



Onibi : Carnets du Japon invisible

Cécile Brun , Olivier Pichard

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Cachés au bord d'un sentier de campagne ou à l'ombre d'un temple, les esprits japonais, renards, tanuki et autres yokai guettent le voyageur égaré dans l'espoir de lui jouer des tours. Cécile et Olivier, fraîchement installés en bordure de la mer du Japon à Niigata, achètent un vieil appareil un peu spécial censé imprimer ces esprits sur la pellicule. Dans leur quête pour les prendre en photo, ils dressent le portrait d'un Japon en équilibre entre deux mondes.

Malgré la modernisation du pays, les Japonais continuent souvent à prendre les histoires de fantômes très au sérieux. Les histoires de yokai et autres esprits restent présentes et ancrées dans le folklore populaire.

Onibi : Carnets du Japon invisible Details

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From Reader Review Onibi : Carnets du Japon invisible for online ebook

Mehsi says

Come with Cécile and Olivier as they travel through Japan, finding hidden spots that may have youkai!

I was super-excited about this book. Japan is on a shared number 1 (along with Venice and Egypt) spot of places I want to go to really badly. So naturally I had to have this book which combined travelling through Japan and finding + photographing Youkai.

The book is separated in parts, namely a prologue and then for each Youkai picture. I really loved that they went for this format, now each photograph got the attention it deserved, plus it wasn't chaos of figuring out where what photograph belonged to again (which it would have been if it was just one big continuous story).

Our duo wasn't even planning to go hunting for Youkai but they get (or I should say Cécile got) a very special camera that apparently allows the user to make pictures of Youkai. I loved that while Olivier was a bit shocked at that Cécile bought that camera, he was all the more eager to help out with finding Youkai. :P

In each part they go to a certain part of Japan and I just adored seeing forests, shrines, mascots, parades, seashores, eventually heading to the place where the camera was created (and with it apparently others). I also can't forget the food, we also get plenty of yummy food that made (and makes as I still need to eat breakfast as I type this) my tummy rumble.

I have to say I expected a bit of twist regarding the owners of Margutta. The way our duo talked about them made it seem like they are some kind of magical beings that lured people to their place. So I was more than prepared for them to appear as Youkai when/if Cécile was going to take a picture. But they were just humans who cared deeply about others and made people feel comfortable and happy, thus having them stay.

I loved the extra bits, like the instruction for the camera (and how to photograph Youkai) and the how to get Youkai out of a film (as they don't just show up instantly).

The ending was OK, I am glad that we got that final shot, even though it was just a dream-sequence. I guess the Youkai also wanted to say goodbye to our duo.

The art was fabulous, it was the third thing that drew me to the book. That cover was just amazing, but I can tell you that the inside is just as gorgeous and pretty. At times I was just staring at a page for a bit longer than normal, just because it was so nicely drawn with tiny little details.

All in all, a fantastic book that I would highly recommend. I could probably talk about it for a bit longer, but I don't want to make my review too long.

Review first posted at <https://twirlingbookprincess.com/>

Vicky Reads MG says

Ugh. What a disappointment. The promised story, two French best friends vacationing in Japan who, after

buying a camera that can capture images of yokai —supernatural creatures— , travel around Japan in search of stories about them and to witness the creatures for themselves. Japan has a rich tapestry of legends and folklore that **Onibi: Diary of a Yokai Ghost Hunter** could've threaded into the plot. This book could've been an incredibly potent look at folklore and legends and the creatures that contribute to the magic and mystery of Japan. Unfortunately **Onibi: Diary of a Yokai Ghost Hunter** is a **disjointed, fragmented series of pointless, plotless vignettes** any semblance of a narrative is nonexistent and the vignettes end abruptly. There's no pay off or satisfaction to be had from this book. It's frustrating how slow and scattered the stories are and it baffles me how the authors managed to screw up what could've been a really compelling and exciting story. They had SO MUCH to work with. Instead they offer measly crumbs of what could be.

The reason I give **Onibi: Diary of a Yokai Ghost Hunter** an extra star is for the art alone. The drawings are quite interesting, unlike what I've seen in graphic novels so far. The watercolourish look and texture also makes these drawings stand out on the page. It's just such a bummer that there was no solid story to go with them.

