

Studies of Kawabata Yasunari in Contemporary China

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In Beijing under martial law following the Tian'anmen massacre, a marvelous book was published that shocked the scholarly world. It was entitled *Dongfang mei de xiandai tansuo zhe Chuanduan Kangcheng pingzhuan* 东方美的现代探索者川端康成评传 (A Critical Biography of Kawabata Yasunari, Modern Seeker of East Asian Beauty; published by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1989) and carried an introduction laden with significance by Professor Hasegawa Izumi 長谷川泉. The author was Ye Weiju 叶渭渠, a member of the Institute of Japanese Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and a professor at the graduate school of the same institute. This volume is of monumental significance for it stands as the first genuinely critical biography completed outside Japan which made careful use of the fruit of Hasegawa's systematic work on Kawabata as well as his work on Mori Ôgai 森鷗外. Kawabata's writings have been widely received in the West, and the ethnic distinctiveness as well as the international universalities of his idea of beauty, his philosophy, and his method have been examined. However, the country with the most translations of and scholarship on Kawabata is China, and the man who played the decisive role in Kawabata's fate in China was Hasegawa Izumi. His writings have, of course, been influential, but Hasegawa also visited Beijing in his capacity as chair of the Research Group on Kawabata's Literary Works, and sponsored a joint scholarly symposium (September 1-4, 1987) of the China Association for the Study of Sino-Japanese Relations, the China Association for the Study of Japanese Literature, and the Research Group on Kawabata's Literary Works. Through direct contacts with Professors Li Wang 李芒 and Li Dechun 李德純 of the Foreign Literatures Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, he gave rise to a new methodological standpoint in Kawabata studies which have had wide repercussions in China. Details concerning all these matters were featured in *Zhongguo Zhong-Ri guanxi shi yanjiuhui huikan* 中国中日关系史研究会会刊 (#5, 1987).

All of the following Chinese writings about and translations of Kawabata took Hasegawa's work, such as his *Kawabata Yasunari ronkô* 川端康成論考 (A Study of Kawabata Yasunari), as a standard authority and owe him a great scholarly debt:

1. *Xueguo* 雪国 (Snow Country), a translation of *Yukiguni* by Shi Heng 侍桁, Shanghai yiwen chubanshe 上海译文出版社 (July 1991). [There is also a 1981 edition of this translation--JAF].

2. *Gudu Xueguo* 古都雪国 (The Old Capital and Snow Country), a translation of *Koto* and *Yukiguni* by Ye Weiqu 叶渭渠 and Tang Yuemei 唐月梅, Jinan, Shandong

renmin chubanshe 山东人民出版社 (September 1991). [There are 1981 and 1983 editions of this translation as well--JAF].

3. *Wuji* 舞姬 (The Dancer), a translation of *Maihime* by Tang Yuemei 唐月梅, Waiguo wenxue chubanshe 外国文学出版社 (January 1985).

4. *Chuanduan Kangcheng xiaoshuo xuan* 川端康成小说选 (A Selection of Kawabata Yasunari's Fiction), translations exceeding 700 pages by Ye Weiqu and Tang Yuemei of such representative works as *Izu no odoriko* 伊豆の踊子 (The Izu Dancer) and *Kinjū* 禽獣 (Of Birds and Beasts), as well as such writings as *Matsugo no me* 末期の眼 (Eyes in Their Last Extremity), *Bungaku teki jijoden* 文学的自叙伝 (Literary Autobiography), and *Utsukushii Nihon no watakushi* 美しい日本の私 (Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself), Beijing, Renmin wenxue chubanshe 人民文学出版社 (January 1985), in 32,900 copies.

5. *Hua de yuanwuqu* 花的圆舞曲 (*Hana no warutsu* 花のワルツ, A Waltz of Flowers), a translation [by Chen Shuyu and others] running to 650 pages of Kawabata's problem works including *Shōkonsai ikkei* 招魂際一景 (A View of Memorial Day) to *Suigetsu* 水月 (Moon in the Water) with a preface by Li Wang, Changsha, Hunan renmin chubanshe 湖南人民出版社 (April 1985), in 19,400 copies.

6. *Gudu* 古都 (The Old Capital), a translation of *Koto* by Shi Heng and Jin Fu 金福, Shanghai yiwen chubanshe (June 1985).

