



Mabuigumi [Spirit Stuffing]

By Medoruma Shun

Asahi Shimbun Shuppan (Asahi Bunko), 2002. 224 pp. ¥480. ISBN 978-4-02-264301-8.

まぶいぐみ
魂込め

目取真俊

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This is the first collection of short stories by this Okinawan author, who won the Akutagawa Prize in 1997 for “Suiteki” [Droplets]. The author Hino Keizō, who was on the selection committee for that prize, raved about *Mabuigumi*: “Not only does it draw from the rich natural environment of the southern islands and the myths and oral traditions that remain there, it also creatively experiments with how to organically combine those raw materials of fiction with the reality of modern-day Okinawa—including its wounds from the war—and how to create a coherent fictional world from them.”

The main character of the title story is Uta, a female shaman who offers prayers called *ugan* in Okinawan. One night, while playing the *sanshin* (an Okinawan version of the Japanese shamisen) and singing alone on the beach, a man loses consciousness, as if a sea turtle had stolen his *mabui* (spirit). Uta prays for days on end, trying to reclaim his *mabui* and put it back in him, but the man does not revive. The man’s mother died when digging up sea turtle eggs for food during the war. Had the man gone back to the ocean like baby sea turtles?

In all of Medoruma’s works, the worlds of reality and fantasy, modernity and myth, are contiguous. Particularly unforgettable is the story “Umukaji tō chiritei” [Followed by Shadows], included in this collection, which depicts a world so sad and sublime that the spirits of the characters stay with you for days after reading it. A girl who has suffered countless horrible experiences from early childhood finds that she has become able to see the spirits of the dead. Once she joins them, her shade sits on the branch of a banyan tree and speaks to the living. That is how vital and pressing the human desire to pass on one’s own story really is.

To turn the reality of Okinawa into literature is not a straightforward process, but Medoruma continues to devote himself to writing, sharpening and attuning his bodily senses to the southern islands. (OM)

Medoruma Shun

Born in Okinawa Prefecture in 1960. Received the New Okinawa Literature Prize in 1986 for “Heiwa-dōri to nazukerareta machi o aruite” [Walking the Street Named Peace Boulevard], the Akutagawa Prize in 1997 for “Suiteki,” and the Kawabata Yasunari Prize for Literature and the Kiyama Shōhei Literary Award in 2000 for “Mabuigumi.” In addition to fiction, he has published essays and criticism in newspapers and magazines.



目取真俊 (メドルマ シュン)

1960年沖縄県生まれ。1986年「平和通りと名付けられた街を歩いて」で第12回新沖縄文学賞受賞。1997年「水滴」で第117回芥川賞受賞。2000年「魂込め (まぶいぐみ)」で第26回川端康成文学賞、第4回木山捷平文学賞受賞。小説の他に新聞や雑誌にエッセイ・評論などを発表。

「水滴」で1997年、芥川賞を受賞した作者初の短篇集。同賞の選考委員を務めた作家の日野啓三は、この作品集を「豊かな南の島の自然、そこに残る神話伝承を小説の材料として利用するだけでなく、それらの素材を、先の戦争の傷も含めて現在の沖縄の現実といかに有機的に組み合わせ、一個の小説世界を創り出すか、を工夫し実験している」と、非常に高く評価した。

表題の「魂込め」は、御願を捧げる祈祷師の女性ウタが主人公。夜、海岸で一人、三線を奏でていた男が、唄いながら海亀に魂を奪われるように意識をなくす。その魂を取り戻し、魂を込めようとウタが幾日祈り続けても、男は生き返らない。男の母親は、戦争中、海亀の卵を食糧にしようとして掘り出している時に亡くなった。男は海亀の子供のように、海へ戻って行ったのか……。

目取真の作品世界は、どれも現実と夢想、現代と神話の世界が地続きになっている。なかでも登場人物の魂が読後、何日も離れぬほど痛ましくも神々しい境地を描いた収録作「面影と連れて」は忘れがたい。幼い頃から積み重なる悲惨な体験を抱える少女は、いつしか死者の姿が見えるようになり、この世から魂をなくしてもなお、ガジマルの枝に腰掛けながら生者に語りかける。自分の物語を伝承したいという人間の思いは、これほどまでに強く、重いのだ。

沖縄の現実を文学にすることは一筋縄ではいかないが、目取真は今も南の島で身体感覚を研ぎ澄ませ、創作に専念している。(OM)

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