Not recommended

Dewi says

Buku ini menarik. Gabungan antara travelogue dan fantasi. Semoga fantasi beneran hehehehe. Cécile dan Olivier menulis dan menggambarkan Onibi berdasarkan cerita perjalanan mereka ke Niigata. Cécile membeli kamera kuno yang konon bisa merekam yokai alias roh halus. Saya sebut roh halus dan bukan hantu. Ada makna yang berbeda bagi saya. Hantu itu kesannya mengganggu. Mereka memakai teknik manual dalam menggambar : pensil warna dan cat air. Demikian pula dengan memproses negatif film. Ada khas horor Asia di sini : tidak perlu muncul dalam sosok yang menakutkan, cukup sesuatu yang hadir dalam diam namun membuat jantung berdebar.

Travis says

Generally a fun book. It really captures the look and feel of the more rural areas of Japan, and is enjoyably familiar for that. And the people also have a familiar feel with their random enthusiasm for taking visitors under their wing and showing them around. The art is nice, and reminiscent of manga in its style, but also distinct, which feels appropriate for the story.

But the book also feels a bit weird in ways. It is a sort of fantasy adaptation of the authors' real travels; I think that fictionalized autobiography is already sort of weird, and this takes it up another notch. And while the authors as they appear in the story seem to be almost children, or more probably young adults or late teens, the goodreads biography of one, Cécile, appears to indicate that she was born in 1960; of course, having two middle aged French people hunting after ghosts and monsters in Japan would have a very different flavor. But why even fictionalize it? Near the end of the book there is a spread of apparent memorabilia from the actual trip that inspired this work, showing photos, sketches, brochures, and the like, and there are several pages from what is apparently a diary with cute illustrations; sadly, it is in French, but I think it would be fun to read a translated version of it.

And on the matter of translation, apparently the original French subtitle would be something like "Diary of Invisible Japan" which seems like a perfectly good title, so I don't really get why it was changed. And the English title is odd since it says "hunter", singular, while there are two main characters who travel together, and it is never clear whose diary it is supposed to be. And why "yokai ghost hunter"? Yokai is not a modifier, it is a Japanese word that means ghost, apparition, or monster, so the English title is "Diary of an Apparition Ghost Hunter", which just sounds stupid. I can guess at the thinking behind the title, a way of giving it a Japanese flavor while also making it clear to an ignorant English speaking audience what it is about; but if you are going to include a foreign word in a title, why not assume the audience knows what it means, or can figure it out for themselves?

One final thought: at the very end they include a section about developing pictures of yokai. I don't know much about the development process (and really, who even has *access* to film anymore these days), but my assumption is that the method they lay out would work, but also adds errors and distortions which could be taken as signs of ghosts. (While the photos at the end of each chapter appear to be modified by more deliberate and conventional means, like photoshop)

Diana says

A very calming and atmospheric story. The choice of style and color carries a haunting air, and the short, normal life but subtly mysterious, tales convey wonder and a build up of gentle emotion for the last story.

Ben says

An engaging story with an appealing quirkiness (some of which might be due to the translation), and an illustration style I really dig. I'll be on the lookout for more from this duo.

Jenny Staller says

Once again, I made the mistake of judging a book by its cover. The artwork on the cover was appealing and the description--two foreigners with a magical camera hunt for yokai (Japanese spirits)--seemed unique and exciting. Unfortunately, the story was very fragmented; instead of being a linear story, the book is a series of vignettes about stories these travelers heard (or dreams they had) about yokai. The "magical camera" isn't really magic at all, it's just a plot device to get the protagonists to talk to locals and listen to their tales about spirits. The characters themselves are completely flat and have no defining traits or interesting qualities to make them memorable. On the positive side, the artwork was nice and the pictures and descriptions made me really hungry for Japanese food.

Laura says

Disappointing. I liked the art and colors, but the story was fragmented and stuttery without any satisfaction or pull.

Amanda says

This was charming and the art is very lovely. A fun, slightly spooky adventure.

Carnet-Plume says

Je suis absolument fan des carnets de voyage mais en plus si la destination est le Japon... mama ! On découvre ce pays et ses petits villages qui regorgent de légendes magiques. Pour ceux qui rêvent de cette destination, vous serez aux anges !

J'ai adoré la complicité des deux personnages et les petites touches d'humour qui rendent la lecture très agréable. Les rencontres qu'ils sont menés à faire sont tout aussi touchantes qu'attachantes. On se rend compte qu'échanger avec les autres nous permet de nous enrichir toujours plus...

