts from longer works, like Kerouac's "On the Road" and Burroughs' "Naked Lunch," are annoying or tantalizing in their brevity, depending on your point of view, but should serve as representative introductions for newcomers to the style.

The book's merits outweigh its unavoidable compactness: Here you'll find Ginsberg's "Howl," "Kaddish" and "America," complete, as well as the poem that immortalized Lincoln's own "Zero Street," plus over a dozen minor beat figures whose writings are out of print.

Charters also includes writers on the fringe of the movement like Ken Kesey and Charles Bukowski, and in the back adds a healthy list



David Badders/DN

of further reading about the beat writers, beyond the title lists lined up with individual authors.

— Calvin Clinchard

What she thinks

Anthology covers many topics

"Thinking Out Loud"
Anna Quindlen
Random House

Opinions — we all have them. Some shout their opinions from the rooftops. Others prefer



to keep their opinions a private matter. Anna Quindlen is one of those few people who actually gets paid to make her private thoughts public via the printed word.

"Thinking Out Loud" is Quindlen's latest compilation of opinion articles. The articles collected in this book were taken from the op-ed column "Public & Private," which she writes for The New York Times.

Quindlen is a writer, mother, feminist, abortion rights advocate... the list could go on and on.

And in "Public & Private," Quindlen shares her personal thoughts and opinions on virtually everything.

If there is a national crisis happening, her readers can expect to find out her opinion on the matter. If her daughter is having a birthday, her readers can expect an opinion on motherhood, or perhaps even women and the future.

"Thinking Out Loud" is a hodgepodge of articles written between 1990 and 1992. The subject matter ranges from the Persian Gulf War to abortion and women's rights to racial and gay issues — she tackles everything.

"Thinking Out Loud" is not Quindlen's first book of opinions. A book entitled "Living Out Loud" was compiled from her columns of the 1980s. In addition to her two opinion books, she also has written a novel, "Object Lessons" and



Courtesy of Random House

a children's book, "The Tree That Came to Stay." In 1992 she added the Pulitzer Prize for commentary to her list of accomplishments.

"Thinking Out Loud" is very interesting, entertaining and thought-provoking.

Even those who don't agree with Quindlen will be forced to evaluate some of their own opinions and thoughts. This book is definitely worth the time.

— Elaine Clair