

Empowering a Eurydice to Rescue Orpheus: Riyoko Ikeda's *Orufeusu no Mado* (1975-1981)

Riyoko Ikeda's *Window of Orpheus* “Orufeusu no Mado” オルフェウスの窓, interweaves within 3400-pages a historical graphic-novel about the development and clash of the Russian Revolution. The lengthy serial manga treats so much more — the demise of the Russian aristocracy, the passage of European Romanticism, among others — while also balancing the conventions of Japanese shojo manga in the most remarkable degree. The novelist's adaptation of the Eurydice myth, which persists from the novel's first page to its last, makes a complex story all the more remarkable; for, out of the lengthy development of a shojo heroine, Julius von Ehrensmeyer (born she/her but presented to society as he/him), emerges the most powerful Eurydice any Orpheus has ever encountered. The classical myth of Eurydice is the primary mythological adaptation running the length of this extensive epic.

The first aim of my fifteen minute paper is to familiarize the audience with this remarkable 20th century appropriation of the Eurydice myth. Serialized first in *Margaret* magazine 1975-1976, then in *Monthly Seventeen* from 1977 to 1981; eventually reissued by Shueisha press. The move from *Margaret* (a younger audience) to *Seventeen* (YA readership) was stipulated by Ikeda herself in a move, she says, to direct the plot toward a more mature shojo readership. Clearly akin to Ikeda's earlier international smash-hit *Rose of Versailles* (ベルサイユのばら) (-1973) — both feature a female adolescent protagonist who experiences a social revolution as a man — some critics regard *Window* as a greater work, a more refined masterpiece than *Rose*.

A fraction of *Orufeusu no Mado* (ca. 15%) has been translated into English. That amateur, unauthorized translation is patently inadequate, with several howling errors within the

first few pages alone. Consequently, anglophone scholarship has recoiled. Indeed, the only such found, part of an article by N.A. Theisen, reduces Ikeda's entire manga to a clever theoretical analysis based on error — not Ikeda's mythological errors, it turns out but intermediating translator's. Such mistaken interpretation should, therefore, be corrected. I have read the entire manga together with a native speaker of Japanese and also in the authorized Italian published translation. My service here plays to the paper's second goal, i.e. to demonstrate that Ikeda's adaptation is not at all ham-handed, but, conversely, remarkably sophisticated as an adaptation of one of Western culture's most pervasive myths. My paper's greater objective is to persuade that *Orufesu no Mado* is a careful, dynamic, compelling adaptation of the Eurydice myth that deserves attention from scholars of the classical tradition. It can reward serious study.

The third and final objective of the paper is to demonstrate how Ikeda appropriates the Eurydice myth in order to create a new Eurydice for a shojo audience — young, adolescent, female readers who are steeped in well established traditions. Ikeda's sensitivity to the so-called “Love Trap” in particular bears careful reading and repays careful analysis.

I propose to treat these three objectives in a fifteen-minute paper illustrated with PPTX — request projector and screen.

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