

universal nature of childhood is shown against the backdrop of a particular time and place—a village in Bengal at the turn of the century.

*Pather Panchali* (*Song of the Road*) takes Opu and his older sister, Durga, through various childhood experiences along the road. The road ends for Durga in her teens and takes a decisive turn for Opu as he and his parents board the train for Banaras. Plot and characterization, important components in the western mode of fiction, are subservient in the Indian narrative mode, which is essentially episodic. But they come naturally to a story well told. What we see is not the consistency of conscious craftsmanship but the consistency that comes from a realistic delineation of life. Thus, Shorbojya who is shown so movingly as a grass widow waiting for her wandering husband is also an unkind woman lashing abuses on a poor relative; Durga, like her divine namesake, is Mother; vivacious, and compassionate, but she is also a rooking girl who would steal not only fruit but also jewellery; the neighbors are malicious gossips but also willing helpers in times of need. The richly episodic structure gives an insight into numerous aspects of life, for example, Opu running away from the clutches of the village "witch," Opu listening open-mouthed to stories from the Mahabharata, as well as Opu's impractical Brahmin father going to the city in search of a job, his mother, half starved and destitute, sustained by the hope so typical of mothers, that her son would one day become the provider for a flourishing family.

The translators have done admirably, considering the intricacies of translating Bengali idioms, and bridging the cultural gap in comprehension with interpolations that have to be welded into the narrative. As with all translations, opinions will differ on these issues of interpolations and interpretations, but this version adds another question in that all translators to date have ended the novel at a point earlier than the author's because, in the words of the translator's Introduction, "what follows, if the reader goes on with it, is something of an anticlimax."

This translation first appeared in 1968. It now appears in an edition obviously designed for classroom use for it comes with a critical introduction and an extensive index that includes a glossary of terms.

Uma Parameswaran

## NATSUME SÔSEKI

*Grass on the Wayside* (Michikusa)

Translated from the Japanese

by Edwin McClellan

2nd ed. London: University of Chicago Press, 1974. Pp. XII, 169.

Sôseki was born in Tokyo to a father who was 53, and to a mother who was 40 years old. His parents had had other children before. They did not feel like looking after yet another baby: Natsume was given away to a childless couple. His foster parents' marriage broke down when Natsume was eight or nine years old, and the boy was returned to his original parents—who were by no means enthusiastic about the homecoming of their prodigal son. Later, Sôseki took a degree in English literature at the University of Tokyo (1893) and married the daughter of a high official (1896). He taught at the college level from 1896 to 1900 and from 1903 to 1907. The years in between he spent in England—on a fellowship. After 1907 he devoted his full time to writing; he died in 1916.

*Grass on the Wayside* is Sôseki's only autobiographical novel and the last one he completed (1915). The action takes place in about 1904. Sôseki (called Kenzô in the novel) has returned from London, teaches English, and is disgusted with his life, his family, his relatives, and himself. His former foster father, now impoverished, appears and wants money. His former foster mother appeals to him—and gets money. His father-in-law has lost his position and his fortune and borrows money from Kenzô. Kenzô has to pay a monthly allowance to his sister. He is overworked, in bad health, but leeches appear from all sides, and his character and the habits and customs of society force him to accept financial responsibility for these people. The reader's sympathies are on the side of poor Kenzô, although the author tries, from time to time, to point out that he is a strange bird indeed—heartless, tactless, self-centered, a pure egotist (when there is an earthquake, he runs out of the house, and his wife has to evacuate the children all by herself. Kenzô is the product of an education without love—he ignores the feelings of his wife or his children as his parents had ignored the feelings of their youngest son.

The unique quality of the novel lies in the penetration of human character. These people come so much alive, that one can never forget them. The novel is a literary masterpiece; it is more than an autobiography—it is a study of tortured human relations on the one hand, a parable of the misery of human existence on the other. The novel is reminiscent of Kafka's *Der Prozess*, Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* and the early parts of Dickens's *David Copperfield*. Edwin McClellan's translation is superb; his introduction is concise and gives Sōseki's biographical background as well as a summary of those facts about Japanese customs which the Western reader must keep in mind to understand some of Kenzō's actions.

Ingrid Schuster

## CRISTÓBAL DE TAMARIZ

*Novelas en verso*

Ed. Donald McGrady.

Charlottesville: Biblioteca Siglo de Oro, 1974.

One of the most enduring traditions in the writing of fiction is that of the literary adaptation or reworking, in which an author does not wholly invent the plot and circumstances of his tale but rather borrows them, either from one or more writers' works or from a general fund of commonly-shared folk stories. The *Novelas en verso* (Novels in Verse) of Cristóbal de Tamariz (fl. 1580) participate in this tradition: of the seventeen stories and one brief fable edited by McGrady, eleven are based on Italian models (Straparola, Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, Masuccio Salernitano, Boccaccio, Bandello), four stem from Spanish sources (*El caballero Cifar*, Juan Timoneda, *La vida del Ysopet con sus fabulas hystoriadas*, *Floresta espanola*), and the remaining three have their roots in the *Disciplina clericalis* of Pedro Alfonso, an "emblema" of Andrea Alciato, and a folk theme of wide diffusion.

Popular tales and folk motifs are an important ingredient of almost all Tamariz's stories in verse, and their presence is ably detected and documented by McGrady in his extensive introduction and notes to the text. In many cases the determining

of sources has involved a considerable amount of literary detective work. Regarding two of the most artistically ambitious of his works, *El envidioso* and *La madrastra*, McGrady remarks that the researcher is faced with "a fabric made up of such diverse threads that he abandons any hope of finding all the skeins which contributed to it." In addition, the editor establishes the hitherto uncertain identity of Tamariz, discusses his role as precursor in the adoption of the Italian *novella* in Spain, and examines the moralistic justification which the author frequently provides for his entertaining stories.

McGrady has given us a text faithful to the original, with the modifications in abbreviations, punctuation, accentuation, capital letters, and word division which are customary in presenting a manuscript of the period. He has chosen as his text a copy from c. 1640, reporting that other MSS, which he does not fully identify, are incomplete and generally inferior. The text is followed by detailed notes for each *novela*, four appendices of related works in verse, an exhaustive bibliography, and indices both of names cited and of the notes themselves, making the results of the editor's research easy to consult.

Of particular interest is McGrady's discussion of the audience for which the *novelas* were written. Noting the excessive frequency with which Tamariz points out that the substance of his tales is borrowed, and the author's practice of introducing himself into his work, McGrady argues that Tamariz was writing not for the single reader but for a live audience, a small group of friends, probably occasional writers themselves, who made up an informal literary circle. The existence of these groups is well documented in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain, and McGrady aptly remarks that the publication of the present work makes it possible for the modern reader to sit in, in spirit, on a literary experience typical of four hundred years ago.

The editor's exploration of the sources of the narrative material of these brief novels by no means leads to the conclusion that Tamariz was an uninspired plagiarist. On the contrary, the author was skilful in refashioning his material to create a deliberate and appealing air of fantasy, and to provide an opportunity for humor (No. 15, *Novela del torneo*); he was adept