

Hinako Abe

translated by Jeffrey Angles

Reflective Optic Chamber

A revolving device for observation, divided into six small chambers, each lined with mirrors

For Shibusawa Tatsuhiko

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| 1 st CHAMBER | The Egg in the Thicket | Its origin, an emerald lentil spilled from its hull – or perhaps a jade ginkgo nut used by the field mice for their games? A pale blue-green egg left in a thicket. |
| 2 nd CHAMBER | The Ruined Garden in Green | Silken wings pleated upon the back of a lizard born in May from the egg that was not really an egg. In the shade of an Angelica leaf, a metamorphosis takes place. Winged membranes oiled by the color of the leaves. |
| 3 rd CHAMBER | The Child's Room | A bronze bed serves as dissection table. Each night, Prokrustes is called to slice the wings from the child's back. |
| 4 th CHAMBER | The Specimen Room | “The child's neck smells like a butterfly...” An angel with unfurling wings that span seventy centimeters wide. |
| 5 th CHAMBER | The Book Depository | Library of the Fallen Angel. A hole leading into the office of the Sacred Agency charged with establishing a catalog of banned books. Inside the hole, a darkness as black as the opening of a fallopian tube. |
| 6 th CHAMBER | The Never Ending Staircase | In a fiery breath, brilliantly clad legs climb the marble staircase that stretches upward like a serpent's stomach. Gathering the speed provided by the laws of perspective, the kind angel dashes onward, growing smaller and fainter. |

Abe Hinako was born in 1953 in Tokyo. In 1983, while working as a proofreader, she started writing poetry on the side. Her first book, *Shokuminshi no Chikei* (Topography of a Colonial City) (Shichigatsudo, 1989) won the Rekitei New Poets Prize. Other collections include *Tenga na Ikidoori* (Graceful Indignance) (Shoshi Yamada, 1994), and *Umiyoubi no Onnatachi* (Women on Seaday) (Shoshi Yamada, 2001), which won the Takami Jun Prize.

Jeffrey Angles (b. 1971) recently completed a dissertation on expressions of same-sex desire in the literature of Murayama Kaita and Edogawa Ranpo, two Japanese writers active in the early twentieth century. He currently teaches Japanese literature at Western Michigan University, and is in the process of preparing a book of translations of Tada Chimako's poetry.