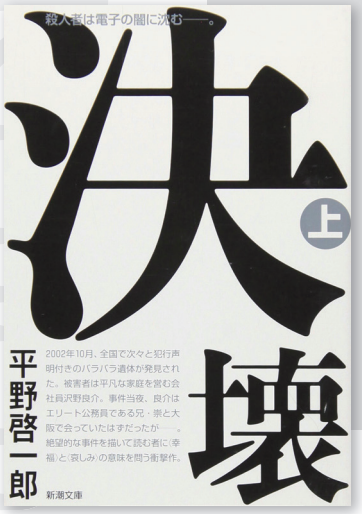

BREACH

Outline / Summary

01

Office worker Ryosuke Sawano, who lives an ordinary existence with his wife in a regional city, keeps an anonymous blog voicing his discontent about his life in comparison with that of his elder brother Takashi, an elite civil servant in Tokyo. Meanwhile, a middle schooler named Tomoya Kitazaki is suffering at the hands of bullies and harboring growing fantasies of murder.

One day, Ryosuke abruptly disappears. Then in October 2002, a dismembered body is discovered along with a note taking responsibility for the murder. The perpetrator calls themselves "The Devil." And the suspect is the brilliant, seemingly unperturbed elite official and elder brother of the victim, Takashi Sawano....

The reader is confronted with a plethora of issues. Who is The Devil? What does it mean to withdraw from society? An unending string of murders. Truths brought to light. And Tokyo caught in a storm of terrorism.

The questions continue. Why do people kill others? What does it mean to forgive? And when something truly unforgivable happens, how should people act?

With its twin themes of murder and forgiveness, this longform novel is a shocking, unflinching look at the loneliness of contemporary life

Agent comments

02

This work is an utterly uncompromising investigation of a critical moment in history at the turn of the twenty-first century, with the coincidental advent of cyberspace and the September 11 terrorist attacks. Hirano brings to bear his trademark multilayered portrayal of issues in present-day society, this time focusing on such topics as the disempowerment of knowledge, the phenomenon of suicide bombings, and how mass media propagates violence, with the central literary question in *Breach* being the very nature of evil. He anticipates with a remarkable level of detail the potential state of the world to come.

The devastating conclusion to the novel, which relentlessly depicts the disintegration both of a family and of the idea of the "individual" itself, has provoked fierce debate among readers from the time the work first appeared, in serial form, in Shincho magazine. The human portrayals in Breach represent Hirano's early forays into what was to become his signature concept of "dividualism."

Book Information

List of awards | Awarded 59th Education, Science and Technology Minster's Art Encouragement Prize for New Writers

Genre | Literary fiction

Originally published in Japan by | SHINCHOSHA Publishing Co., Ltd.

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First publication | Published serially in Shincho magazine in the November 2006 through April 2008 issues

Book editions | Hardback: June 26, 2008 Paperback: May 28, 2011

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Keiichiro Hirano

Hirano was born in 1975. In 1999 at the tender age of 23, while still studying at Kyoto University, he was awarded the Akutagawa Prize, Japan's most prestigious literary award, for the work *Nisshoku [Eclipse]*, first published in the literary magazine Shincho. His novel became a bestseller, selling 400,000 copies, and he was hailed as the new Yukio Mishima. To date he has published 15 works, many award-winning, across a wide range of genres and each with its own style. In 2004, he spent a year in Paris as a Cultural Ambassador for the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs. Recognizing his extensive knowledge of fine art and music as well as literature, France made him a Chevalier des Artes et des Lettres in 2014.

His elegant, pellucid prose fashions stories that are multilayered in their portrayal of current social issues yet plotted as compelling page-turners. Hirano focuses squarely on the lifestyles and identities of modern-day people, bringing to his novels in equal measure an acute critique of society and a profound literariness.

The many films and drama series based on Hirano's works have been nominated for awards both within and outside Japan. He has secured his place among Japan's most recognized contemporary novelists, with not only best-sellers across the board but also a seat on the committee deciding the annual Akutagawa Award that he himself won so early in his career.

Now transcending national borders, Hirano has been translated numerous times. So far two of his novels have appeared in English translation, beginning with *A MAN* in 2020 and followed by *At the End of the Matinee* in 2021. *A MAN* alone has received over 3,500 online reviews with a high average score of 4.2 out of five, and seen good sales. Translations of his works have also been published in French via Actes Sud Editions, and in German via Suhrkamp Verlag, among other languages.

Official site Twitter Instagram

CORK

Agent profile

One of the few literary agencies in Japan representing both novelists and manga artists, with a client list spanning novelists such as Keiichiro Hirano and mangaka including Moyoco Anno, Chuya Koyama (Space Brothers), and Norifusa Mita (Dragon Zakura). CORK provides a suite of services including book production and unified rights management.