

JAPANESE LITERATURE

The Conventions of Courtly Love

The excerpts in this first section all center on the tradition of courtly love as it developed in literature of the Nara (710–784) and Heian (794–1185) periods. Early poetry collections such as the *Man'yōshū* and *Kokinshū* witnessed the appearance of conventional narrative/motifs for portraying a (typically doomed) love affair at the imperial court. These conventions were refined during the Heian period, most notably with Murasaki Shikibu's endlessly inventive recasting of the tradition throughout her fifty-two-chapter *The Tale of Genji*. Finally, Sei Shōnagon's *Pillow Book* satirizes the tradition of courtly love in passages that have not lost their freshness—or bite—in the thousand years since she recorded them. (Don't miss the inept lover who stumbles about muttering the Heian equivalent of "Where are my socks?")

- *Man'yōshū* "Your basket..." (33), "In the sea of Iwami...", (34–5), "On the occasion of the temporary enshrinement of Princess Asuka" (36–7), "After the death of his wife" (37–40), Three poems by Lady Kasa (41), "A dialogue on poverty" (46–8), "Dialogue poems" (52). In *Anthology of Japanese Literature: From the Earliest Era to the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, edited by Donald Keene. New York: Grove Press, 1955.
- ARIWARA Narihira, poems 410–11, 476, 616, 622, 632, 644, 706–07, 747, and 884. In *Kokin Wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Poetry*, translated by Helen Craig McCullough. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985.
- ONO no Komachi, poems 113, 552–54, 623, 656–57, 727, 782, 797, 822, 1030. In *Kokin Wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Poetry*, translated by Helen Craig McCullough. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985.
- MURASAKI Shikibu. "Introduction: A Short Summary of the Tale," and "Chapter 4: Twilight Beauty." In *The Tale of Genji*, translated and introduction by Royall Tyler. New York: Viking, 2001.
- SEI Shōnagon. Sections 1, 12, 14, 30–31, 45–48, 62–63, 101–02, 112–14. In *The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon*, translated by Ivan Morris. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Buddhist Themes in Medieval and Edo Literature

Our second lecture focuses on Buddhist themes as they appear in the medieval era (1185–1600) and the Edo period (1600–1868). We will look at 4 themes: 1) reincarnation; 2) karmic retribution; 3) the impermanence of all things; and 4) salvation through devotion to the Buddha/Buddhist doctrine. Be also on the lookout for a subtheme of #3 (the uncertainty of the world) that led to the inclusion of startlingly secular passages in some of our texts!

- *Japanese Tales*, translated by Royall Tyler, stories 65, 105, 107, 115–7, 133, 146–9. New York: Pantheon, 1987.
- *Tales of Times Now Past: Sixty-Two Stories from a Medieval Japanese Collection*, translated by Marian Ury, stories 15, 22, 23, and 31. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.
- *The Tale of the Heike*, in *Genji and Heike: Selections from the Tale of Genji and The Tale of Heike*, translated by Helen Craig McCullough, episodes 1.1, 1.6, 6.7, 9.12. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.
- YOSHIDA Kenkō. “Essays in Idleness,” sections 7, 25, 74, 82, 122, 137, 145, 149, 166, 189, 211. In *Classical Japanese Prose*, translated by Helen Craig McCullough. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.
- MATSUO Bashō: “The Narrow Road to the Deep North,” p. 117–123. In *The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches*, translated by Yuasa Nobuyuki. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966.

Psychological “Realism” in Modern Japanese Literature

The first modern lecture deals with three stages of psychological “realism,” one of the prominent trends in literature from the Meiji period (1868–1912) to the present. In the texts of Meiji writer Natsume Sōseki, psychological “realism” appears as **literary revision** of the “idealized” mental struggles portrayed in traditional literature. Authors such as Shiga Naoya later reinvented psychological “realism” as a **literary style**, with their creation of the stream-of-consciousness “I-novel.” Finally, literature after World War II initiated a new phase of psychological “realism” as **social critique**. Contemporary female authors, such as Takahashi Takako and Makino Eri, are notable for taking advantage of this latest incarnation of psychological “realism” to critically assess the institution of motherhood.

- NATSUME Sōseki. *Kokoro*, translated by Edwin McClellan. Washington, D.C.: Regency Publishing, 1957.
- SHIGA Naoya. “For Grandmother.” p. 129–137 in *The Shiga Hero*, translated and edited by William Sibley. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
- DAZAI Osamu. “A Sound of Hammering,” translated by Frank T. Motofuji. In *Japan Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1969): 194–202.

- TAKAHASHI Takako. "Congruent Figures." In *Japanese Women Writers: Twentieth Century Short Fiction*, edited by Noriko Mizuta Lippit and Kyoko Iriye Selden, p. 169–193. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1991.
- MAKINO Eri. "Sproing!" In *Monkey Brain Sushi: New Tastes in Japanese Fiction*, edited by Alfred Birnbaum, p. 29–48. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1991.

Modern Japanese Fantasy

Our final section on Japan ends with a discussion of Japanese fantasy literature. We begin with texts that adapt familiar conventions from Western science fiction, such as Rampo's "Hell of Mirrors" and Tsutsui's "Standing Woman." We then continue with stories that derive their fantastic elements from early Japanese prototypes. For example, Akutagawa's "The Spider's Thread" references supernatural folklore, while Enchi's "A Bond of Two Lifetimes—Gleanings" delivers an unexpectedly feminist message through its rewriting of a Buddhist miracle tale.

- EDOGAWA Rampo. "The Hell of Mirrors." In *Japanese Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, translated by James Harris, p. 109–122. Rutland, VT.: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1956.
- TSUTSUI Yasutaka. "Standing Woman." In *The Best Japanese Science Fiction Stories*, edited by John L. Apostolou, p. 130–143. New York: Dembner Books, 1989.
- KINOSHITA Junji, "The Twilight Crane." p. 131–159 in *Playbook: Five Plays for a New Theatre*. Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1956.
- AKUTAGAWA Ryūnosuke. "The Spider's Thread." In *Japanese Short Stories*, translated by Kojima Takashi, p. 187–192. New York: Liveright, 1962.
- ENCHI Fumiko. "A Bond for Two Lifetimes—Gleanings." In *Rabbits, Crabs, Etc. Stories by Japanese Women*, translated by Phyllis Birnbaum, p. 27–47. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1982.