



# Culture and Empathy

International Journal of  
Sociology, Psychology, and Cultural Studies



ISSN: 2635-6619 (Online) Journal homepage: <https://cultureempathy.org/>

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## Book Review: I Used to Like Bookstores

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To cite this article: Oh, I. 2020. "I Used to Like Bookstores." *Culture and Empathy* 3(3-4): 162-163. DOI: 10.32860/26356619/2020/3.34.0008.

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.32860/26356619/2020/3.34.0008>



Published online: 30 Nov 2020.



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## Book Review:

### I Used to Like Book Stores

*Watashi wa Honyaga Sukideshita – Afureru Heito Hon, Tsukutte Uru made no Butaiura* [I used to Like Bookstores: Flooding Hate Books, Behind Stories of Making and Selling Them], by Nagae Akira, Tarōjirōsha Editors, 2019, 251 pages, 978-4-8118-0839-0, 1,760 Yen.

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Nagae Akira is a Japanese free-lance writer on bookstores. He used to work at various bookstores and publishing companies throughout the 1980s and the 1990s. Nagae's new book, *I Used to Like Bookstores: Flooding Hate Books, Behind Stories of Making and Selling Them* (2019), explains why he no longer likes to work for bookstores and publishers. The reason is clearly shown on the cover page of his book: "the overflow of hate books in Japanese bookstores from Okinawa to Hokkaido."

These books are called "hate books" because they mostly deal with hatred towards South Korea, North Korea, China, and Muslims. Like hate speeches and hate crimes, hate books intend to "hurt" Koreans, Chinese, Muslims, and their descendants living in Japan for generations. Instead of "criticizing Korean or Chinese governments, politicians, or policies," these books, Nagae argues, "attack Korean and Chinese ethnic groups" in general as "mediocre, immoral, or biologically condemned." Therefore, these hate books "fan and fuel racist movements in Japan, epitomized by the rise of *Zaitokukai* [Association of Citizens against the Special Privileges of the Korean Residents in Japan]." These books "propagate illusionary and distorted views of Koreans" so that they can lead the Japanese people toward a neo-fascist movement of hurting and assaulting Koreans for wrong reasons.

The book contains interviews with inside people, thus bearing the allusion to and metaphor of "behind stories." To write this book, Nagae has widely interviewed writers, publishers, wholesale distributors, and bookstore retailers. Based on these interviews, Nagae clarifies that most of the hate book readers are "in their 60s or 70s who are mostly male and highly educated." The writers of the hate books are, however, in their 30s and 40s who have living experiences in South Korea or have Korean spouses." Nagae's interviewees confirm that "most of them do not possess any in-depth knowledge of Korea before the 1980s."

Publishers are eager to publish and market these books mainly for economic reasons. The author identifies two types of hate books: hate Korea books and praise Japan books. Nagae also identifies three types of publishers: those who publish any books that sell, including both hate books and Hallyu books; those that publish only hate books because they

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believe in the racist ideology and act together with such racist organizations as *Zaitokukai*; and finally those that take a careful approach to hate books although they nonetheless believe in rightwing ideologies. Therefore, as the hate books are in decline these days despite the revived boom in 2015, the author predicts that the majority publishers will soon shy away from hate book publications. Having said that, the author forewarns that the rightwing publishers who are connected to *Zaitokukai* and other careful rightwing groups will continue to publish hate books until they run out of capital.

The distributors and bookstore owners maintain few choices only, as they are relatively weaker than publishers, unless “they can open up and maintain small specialized bookstores” that refuse to display and sell hate books. Surprisingly though, Nagae could secure a couple of independent bookstore owners who survived without displaying or selling hate books. Their success has mostly been derived from long term commitments to specialized books and their “buffs.”

The book’s climax is when Nagae proclaims that the hate book publishers, especially the minority rightwing zealots, are Japanese Adolf Eichmann’s, the infamous Nazi holocaust organizer who killed more than six million Jews. Nagae believes that these extreme book publishers are actively brainwashing and organizing hate groups against Koreans and Korean Japanese in general. These hate groups are often referred to as “net based rightists [*netto uyo*].” This means that Japanese neofascists began actively organizing themselves on the internet while publishing and selling hate books in bookstores since the turn of the century, when Japan also embraced a mass internet age. These are the neofascists who organized strikes in front of Fuji TV, which aired many Korean TV dramas, and Shin Ōkubo Koreatown. Nagae argues that these hate groups are trying to instill permanent fear among Korean residents in Japan.

Nagae used to work for the same publisher that is publishing and marketing hate books. He also worked for the bookstores that are now shelving the hate books. He feels really depressed about the book media in Japan that is overtaken by the rightwing movement – a reminiscence of the Nazi era.

*Ingyu Oh is Professor of Sociology at Kansai Gaidai University, Osaka, Japan, and the editor of Culture and Empathy. As the former president of the World Association for Hallyu Studies, he has written several articles and books about Korea-Japan relations and Hallyu.*