

TROUBLED SOULS FROM JAPANESE NOH PLAYS OF THE FOURTH GROUP. Translated by Chifumi Shimazaki. Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Program, 1998. xvi + 342 pp. Cloth \$28; paper \$17

DRAMATIC REPRESENTATIONS OF FILIAL PIETY: FIVE NOH IN TRANSLATION. Translated by Mae J. Smethurst. Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Program, 1998. x + 172 pp. Cloth \$22; paper \$14

Two recent collections of *nō* plays continue the great contribution of the Cornell East Asia Program in scholarly studies and translations of traditional Japanese theatre.

Chifumi Shimazaki's *Troubled Souls* is the latest work in her series surveying plays from the five categories of *nō*. *Nō* are roughly categorized according to the role enacted by the lead performer (*shite*). Auspicious deities, suffering warriors, women, and supernatural beings form the first, second, third,

and fifth categories respectively. The fourth category, which Shimazaki addresses in the present collection, is the largest: it encompasses several genres of plays including works about madwomen and realistic “present-life” (*genzai mono*) dramas featuring unmasked roles of “living persons.” Shimazaki’s own subdivision, “troubled souls,” could almost be subtitled “marginal figures” for its inclusion of plays about a woman who transforms into a devil (*Kanawa*), a street preacher skilled in the performing arts (*Jinen Koji*), and social outcasts (*Semimaru*). The volume also includes the “historical play” *Kogō*, the “swordfighting piece” (*kiriai mono*) *Eboshi-ori*, and the “human-interest” (*ninjō mono*) play *Kagekiyo* about a once powerful warrior who has been blinded and reduced to eking out a living as a wandering minstrel. Though it is the eighth book in an ongoing series, the present text stands on its own with illustrations of a *nō* stage and performers, pronunciation guide, glossary, and a useful reference to all fourth-category *nō* in the form of three appendixes.

Mae Smethurst has devised another unique subgrouping of fourth-category *nō* under the rubric of “filial piety.” This title, however, is somewhat misleading. Mention the term “filial piety” in an East Asia context, and Confucianism surely comes to mind. The seminal *nō* playwrights and theorists Zeami (d. 1443) and Zenchiku (d. 1470?) both cite the Confucian philosopher Mencius in their treatises, and the question of Confucian themes in *nō* begs further study. Yet the point of reference in the present collection is the dramaturgical theory of ancient Greece, not the political philosophy that originated in ancient China. Professor Smethurst’s use of the term “filial piety” builds upon an understanding of the ancient Greek word “*philia*,” which she argues is more broadly encompassing in the sense of the breadth of human relationships and values. This move supports her larger aim of exploring how a few *nō* about warriors—*Shun’ei*, *Dampū*, *Shichikiochi*, *Nakamitsu* (also called *Manjū*), and *Nishikido*, which she presents in translation—reflect elements of Greek tragedy when viewed through an Aristotelian framework. While the five *nō* chosen for the translation ultimately fall short of satisfying all the criteria for Greek tragedy in the opinion of the translator, the discussion offers a point of reference for making such comparative interpretations. A useful companion to this approach is Professor Smethurst’s earlier study, *The Artistry of Aeschylus and Zeami: A Comparative Study of Greek Tragedy and Nō* (Princeton University Press, 1989). In fact, I searched this earlier text for clearer definitions of terms such as “*pathemata*” and “*distanciation*” that appear in the translator’s introduction to the present collection, but these words unfortunately remained Greek to me. Despite this lack of clarity in the use of Grecologisms, the utility of Smethurst’s comparative approach is demonstrated in its effectiveness in highlighting salient features of *nō*, as revealed in the discussion of narration and representation. A characteristic of *nō* plays is the shifting narrative perspective of the chorus and main actor, either of whom can speak from a neutral third-person view or else from the first-person perspective of the main actor. As Smethurst explains, this shift from first to third person has usually been interpreted as a narrative technique believed to hark back to earlier storytelling traditions. The *nō* plays in her volume reveal that

not all plays share in this device equally. The plays translated reveal greater integrity in maintaining the lead character's persona, evincing what Smethurst, borrowing from Aristotle, calls "tragic impersonation" in support of the realism of "present-life" *nō* of the fourth group. As this example indicates, the juxtaposition of *nō* and Aristotle on the plane of theory fits—though not completely—when *nō* is considered from that elevated level. The incongruities also reveal what makes *nō* distinct and compelling.

Shimazaki and Smethurst take different approaches in their translations. Smethurst introduces the translations with the proviso that the language chosen accentuates the points when the chorus speaks in the first-person voice of the main actors or when the actors themselves describe their actions from a third-person view. Her translations read well and are fast-paced—heightening the realism characteristic of fourth-category *nō*. Shimazaki, however, uses parallel translation with Japanese in romanized form on one page and English on the other, providing readers with a sense of the original, without forcing the English translation. Without an overarching theoretical frame like Smethurst's approach, Shimazaki provides in-depth prefaces to each play, including a short synopsis and discussion of dramatic structure. Also included in Shimazaki's introductions are the possible variations (*kogaki*) for the translated plays. *Kogaki* are changes that actors can utilize to alter the mood and formality of a given performance—giving *nō* a freshness and space for individual interpretation that far too many translators and scholars fail to consider when they are judging *nō*'s "rigid" codes of dramatic representation.

In terms of adoption for undergraduate teaching, both volumes have a lot to be said for them not only in drama and literature courses but also history. Shimazaki's collection offers translations of some of the finest and most intriguing plays in the repertoire—for example, *Semimaru* and *Jinen Koji*—and these same works address the lives of people on the margins of medieval society: *Semimaru* concerns a prince disinherited from the imperial family for his blindness and set to live alone in a hut where his deranged sister Sakagami finds him; *Jinen Koji* describes how a preacher uses his talent at performance to ransom a girl who sold herself into slavery to pay for her parents' funeral service. While the characters are of uncertain historicity, the plays offer entry points for discussions of identity, social boundaries, and liminal groups in medieval society. Mae Smethurst's collection is well suited for classes on comparative drama—providing students have some background in *nō* and Aristotelian theories. The same text could also be read in conjunction with study of the samurai, since all the plays feature warriors confronting the higher values of their social group, such as loyalty and honor.

Together the collections show the possibilities of two different but successful approaches to translation and interpretation of fourth-category *nō* while expanding our appreciation of this category of plays.

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