

BOOK REVIEWS

Yomigaeru Yosano Akiko no Genji monogatari

よみがえる与謝野晶子の源氏物語

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Kannotō Akio (born 1943) trained as a scholar of Heian and Kamakura period literature at Waseda University. In 1999, for his monumental study of lost monogatari *San'itsu shita monogatari sekai to monogatarishi* 散逸した物語世界と物語史 (Wakakusa Shobō, 1998), he was awarded both his doctorate and the prestigious Kadokawa Genyoshi 角川源義 Prize. Then in 2001, Kannotō was asked to provide an essay to accompany the reprinting of Yosano Akiko's 与謝野晶子 (1878–1942) epoch-making first translation of *The Tale of Genji* into modern Japanese, her *Shin'yaku Genji monogatari* 新訳源氏物語, originally published 1912–1913.¹ That essay was the earliest of more than two dozen long and short research articles and keynote lectures on the subject of Akiko and *The Tale of Genji* that Kannotō presented and published in a variety of fora between 2001 and 2021. (They are listed in the “Author's previous publications” section at the end of the present volume, pp. 447–449.) *Yomigaeru Yosano Akiko no Genji monogatari* is, therefore, not only the culmination of two decades of research, writing, and speaking on Akiko; the author also brings a lifetime of scholarship on the *monogatari* tradition to bear on Akiko's translations of *Genji*.

By no means is the book a mere collection of the author's previously published articles, lightly revised. Kannotō has completely reenvisioned his scholarly work as a coherent, readable narrative. The detail he has mastered and mustered is phenomenal, even overwhelming at times, but the whole is written in a lively style, interspersed with numerous photographs, maps, and charts. Kannotō also makes skillful use of a dozen “columns” (コラム)—longish notes set off from the main text—that provide further detail about a variety of subjects: people

¹ Kannotō Akio, “Kaisetsu: *Shin'yaku Genji monogatari* to maboroshi no *Genji monogatari* kōgi,” in *Yosano Akiko no Shin'yaku Genji monogatari*, 2 vols. Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 2001, 2: 509–21.

(Akiko's elder brother Hō Hidetarō 鳳秀太郎, 1872–1931; her French teacher Furuoya Tetsutarō 古尾谷鐵太郎); the texts of *Genji* that Akiko owned; the publication history of the 1912–13 *Shin'yaku* translation; and an excursus into the history and rediscovery of the Kawachi 河内 manuscript of *Genji*. What gives rise to this last column is Kannotō's careful working out of the text of *Genji* on which Akiko based her second translation, the *Shin-Shin'yaku Genji monogatari* 新新訳源氏物語 published 1938–39. It was, he argues, most likely the three volume *Teihon Genji monogatari shinkai* 底本源氏物語新解, edited by Kaneko Motoomi 金子元臣 (1869–1944) and published 1925–30. Kaneko used a text in the Aobyōshi 青表紙 lineage as his base text but also incorporated numerous emendations from a copy of the Kawachi text in his possession, and this influence of the Kawachi text can clearly be seen in Akiko's second translation (pp. 351–357).

Yomigaeru Yosano Akiko no Genji monogatari is organized as follows:

Introduction: The start of my journey in search of Akiko's translation of *The Tale of Genji*

Chapter 1: Recreating Akiko's lost Lectures on *The Tale of Genji*

Chapter 2: The foundations of Akiko's knowledge of *The Tale of Genji*

Chapter 3: Readers captured by *Shin'yaku Genji monogatari* and Akiko in Paris

Chapter 4: Akiko's lifework: the creation and circulation of *Shin-shin'yaku Genji monogatari*

Conclusion: The end of the journey

There is also an extensive chronology of Akiko's life, a full list of the sources of the dozens of photographs that illustrate the volume, and a thoughtfully compiled, truly usable index.

The meticulous attention to primary sources that is characteristic of Japanese literary scholarship is everywhere in evidence. Errors of attribution and identification are corrected from the very beginning of the book. One example: the Tōhakutei 冬柏亭 pavilion that now stands on the grounds of Kuramadera 鞍馬寺 in the mountains outside Kyoto was not in fact Akiko's study but rather her tearoom (pp. 3–4). Quotations are carefully identified. The work of other scholars who have written (in Japanese) about Akiko and *Genji*—Shinma Shin'ichi 新聞進一, Ichikawa Chihiro 市川千尋, Itsumi Kumi 逸見久美, myself—is cited solely as the source of material the author has not uncovered or been able to find himself. Kannotō does not summarize the findings or views of previous scholars; there is no “state of the field” chapter setting out where we are now and what the author proposes to do differently, and this approach is perhaps the greatest difference from scholarship by those trained in the Euro-American scholarly tradition.

