

## BOOK REVIEWS

Saiichi Maruya 丸谷才一. *Koi to Onna to Nihon Bungaku, Onna no Sukuware* 『恋と女と日本文学・女の救はれ』 (*Love, Women, and Japanese Literature: The Salvation of Women*). Tokyo: Kodansha Bungei Bunko (Japanese), 2013. 192 Pp.

The well-known author Saiichi Maruya was also recognized as a scholar of modern British and Irish literature; he translated James Joyce's *Ulysses*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat (To Say Nothing of the Dog)* and others, but perhaps first among his contributions are his critical works and essays putting forth his theory that Japanese literature began with *waka*, a traditional poetic form, during the Heian Period (from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries). *Koi to Onna to Nihon Bungaku, Onna no Sukuware* (『恋と女と日本文学・女の救はれ』, *Love, Women, and Japanese Literature, The Salvation of Women*) is a work of Japanese literary criticism that discusses why the Japanese, since early times, have loved romantic stories, and illustrates a marriage ritual in which a man goes to a woman's house to give her words of love in the form of *waka* and finally proposes marriage. The excellent *waka* considerably appeals to the woman to a greater degree. This discussion of the marriage ritual, called *tsumadoi-kon* or *kayoi-kon*, deserves considerable praise.

Although the Japanese took much of their political system and culture from the Tang Dynasty through Japanese missions to Tang China (Kentōshi), from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, they did not learn romance literature, an integral element in the history of Japanese literature source. In China, romances were out of favor, especially those concerning unmarried couples, due to the influence of Confucian philosophy, while Japan created its own new literary form. In Chinese literature, romantic stories between husbands and wives and detailing love affairs with prostitute were permitted, as they did not appear to cause direct damage to the marriage system. Therefore, luscious stories that dealt with love between unmarried couples, such as *Jin Ping Mei (The Golden Lotus)*, were relegated to a second-class status. Maruya claimed that the marriage ritual of a man proposing to a woman, especially in matrilineal societies, occurred not only in Japan but also in other countries. James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* cited the Pipiles in Central America and the Peruvian Indians as illustrations of other cultures having a similar marriage ritual. The author also found examples of this ritual in

Japanese mythology, including from the *Kojiki* (『古事記』, *Records of Ancient Matters*) and the *Nihon Shoki* (『日本書紀』, *The Oldest Chronicles of Japan*), which were both compiled in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. He described the characters in Japanese mythology not as immortal beings, like the Greek gods, but as human-like entities. There are many stories in Japanese mythology that exemplify the matrilineal tradition, in which the princess inherits the property and not the prince. For example, Prince Susano-o, the son of a god, was exiled from Takaamahara where the heavenly gods lived, because his elder sister Amaterasu was chosen to take over the house. Then, Susano-o went to Izumo (which is now the province of Chugoku) and killed Yamata no Orochi, the eight-headed giant snake, and married Kushinada-hime, a goddess in Izumo. In the matrilineal society depicted, all men must find their partners in a strange land. Maruya noted that even the gods in Japan followed this matrilineal tradition, which provides a key to understanding Japanese identity.

Japanese gods based on Shinto resemble ancient Greek deities more than the Christian God. Japanese Shinto is a polytheism that worships multiple deities. Each god has a particular realm where he or she holds sway, and there are vivid stories of these gods written by talented story writers. This marriage ritual, in which a man asks a woman in a strange land to marry him, resembles the tradition of courtly love in Europe, a medieval literary expression of love, invented by troubadours in Provence in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. This was a great invention of Europeans, according to Maruya. A typical story has a man, usually a heroic knight who falls deeply in love with a married woman. He blindly obeys her commands, even if being treated cruelly by her. However, his love is never accomplished. Although for a long time, the Japanese did not know any foreign cultures apart from the Chinese, they easily assimilated European literature beginning in the Meiji Era, because they had a similar conception of love to that of Europeans. Within 40 years after the beginning of the Meiji Era, European literary works such as those of Shakespeare and Jane Austen were rapidly imported and translated into Japanese. Maruya gives examples from Japanese classical literature to illustrate the form of romance, including samples of *waka*, mythology from the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki*, as well as European ethnological and critical works such as Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. Maruya's works clearly reveal the relationship between romance and matrilineal society.

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