

MERCREDI 9 OCTOBRE 2019

REGARDS SUR LE THERMALISME EUROPÉEN DU MOYEN ÂGE AU XIX^E SIÈCLE

Spas in England and Japan: Historical Traditions and Literary Representations

Eri Ohashi, Nagasaki University (Japan)

eriorika@gmail.com

Abstract:

[This presentation will be in French]

Since both English and Japanese spas have a long history, they are often described in literature. However, we find few studies comparing spas in both England and Japan. This paper analyzes the differences in perception and representation of spas between them, as evidenced in literary examples from the 18th century.

The use of spas for curing various illnesses has long been tied to myths and religions. In England, the goddess Minerva was first celebrated in Bath before a Christian abbey was built in the 7th century. In a *Shinto* legend, a lesser divinity recovered his health from bathing in a hot spring. So the Japanese built shrines or temples near hot springs. We can find also another common trait through the presence of animals: in Bath, pigs (according to Bladud's legend), while in many Japanese legends, people understood as well the benefits of spa waters by observing foxes, bears or monkeys healing their wounds in such waters.

However, there is a major difference in their history. In early Christianity, Europeans thought that spas, developed by Romans, were an immoral and pagan habit. Afterward, as they believed that plague epidemics were the wrath of God, there were calls for closing spas. During the same period, the religious custom of *Seyoku* spread in Japan. It is the holiday when temples provide their spas free to the public. Following the scripture of *Onsen-Kyo*, in which Buddha teaches the importance of cleansing both body and spirit through bathing, the people prayed in such spas.

So, what kind of influence do these differences have upon literature? In England, we find two types of writings: travelogues and novels. The travel records of Celia Fiennes who visited famous spas contain valuable information on the traditions and the customs in the 18th century. In the novels of Jane Austen, Bath is the special town where various people meet. The truth of each person, less obvious in other places, is exposed there. As for Japan, the most famous *Haiku* poet, Matsuo Basho, went on a journey through Japan in the second part of the 17th century and wrote about spas; his poems are combined with his travel accounts. In the 18th

century a humorous short poem, *Senryu*, was in fashion among common people and many *Senryu* were about spas: for example, a man went secretly to a spa and prayed to Buddha to recover from syphilis.

Thus, spas, rejected for religious reasons for several centuries in England, lost their original mystique to evolve into a social and literary place for the wealthy. In Japan, spas remained linked to Buddhism, retaining their original and poetic traits for all people. Today, spas and their surrounding continue to fascinate, as evidenced by their presence in literature and in films, in England as well as in Japan.

Biography:

ERI OHASHI, titulaire d'un doctorat de l'Université de Rennes II en Littérature Française, est professeur à l'Université de Nagasaki depuis 2013. Spécialiste de Flaubert, elle travaille sur les analyses des manuscrits des *Trois Contes*. Récipiendaire en 2016, pour une durée de cinq ans, des *Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research, Japan Society for the Promotion of Science*, elle se consacre à des recherches sur la représentation du thermalisme dans la littérature française.

Ses derniers articles principaux sont « L'évolution des consciences grâce à la langue, vue au prisme du voyage, de la colonisation, et de l'émigration », Éditions de Gruter (à paraître), « Romans sans frontières : ampleur de la lecture dépassant les conflits » in *Expanding the Frontiers of Comparative Literature*, Vol. II, Seoul, Chung-Ang University Press, 2013, et « La déconstruction de l'humain dans *La Légende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier* : le conte de Flaubert et le vitrail de la Cathédrale de Rouen » in *Beyond Binarisms 2 : Corssings and Contaminations*, Rio de Janeiro, Aeroplano Editora, 2009.