Par contre, j'ai moins apprécié la patte graphique. Enfin... ce n'est pas vraiment mon style car la qualité graphique est bien là. Les couleurs sont un peu trop primaires par exemple. C'est simplement une affaire de goût car cela ne m'a pas empêché de m'évader au Japon pendant ma lecture. En revanche, les photos prises des Yokai sont bluffantes !

Si vous avez envie de partir, de vous évader au Japon et de découvrir les Yokai par la même occasion, je ne peux que vous conseiller cette bande dessinée ? !

Carnet-plume.fr

Uma says

SO CUTE

Lenny says

A few months ago, I spent two incredible weeks in Japan. It was my first time there, and even though I've wanted to go to Japan since I was very young (blame my anime obsession), it was far beyond my wildest expectations. Japan is an incredibly beautiful country, from its forests and mountains and beaches, to its mind-blowing architecture, shrines, statues and temples. Its people are gracious and friendly and its food is unmatched. I just love Japan.

So it was with no small amount of nostalgia and excitement that I picked up Onibi: Diary of a Yokai Ghost Hunter, by French artists Cecile Brun and Olivier Pichard, who also appear in our story as the main protagonists.

The book follows French gaijin (foreigners) Cecile and Olivier as they live in a small village in Japan over the course of several months. Cecile becomes enamored with a plastic film camera that, she is told, can

capture not only this world, but also yokai, supernatural beings who like to play tricks on humans. The graphic novel is separated into several vignettes, one for each photograph (the special roll only allows for eight pictures) as Cecile and Olivier travel around Japan in search of yokai.

First thing's first: the artwork is gorgeous, as one would hope and expect from two artist creators. Using largely watercolors and colored pencils, Brun and Pichard effortlessly capture the beauty of Japan not only in its stunning vistas but also its shopping marts, trams and alleyways. Because the writers are also the characters, it stands to reason that Brun and Pichard have lived in this area of Japan, and it's refreshing to see a part of the country that isn't Tokyo and Kyoto (though perhaps problematic from a writing point of view, more on that later). Small details aren't overlooked, like the way that everything comes neatly packaged and in a plastic bag (but good luck finding a trash bin outside your hotel room!), train and bus timetables, the gorgeous food presentations, and how Japanese schoolgirls love to have things dangling from their cellphones.

Cecile and Olivier are portrayed with a more chibi anime style, while the Japanese people they encounter – mostly older folks – have a sketchier colored pencil look (which, while well drawn, sometimes made them look creepy). On the other hand, the photographs with yokai and other mysterious beings are more photorealistic, which is jarring, perhaps proves the camera does what the salesman says, and blurs the line between fictional story and nonfiction travelogue. Speaking of which, the art is so calming and lovely that the supernatural elements come across as spiritual and playful, and are only melancholy in one vignette, when our characters visit Osorezan, a place for mourners who have lost children.

While the art was lovely, the story itself left a lot to be desired. Even if the main characters are based on Brun and Pichard, we don't know anything about them when we begin the book, and that's still true at the final page.

Here is a quick list of the things we don't know about Cecile and Olivier from least to most important:

- what kind of jobs (if any) allow them to take such a long trip – especially when said trip was booked for them by mistake!
- if said trip was by mistake, what makes them stay for several months instead of a quick visit
- when they started coming to Japan (because they know the country very well and seem fluent in Japanese), why they choose to travel to Japan over any other country (I mean look you don't have to convince me, I'm talking more about for character reasons)
- if Cecile and Olivier are dating, committed partners, or married (they could also be friends, though we see them sharing a mattress in one panel)
- anything about Cecile and Olivier's relationship
- strong personality differences between Cecile and Olivier

This is a pretty big list. Throughout the book, Cecile and Olivier don't really seem like characters – to use a photography metaphor, they're more like the lens through which we are experiencing the story. We don't really know anything about Cecile and Olivier, what they're doing in Japan, and why they are drawn to using the camera during the trip. (I'm tempted to think they're rich, if they can take months at a time off, and spend 100,000 yen (about \$100) on a plastic camera and not be upset if multiple people tell you it's a toy.) Perhaps if Cecile was really into capturing spiritual beings and Olivier thought it was a tourist trap or just silly superstition, and she wanted to go places that conflicted with their original agenda, it would have created some conflict and revealed important aspects about their relationship. The relationship doesn't have to be the point of the story, but some character development or relationship building would have kept me far more invested in the story. Otherwise...who cares?

