Proust Europe Through the Prism Annotation

Annotation

French scholar Jacques Proust's *Europe Through the Prism of Japan* (translated into English by Elizabeth Bell) analyzes the image that Europe constructed of itself and projected, whether this projection was deliberate or not, to the Japanese during the late-sixteenth through the eighteenth century. Proust is especially interested in the humanistic role of the early Portuguese Jesuit missionaries in Japan. It was this group, Proust argues, that was the primary source and disseminator of Western knowledge and art prior to the arrival of the Dutch merchants in the early seventeenth century. As the scholarly reviews make clear, this volume, while insightful, is largely geared toward audiences that are non-Japanese specialists since Proust does not aim to give a full account of the history of Japan. While he claims to have abandoned the Eurocentric model in his critical analysis of Europe-Japanese relations, one reviewer (Yonemoto) noted that Proust’s argument is regrettably skewed because of his presentation of Europeans as “dynamic individuals with distinct ideas and personal histories while the Japanese are blurry, elusive, and ultimately forgettable” (627).

Reviews available for consultation:


(By Amanda Strasik)