7. *Qianhe* 千鹤 (A Thousand Cranes), a translation of *Senbazuru* 千羽鶴 by Guo Laishun 郭来舜, Taiyuan, Shaanxi renmin chubanshe 陕西人民出版社 (July 1985).

8. *Xueguo Qianhe Gudu* 雪国千鹤古都 (Snow Country, A Thousand Cranes, and The Old Capital), translations of *Yukiguni*, *Senbazuru*, and *Koto* by Gao Huiqin 高慧勤, Guilin, Lijiang chubanshe 漓江出版社 (September 1985). [Reprinted 1991].

9. *Chuanduan Kangcheng sanwen xuan* 川端康成散文选 (Selections from the Prose of Kawabata Yasunari), translated by Ye Weiqu, Baihua wenyi chubanshe 白花文艺出版社 (March 1988).

10. *Chuanduan Kangcheng xiaoshuo bai pian* 川端康成小说百篇 (One Hundred Pieces from the Fiction of Kawabata Yasunari), translated by Ye Weiqu, Sanlian shudian 三联书店 (December 1989).

11. *Riben xin 'ganjuepai zuopin xuan* 日本新感觉派作品选 (Selections from the Writings of the Neo-Sensualists in Japan), edited by Yang Xiaoyu 杨晓禹 and Geng Renqiu 耿仁秋, Zuoqia chubanshe 作家出版社 (September 1988).

12. The entry "Chuanduan Kangcheng" 川端康成 (Kawabata Yasunari) by Ye Weiqu in the *Zhongguo dabaiké quanshu waiguo wenxue* 中国大百科全书外国文学 (The

Chinese Encyclopedia, Foreign Literature), Beijing and Shanghai, Zhongguo dabaikē quanshu chubanshe 中国大百科全书出版社 (May 1992).

While I was a visiting scholar at the Center for Japanese Studies in Beijing, I gave a lecture entitled “Avant-garde Literature and War Literature in Japan” at the Institute of Arts and Literature of the People’s Liberation Army (P.L.A.) which boasts a proud reputation going back to when it was the Gorky School. At that time questions from the audience concentrated on: What was the reputation of Kawabata’s writing in the West? How could he win the Nobel Prize for Literature on the basis of *Yukiguni*, *Senbazuru*, and *Koto*? Weren’t the criteria for selection of the Nobel Prize for Literature that it be “the finest work with an idealist tendency?” The scholarly information they had about Kawabata’s literary writings came from Professor Hasegawa’s work.

The P.L.A. has been maneuvering in the field of literature and the arts of late. In addition to publishing the journal *Jiefangjun wenyi* 解放军文艺, anthologies of fiction, reportage, and poetry have been published as part of a series from the Institute of Arts and Literature of the P.L.A. (“Jiefangjun wenyi xueyuan congshu” 解放军文艺学院丛书). They present lectures on twentieth-century literature, including Proust, Joyce, Kafka, and Malraux. They are encouraging the modernization and internationalization of Chinese literature with the aim of actively nurturing a future Chinese recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature. In fact, Mo Yan 莫言, who won international acclaim as the original author of the book *Red Sorghum* which in movie form was awarded the Grand Prize at the Berlin Film Festival in 1988, was himself a graduate of this Institute.

In January of 1989 Hasegawa Izumi’s book, *Nihon sengo bungaku shi* 日本戦後文学史 (A History of Postwar Japanese Literature), translated by Li Danming 李丹明, was published by Sanlian shudian as the first volume in a series on Japanese culture. It is healing the concerns of the younger literary generation over historical trends in postwar literature. Furthermore, on the model of Hasegawa’s *Kindai Nihon bungaku shisō shi* 近代日本文学思想史 (A History of Literary Thought in Modern Japan), Professor Ye Weiqu recently published *Riben xiandai wenxue sixiang shi* 日本现代文学思想史 (A History of Modern Japanese Literary Thought), and a Chinese translation of the *Kindai bungaku kenkyū hō* 近代文学研究法 (Research Methods for Modern Literature) is being prepared. As the father of modern Japanese literature in China, Hasegawa has released a Goethe-esque creative affinity there--a great incubator, indeed.

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