



Evening Clouds

Junzo Shono , Wayne P. Lammers (Translator)

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This episodic novel, originally published in Japan in 1964 and appearing for the first time in translation, scrupulously observes one family's experiences getting used to a new home atop a windy hill near Tokyo. As the three children and their parents discuss the intricacies of buying a new desk, or deal with curious centipedes and residential developers who threaten to destroy the surrounding landscape, they accustom themselves to the trials of moving and the necessity of accepting change as the only constant in life. Each section revolves around the observations of father Oura, whose character is loosely based on Shono himself.

Evening Clouds Details

Date : Published June 1st 2000 by Stone Bridge Press (first published 1964)

ISBN : 9781880656488

Author : Junzo Shono , Wayne P. Lammers (Translator)

Format : Paperback 208 pages

Genre : Cultural, Japan, Fiction, Asian Literature, Japanese Literature

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From Reader Review Evening Clouds for online ebook

Lauren says

Reminded me in format of My Neighbors the Yamadas in book form and with a bit less humor and a bit more reflection on nature. It also made me think of the Studio Ghibli movie Pom Poko, about the development of the Tama Hills.

Susa says

I felt Oura's resolution for his life through description of peaceful and non-eventful days. I would keep longing eyes on his world.

David says

I really enjoyed this. There were just a few times, however, that he was a bit too sentimental. Shono's writing about his own family and "Evening Clouds" never really got too far beyond one of those pieces people write every week about their family life for newspaper colour supplements.

"Evening Clouds" has been compared to the films of Yasujiro Ozu. But, perhaps because he didn't have a family of his own, I think Ozu bites harder and is better at avoiding mawk. Classic scene:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gumG54...>

Delphine says

one of my favorite books. A description of family life in an evolving word, this is not an adventure book, unless you are able to appreciate the small movements of life that make being a parent an adventure. I loved reading that book , and have re-read in twice in 3 or 4 years.

Diane Barnes says

3.5 stars, rounded up.

I decided to do something about the unread books on my shelves, so closed my eyes and pulled one out. I'm not sure when or why I bought this one, but I know I got it at a used book sale. I figured I'd give it a try and DNR it if I didn't like it.

I figured out pretty early on that this was the literary equivalent of The Jerry Seinfeld Show - a book about nothing. Little snippets of conversation between family members, mother, father, 3 children. No plot, no drama, no theme, none of the things that normally go into a novel. Nothing ever really happened.....but I kept reading.

And chuckling, because on every page was a part of family life that I recognized and sympathized with. Kids who don't want to wash their faces and brush their teeth, who put off homework til the last minute, who don't know school assignments, who fight with each other. Parents conversations, "What shall we have for dinner?" "Where should we go on vacation?" "Should we worry about our son's attitude?" "What should we plant this spring?"

Yeah, I know, it sounds boring.....but I kept reading.

This book was written in 1964, when I would have been 11 years old. And even though it took place in Japan, half a world away, and more than 50 years ago, it brought to life a world so familiar to me it actually sent me back to growing up in the little southern town of Catsburg, NC. We kids didn't want to brush our teeth or do homework either. Our parents worried about us. Life just plodded along like the action in this book, nothing ever really happened, except that it did. We grew up, our parents grew old. And I finished the book.

I will end this review with a quote from Maya Angelou:

"We are more alike than not, my friend,
we are more alike than not"

Kate says

"The most celebrated work by one of Japan's master literary stylists, *Evening Clouds* is a book filled with delicious images of ordinary life, richly and precisely observed. A family moves into a new home on a windswept hilltop in western Tokyo. Around them are forests and farms. But the developers are coming, and the children are growing up. There are meals, quandaries, conversations ... Life appears comfortable and serene, yet Shono's portrayal has a strange and evocative undercurrent, as the most minute details slowly resonate out through a universe that is changing and unforgiving. *Evening Clouds* combines the crafted naturalism of haiku with the Ozu-like clarity of film to produce a story that is wistful and real. Read Shono slowly, and luxuriate in his vision."

~~back cover

This book is the personification of the amazing range of what readers like, and what speaks most deeply to them. When I had finished reading the book (and it went quite slowly for me because it failed to hold my interest) I was undecided in my opinion -- did I even have an opinion? So I read reviews -- something I don't ordinarily do, preferring to come to my own opinion about what I read. Every one just raved about it. Much to my surprise. After giving it more thought, I realized that the style was meant to mirror the silence and beauty found in meditating, that the book was indeed a kind of meditation: random sketches of various aspects of the life of a Japanese family. In meditation, you're advised to notice thoughts as they arise and then let them slip away. Exactly the pattern and rhythm of these sketches.

But as much as I enjoy meditating, I confess I didn't receive the same comfort and serenity from reading this book. Because I have had little exposure to Japanese culture, I found myself annoyed by the parents' responses to their children and their apparent philosophy of child rearing. I make the assumption that my ignorance of Japanese culture resulted in my not being able to see or appreciate the nuances others could see and appreciate.

It's not a book I can in good conscience I can recommend to other readers, nor is it a book I would have chosen to read left to my own devices (it's a book selected by my online reading group -- each of us chooses a book for the rest of the group to read.) But since so many other readers loved the book, you would be wise to take my lackluster appraisal with a large grain of salt.
