

Tokyo, 1990

by Phyllis Chesler



Dr. Kiyomi Kawano translated *Women and Madness* into Japanese. She also founded the first feminist therapy clinic in Tokyo and invited me to speak there. I arrived after about fourteen hours in the air, dazed and sleepless. Nevertheless, a very friendly delegation met me at the airport and whisked me off to dinner at Tokyo's latest sensation—its first-ever Chinese restaurant. I tried hard not to nod off into my soup.

I did not expect so many coffee shops in Tokyo. I'd forgotten that foreign sailors had introduced them and that the Japanese, so fond of tea, also drink coffee from Africa, the Middle East, and South America. As I walked around the city, I saw the occasional male Samurai in full Japanese formal dress, a gray kimono. I also visited the timeless, mist-shrouded countryside dotted with Buddhist temples.

After my lecture, my hosts held a party for me. Perhaps, I thought, the Japanese always celebrate their lecturers—but I was wrong. Somehow, these feminists knew that it was my birthday. They surprised me with twenty bouquets of moist, wondrous flowers and a flamenco guitarist. One woman explained: “In case you’re homesick, we saw how close Spain is on the map to New York, and we wanted to cheer you up with familiar music.”

They were so loving, so well meaning. All I could do was thank them. I may also have said: “How ever did you know that I love Spanish guitar music?”