

## BOOK REVIEWS

of the era. However, not many scholars, until the writing of this book, had an understanding of these connections, their ideological character, and their historical context.

The editors divide the book into four parts which total fifteen chapters. Part One addresses the question regarding the involvement of Zen Buddhist figures in Japanese nationalism. The chapters all concern the conflict between Zen Buddhists' emphasis on the absolute and their active involvement in support of Japan during the war. However, the conclusions of these chapters vary dramatically on occasion—differences that can be useful in the classroom. For example, Robert Sharf argues that the Zen of figures such as D. T. Suzuki is a twentieth century construct that is both ahistorical and nationalistic in character. Kirita Kiyohide, based on an extensive examination of Suzuki's letters and writings, comes to the conclusion that, given the times, Suzuki did what he was capable of to undermine Japanese militarism and its activist ideology. Sharf's study gives teachers an occasion to illustrate the Western underpinnings of some of the notions emphasized in popular Zen. At the same time, Kirita gives teachers as well as students an opportunity to explore the immediate context within which Suzuki wrote; it is clear that Suzuki had nationalistic leanings, but what was the ideological position of Suzuki vis-à-vis the constrained political and intellectual atmosphere of prewar Japan? Knowledge of Suzuki's praise of Japanese spirituality, on the one hand, and of his veiled criticisms of the military establishment and State Shinto, on the other, will help to problematize the figure of Suzuki for everyone in the classroom.

Parts Two to Four analyze questions concerning the connection between the thought of Kyōto school philosophers and nationalism but also their association of the war with the effort to overcome Western modernity. It is in these sections that the difficulties of disentangling Japanese nationalism from the effort to overcome Western imperialism become most apparent. Indeed, we might say that Parts Two to Four constitute the real core of the book, and offer the most grist for the classroom mill, because they present with both intellectual rigor and candor the variety of opinions regarding the nationalistic leanings of the Kyōto school. Part Two explores the variety of views on the connections between Nishida Kitarō, father of the Kyōto school of philosophy, and Japanese nationalism.

Part Three raises the book to a new level of cross-cultural and historical complexity by exploring the processes by which Japanese intellectuals of the early twentieth century attempted to articulate an East Asian alternative to Occidental views of the world and statehood. Given the ongoing debates about the problem of post-modernism, the idea that the Japanese attempted to resist the hegemony of Western ideas of modernity should prove a source of lively discussion; so should the apparent ease with which many of them reformulated such ideas to justify their belief in Japanese uniqueness and supremacy.

The final part of the book highlights case studies that pursue in even greater depth the specific character of the nationalistic concerns of members of the Kyōto school of philosophy. The chapter by John C. Maraldo that concludes the book is arguably its best, drawing our attention to what he argues are distinctions between the forms of nationalism in the thought of D. T. Suzuki, Abe Masao, and Nishitani Keiji. Indeed, as he claims, the rhetorical impact of their anti-government texts reveals their nationalism irrespective of their authorial intention: "Criticisms of nationalism, even with the

best of intentions, can display a nationalistic side of their own when considered in the context of the effects they produce" (361). Suzuki and Abe with their "cultural nationalism," Nishitani with his "globalist nationalism": each of these figures in his own way criticized what he saw as the wrong form of nationalism, not its inherent evil.

This book, ideal for use in courses in politics, religion, philosophy, and cultural studies, constitutes an invaluable source of knowledge for at least two groups of people—the lines between which are often blurred. On the one hand, there are those who have found in Zen or Kyōto school philosophy a kind of personal liberation from the confines of the peculiar world of the Cold War era and from disillusion at American involvement in Vietnam. This book challenges them to examine not only the heights of Zen realization but also its ideological and historical connections with Japanese nationalism. On the other hand, there are those who have investigated the works of Zen or the Kyōto school in their respective academic disciplines. This book offers them the most sophisticated study to date on intellectual life in prewar Japan, and beckons them to interpret these works with critical rigor and historical perspective. ■

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## The Wild Goose

BY MORI ŌGAI

TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY BURTON WATSON

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN: CENTER FOR JAPANESE STUDIES

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Many of us were aware that Burton Watson, the gifted translator of Chinese and Japanese, had a manuscript in his drawer ever since excerpts from *The Wild Goose* (Gan; 1911–13) appeared forty years ago in the well-known anthology of modern Japanese literature edited by Donald Keene. Now the manuscript has appeared in full, thanks to the University of Michigan's Center for Japanese Studies. This is indeed a welcome event. Although another translation of this novel has been in existence since 1959, the version by Watson, who is best known to students of modern Japanese literature for his supple rendering of Oda Sakunosuke's *Stories of Osaka Life*, is surer and

more graceful, and should go a long way to help secure abroad some of the enduring reputation Mori Ōgai has enjoyed at home.