If Cecile and Olivier are the lens, maybe the point of the story is the yokai and the spiritual nature of Japan. Unfortunately, that doesn't really fly, because the yokai aren't really characters either. Cecile and Olivier often take pictures of empty air, and while the reader sees the photograph at the end of each vignette, our characters have to wait until the film is processed (yes young'uns, that's how film works). There is one instance of a mysterious stranger who is a yokai, but we don't spend any time getting to know him; and between eight vignettes there isn't enough time to fully explore the folktales and spirituality of Japan. If the yokai do play some tricks on Cecile and Olivier, perhaps with some dreams as well as a little trickery at the end with Cecile's camera, which is nice, we don't know their motivations and they don't seem much like characters.

That leaves us with our final option: Japan is the main character of the story. And there is slightly more evidence for this point, but it's still not enough. Visually, you will probably want to visit Japan after this, and explore more than just the usual tourist destinations. In one vignette towards the end, a Japanese local takes Cecile and Olivier to tour a 19th century home. He muses that seeing the old home next to the city feels like "two cities superimposed" on one another, and perhaps this is what the yokai see. This is a lovely representation of Japan, because it really did feel that way when I was there – some lovely Japanese folks I befriended one night took me to a quiet shrine in the middle of Shinjuku, an area of Tokyo, which was literally right next to a hopping bar area. It can feel extremely jarring, with the city's ancient roots right up against the modern cutting edge. But it also feels like Japan values its roots and spiritual heritage, and refuses to let go, even if sometimes old and new values are at odds with one another.

However, these one or two lines of dialogue can't support the entire story. It's left there and never returns. Moreover, Olivier and Cecile seem dead set on avoiding any of the huge cities – Kyoto, Osaka, Tokyo, or any of the smaller ones. They really only interact with older Japanese people, and not with anyone their own age. The "new Japan" is simply ignored. It would have been fascinating for them to find yokai in the middle of Tokyo, and see if perhaps the yokai play tricks on young Japanese in the middle of the city, to remind them that the old Japan still exists and is valuable.

This is only compounded by the fact that the English translation (from the original French) is not only awkward at times, but impedes the story. In the third vignette, we think Cecile and Olivier are experiencing the lantern festival, and then Olivier wakes up, implying it was a dream, but the language is unclear. Even the cover says "Diary of a Yokai Ghost Hunter," yet Olivier and Cecile are hunting them together. Moreover, when Olivier and Cecile speak with Japanese locals, they communicate perfectly, and Cecile deciphers kanji, written Japanese too. Do they know Japanese fluently? It's not an easy language to learn and French isn't even closely related. Once again, they clearly know Japan very well, but to speak fluently is at another level. When a few schoolgirls interrupt them and call them American, why don't the two French tourists correct them? Sometimes I suspected that the translation was trying to trick the English readers into thinking this wasn't a translation, which does a huge disservice to the reader. We should appreciate foreign art and entertainment, and not be scared away by it.

Onibi is a light read with beautiful art that will either get you all nostalgic (and hungry) about Japan, or it's a wonderful choice for someone preparing for a visit to the country. However, even with an interesting premise, Brun and Prichard miss the boat on what could have been a fascinating and moving story about their characters, and the beautiful meeting of contradictions that is Japan.

For more reviews please check out my blog, Reading Art!

Erik This Kid Reviews Books says

This is a stunning graphic novel. It is a subtle introduction to Japanese culture, as the characters are traveling through the country in search of yokai (ghosts). You see Japanese folklore woven into more modern settings. The plot is straightforward, but demands the readers attention due to the gorgeous pencil and watercolor artwork.

I thought the concept of discovering ghosts and the spiritual world through an old camera was cool. The the story is interesting and will appeal to kids and adults. There are actually 8 different stories in the book – each about a different travel and encounter with a different yokai. There is even a part in the back where you are told how to develop your own film using household ingredients to see yokai This one is definitely going on my to be read again shelf! Please note I received a free review copy of this book

Paige says

Cute little book about traveling and yokai, what could be better?

Kirsten says

This is so pretty! Two tourists in Japan buy a supposed special camera that can capture images of the supernatural. They explore the countryside, but don't find any ghosts -- or do they?

Beautiful art and a fun, episodic story make this a rewarding afternoon read.