Instead, Kannotō charts his own course. It is well known, for example, that Akiko's *Shin'yaku Genji monogatari* was an abridged version of the original, and Kannotō sets out the evidence in two revealing charts, pp. 182–83. But in what ways was that abridgement effected? In *Yosano Akiko and The Tale of Genji*, I

noted her dispensing with honorifics that position the narrator within the text and her use instead of an omniscient narrator; as well as her extensive cuts and use of summary.² Kannotō's approach to answering this question is to look at Akiko's treatment of poetry. He first compares complete texts of the "Sekiya" 関屋 chapter of the *Shin'yaku* with the versions of "Sekiya" in a representative selection of *Genji* digests (*kōgaisho* 梗概書): *Genji ōkagami* 源氏大鏡 (early Muromachi); *Genji kokagami* 源氏小鏡 (early Muromachi, printed 1651); Nonoguchi Ryūho's 野々口立圃 *Jūjō Genji* 十帖源氏 (mid-17th century); and Kitamura Koshun's 北村湖春 *Genji monogatari shinobugusa* 源氏物語忍草 (1688). Kannotō concludes:

It is fair to say that until the appearance of modern vernacular translations, the rule was that poems (*uta* 歌)—though they may have been glossed or translated—were provided in their original form. And that was because digests began life as a means of sharing general knowledge about how to understand the poetry in *Genji*. Poetry is the very life of *Genji*, its sacred space. Even as digests developed from high level *renga* 連歌 how-to manuals into easy introductions to the world of *Genji*, the unspoken understanding—that translating the narrative served to aid comprehension of the poetry—lived on like a magic spell. In the *Shin'yaku*, however, Akiko broke the spell and stepped into that sacred space (p. 200).

There are three poems in "Sekiya": Kannotō shows how Akiko translates one as a five-line poem of seven plus five syllables and the other two poems as prose in letters exchanged by Genji and Utsusemi. Of the 795 poems in *Genji*, Akiko translates just 137 (p. 204). Kannotō's attention to just how Akiko dealt with the poetry of *Genji* is a major contribution not only to our understanding of Akiko's methods but also to the history of the popularization of *The Tale of Genji* itself.

Another of the fascinations of *Yomigaeru Yosano Akiko no Genji monogatari* is Kannotō's considered account of the impact on Akiko and her translation of *Genji* of France. (And here he does criticize "the field" for so neglecting the subject.)³ Kannotō has spent many months in France, successfully following the trail of Parisian hotels and pensions in which Akiko and her husband Yosano Hiroshi 与謝野寛 (1873–1935) stayed during her visit to Europe between May through September 1912; and uncovering several little-known appearances Akiko made in the French media: in *Le Miroir* (25 August 1912); *Le Temps* (12 September 1912); and *Les Annales* (29 September 1912). Kannotō concludes that

² G. G. Rowley, *Yosano Akiko and The Tale of Genji* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2000; revised open access edition, 2022), chapters 5 and 6.

³ In English, see several articles by Janine Beichman: "Akiko Goes to Paris: The European Poems," *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 25.1 (1991): 123–145; "1911: Yosano Hiroshi Ships Out for Paris," *The Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, fifth series, vol. 7 (2015): 81–102; and "Portrait of a Marriage: The How and Why of Yosano Akiko's Paris Foray," *The Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, fifth series, vol. 8 (2016): 135–155; as well as Scott Mehl, "Yosano Akiko in Belle Époque Paris," *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 60 (2021): 1–30.

it was Akiko's contact with French intellectuals and burgeoning sense of the importance of *The Tale of Genji* as representative text of Japan that encouraged her to retranslate *Genji* during the 1930s (pp. 256–257, 410–412).

There is much more work to be done on Akiko's oeuvre as a whole, of course, especially her fiction and work on other texts in the Japanese literary tradition, but with the publication of Kannotō's magnum opus, scholars will not need to revisit the subject of Akiko's translations of *Genji* anytime soon.

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