

The 1887 translation of Apuleius' *Golden Ass* by Morita Shiken (1861-1897), while based on an English intermediary and heavily modified, stands as the first work of Greco-Roman literature to be published in modern Japanese (cf. Gonoji 2006 30-31, Watanabe 2001-2002) and is of crucial importance in the history of classical reception in East Asia. My presentation aims to clarify its textual, literary and cultural relationship to Apuleius, point out its significance in early modern Japanese literature, and illuminate a neglected corner in the rich reception history of *The Golden Ass* (cf. Schmeling 2003: xxii, Albrecht and Schmeling 1996 1460-1467), while making use of critical strategies developed in recent scholarship on classical reception (e.g. Hardwick 2003, Martindale and Thomas 2006).

It may be safely assumed that Shiken relied on an English translation since he knew no other Western language, but no investigation has been made so far to determine which version he used. Of the four English translations available by 1887 (Adlington 1566, Taylor 1822, Head 1851, Anon. Bohn 1853), close textual analysis reveals the anonymous Bohn to be the most likely source, as Shiken's text incorporates materials from its notes and summaries.

Apuleius' most pornographic passages, printed in Latin in Bohn, would have been inaccessible to Shiken and are omitted in his translation. The Japanese version makes other changes of its own, removing much of the religious and mythological content that properly belongs to the ancient cultural horizon. The plot too is modified in the direction of greater acceptability in the contemporary moral climate, with Photis helping Lucius recover his human form and the two happily married in the end. Likewise, the tales of adulterous women are conflated and transformed so that marital transgressions more often end in shame and divorce. One can also see a degree of acculturation at work in the illustrations accompanying the editions of 1888 and later, as the clothing, architecture and other details therein are of the contemporary West. Traces of the alien context of the original *Golden Ass* are not completely obliterated, however, as the story is specifically stated to come from ancient Greece, parenthetical notes point out and explain such foreign institutions as the Roman legion and *damnatio ad bestias*, and Greek and Roman names are rendered in more or less faithful transcriptions based on their pronunciation in English.

Japanese novelist and playwright Izumi Kyōka (1873-1939) enthusiastically read Shiken's *Golden Ass* when it was first serialized in the Yūbin hōchi newspaper, and Japanese scholars have recently pointed out a number of linguistic and literary parallels between Shiken's Apuleius and Kyōka's most famous work, *The Holy Man of Mount Kōya* (*Kōya hijiri*) (Fujisawa 1989, Noguchi 2005). A powerful tale of erotic temptation and spiritual redemption in a world full of supernatural dangers, Kyōka's novel evokes the literary texture of Apuleius to a remarkable degree and testifies to the lasting impact of *The Golden Ass* in a culture far removed from its ancient Mediterranean origin.

An Educational and Improving Novel: *The Golden Ass* in Meiji Japan

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