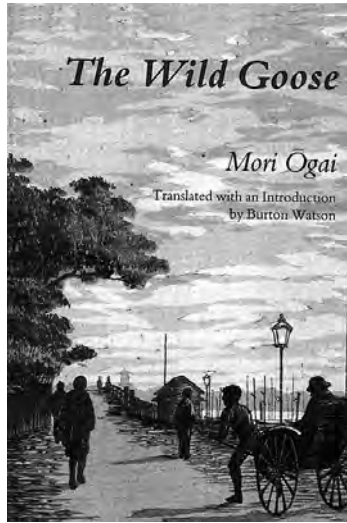
One of modern Japan's most eminent writers, Ōgai (1862–1922) is still a relative unknown to English-language audiences and compared, if at all, somewhat negatively to Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916), the contemporary with whom he is most often paired by Japanese critics. In the face of conventional Japanese literary wisdom, Edwin McClellan, for example, dismisses Ōgai in favor of Shimazaki Tōson (1872–1943) as the proper companion author for Sōseki in his study, *Two Japanese Novelists*, arguing that Ōgai's originality as a writer of fiction was limited. Yet while it is true that Ōgai's fictional works lack the dramatic structure of, say, Tōson's *The Broken Commandment* (*Hakai*; 1906) or Sōseki's *Kokoro* (*Kokoro*; 1914), many are landmark narrative experiments in their own right.

This is not to say that a work like *The Wild Goose* is lacking in conventional dramatics. It is at first glance the story, seemingly modeled after a Chinese romance, of a kept woman who falls in love with a handsome university student whom she sees passing by her house on his daily walks—all retold by one of the student's classmates reminiscing from the long-lensed perspective of three decades. But Ōgai toys with his romance at every turn and finally undermines it completely. Readers, informed at the end that the woman and the student never did get together but that she and the narrator did (although the kind of relationship goes unexplained), are left with questions that threaten to unravel the story altogether.

Fully half the novel is the first-person narrator's reconstruction of events leading up to the anticlimactic non-meeting between the woman and the student. But what an eccentric narrator he turns out to be—this "I" who freely transcends the bounds of personal memory and probes the minds of his characters at will. Indeed, the narrator stretches the limits of recall so far that we are compelled to ask ourselves what, in this story, if anything, is true.

The answer, apparently, is not much, but ultimately that doesn't matter. For the novel is a self-conscious critique of the fictional mode and a meditation on the impossibility of truth-telling by either characters or narrator. Simply to tell stories, we are reminded again and again, is to deceive. Otama, the naive yet ambitious mistress of the moneylender Suezō, misleads her father (an avid reader of historical narratives who scorns fiction as so many "lies") about her master's lowly occupation just as readily as the cunning Suezō protests to his half-believing wife the innocence of his relationship with Otama. The biggest swindler of them all, however, is the narrator himself, who cons his readers into believing they are privy to personal recollections, only to cast doubt on the whole story-telling enterprise before he is through. To engage in such narrative sabotage and still produce a captivating tale is no mean accomplishment. That the author succeeds is a measure of his narrative authority—even as he saws away merrily at the limb he has gone out on.

Ōgai's ambivalence about fiction is evident not just in *The Wild Goose* but in such earlier works as *Vita Sexualis* (*Ita Sekusuarisu*; 1909) and *Youth* (*Seinen*; 1910–11) as well. They are subtle parodies, respectively, of the romance, the confession, and the



Bildungsroman—desultory, dissonantly philosophical anti-novels all. After finishing *The Wild Goose*, Ōgai turned from the grudgingly fictional to the meticulously learned, devoting the final decade of his life to the writing of historical narratives whose fictionality, if it can be called that, lies in the selection and arrangement of events rather than in the events themselves.

The book under review is a visual delight, set in handsome Bembo type and graced on the cover with a radiant print of a Tokyo poised on the cusp of modernity by the woodblock artist Inoue Yasuji. The Center for Japanese Studies is to be commended for producing such an attractive volume, one surely destined for considerable use in the classroom. With *The Wild Goose* and the many other works by Ōgai now available in English,<sup>1</sup> instructors could conceivably build

an entire course around this writer and his era, focusing on such topics as the construction of tradition in a modernizing nation, the compatibility of Western thought with the Japanese cultural climate, the limitations of intellectual freedom and carnal desire, the exceedingly ambiguous position of women in Meiji society, and the viability of the fictional enterprise, to name a just few. Ōgai, in short, bears repeated readings and discussions in a variety of educational contexts. ■

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#### NOTES

- In addition to those mentioned above, translations include *The Incident at Sakai and Other Stories* and *Saiki Kōi and Other Stories*, both edited by David Dilworth and J. Thomas Rimer. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1977 and later combined into a single paperback volume under the title *The Historical Fiction of Mori Ōgai*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991; *Youth and Other Stories*, edited by J. Thomas Rimer. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994; and excerpts from *Shibue Chūsai* in Edwin McClellan's biography of Shibue's wife, *Woman in the Crested Kimono: The Life of Shibue Io and Her Family Drawn from Mori Ōgai's 'Shibue Chūsai'*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985. Biographical and critical studies of Ōgai in English (frequently at odds with each other) include the introductions to the translations edited by Dilworth and Rimer; chapters in Masao Miyoshi, *Accomplices of Silence: The Modern Japanese Novel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974 and in Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984; J. Thomas Rimer, *Mori Ōgai*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975; Richard Bowring, *Mori Ōgai and the Modernization of Japanese Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979; and Marvin Marcus, *Paragons of the Ordinary: The Biographical Literature of Mori Ōgai*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990. See also Yoshiyuki Nakai, "Ōgai's Craft: Literary Techniques and Themes in *Vita Sexualis*," in *Monumenta Nipponica* 35 (1980): 223–239; and Dennis Washburn, "Manly Virtue and the Quest for Self: The Bildungsroman of Mori Ōgai," in the *Journal of Japanese Studies* 21 (Winter 1995): 1–32.