

JAPANESE EDITIONS OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS FROM THE ENGLISH SPEAKING WORLD

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This short paper concerns children's books introduced from English into Japan — (1) the current status of research works, (2) a brief history of translation, (3) Japanese versions of P. Wrightson's *BALYET* and other books.¹⁾

(1) THE CURRENT STATUS OF RESEARCH WORKS

In Japan, young people have enjoyed Japanese versions of English-language books for more than 140 years. There are also many publications by researchers on children's books from the English speaking world. These publications are the results of the historical and literary research works of English and American children's books based on their original works by the professionals of reading and studying English literature. The late Mr. Seta Teiji was the leading scholar; Professors Jingu Teruo, Inokuma Yoko²⁾, and Ms Matsuoka Kyoko³⁾, who is currently the Director of Tokyo Children's Library, are the most noted contemporary researchers in this field. The Japanese Board on Books for Young People (JBBY) has compiled *Overseas Editions Of Japanese Children's Books* in English and distributed this to all the National Sections of the International Board on Books for Young people in 1988. A revised edition is planned. Moreover, JBBY has started to prepare for the exhibition of *Translated Children's Books*. The exhibition is planned as one of the special events to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the JBBY.

Concerning articles on the study of 'translated versions' of children's

books originally written in English, the fruits of such are scarce. *The Chronological Table Of The Translated Versions Of English And American Children's Literature* (1971) by Shimizu and Yagita was the first comprehensive table of its type ever published⁴⁾. Shimizu made the chronological table of the original books and Yagita that of the Japanese versions. It was painstaking work. It gave us the chance to see the sweeping historical overview of the introduction of the fruits of the English writing and is still used as a precious source of information until 1970. The compiler says in her editorial note that it does not have the space to include the amount of copies of each translation published or in how many editions each version went so far. There has been no revised edition and no equivalent work ever published since. Many translators including myself realize the necessity of such work which include not only English, American, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand children's books but also those originally published in Asian language circles as well as European countries.

The Japanese Ministry of Education has been working with several groups of librarians, teachers, and literary people to found the Children's Book Library, scheduled to open in a few years. It aims at serving as an information centre of children's books in Asia and hopefully will be equipped with comprehensive and updated materials concerning the translated versions as well.

(2) HISTORY OF TRANSLATION

As early as 1593, *Isoho Monogatari or Esopo No Fabulas* was published. Seventy tales from Aesop's fables were translated into Japanese. One of the tales, that of the Hare and Turtle, became especially beloved by Japanese. Eventually, it was made into a traditional Nagauta song and used for a child's training song⁵⁾. Japan closed herself to foreign countries at the beginning of Edo Era (1641) until Captain Perry

(Matthew Calbraith) came in 1854. This isolation meant the complete cut of the literary flow. Only a peninsula in Nagasaki, a remote place from the centre of Japan, was open to Dutch trade ships. The first introduction from England was Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. It was published in 1722 but it was the rewritten version of the article introduced in 1848 as the real record of someone who survived on a lonely island. It was a translation from Dutch into Japanese. And the Dutch version is said to be the translation from an abridged German version⁶⁾. We had to wait until Meiji Era became more culturally sophisticated for the really active translations to flourish.

Several years before the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Fukuzawa Yukichi, founder of Keio University, traveled around America and Europe. He bought many books written in English. On returning home, he encouraged young students to translate them into Japanese. English quickly replaced Dutch and became the most popular foreign language in Japan. Since then, *Robinson Crusoe* has had many Japanese versions along with *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), *The Arabian Nights (The Thousand And One Nights)*, *Grimm's Fairy Tales* (1812-5), *H.C. Andersen's Tales* (1835). They are all translated directly from the original languages into Japanese and have always attracted a large audience.

In six years after the Restoration, 237 of Aesop's tales were translated into Japanese from Thomas James' English version. The Ministry of Education adopted one of the tales, the Hare and Turtle, in the official primary textbook. It was already one of the most popular stories among children. The translation of *Little Lord Fauntleroy* by Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett was introduced to Japan in Meiji 23 (1890). The translator was a young woman, Wakamatsu Shizuko. She was born four years before the Meiji Restoration and was a devoted Christian. She impressed the readers with her enthusiasm in conveying the power of innocence, humanism and love⁷⁾. She translated as

if she herself was telling the story to a few young people sitting just in front of her. The translation is so natural that for the young readers it was very easy to grasp the clear message the story conveyed. No wonder the book was welcomed by parents, teachers and children. Now, however, the Japanese used is too classic for modern Japanese readers, but the translation should be remembered as a monumental publication of newly-born Japan. The Japanese editions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*(1852), *The Prince and the Pauper*(1882), *A Christmas Carol*(1843), *Sara Crewe*(1888), and *Little Women* (1868-9) are achievements young Japanese appreciated.

The Taisho Era replaced the Meiji Era in 1912 and lasted for 15 years. In the Taisho Era, a number of famous English writing were introduced, such as *The Secret Garden* (1911), *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*(1876), *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*(1884), *Black Beauty* (1877), and *The Water Babies*(1863). Above all, the Japanese edition of Mother Goose (English nursery rhymes) should be mentioned as one of the most important translations. The translator was a famous poet, Kitahara Hakushu. He left numerous poems and they are still loved by Japanese. His translation is not, sometimes, very faithful to the original poems. Still there are no unnatural lines in the translated versions. The poet must have enjoyed the chance to free his own images and play in the mysterious world of words. Now we have quite a number of translated books of Mother Goose, but Hakushu's translation is, I regard, best in singing and reciting. The expressions and phrases he uses are classic, but they are fluent if you read them aloud.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland(1865), was first introduced in Japan at the end of the Meiji Era in 1910. The title was *Ai-chan no Yume Mmonogatari*, or, *Ai-chan's Dream Tales*. The name of the girl, Alice, was changed to a Japanese one, Ai-chan⁸⁾. The translator, Maruyama

Eikan did his best to translate this unique fantasy. Later, including Akutagawa Ryunosuke and Kikuchi Kan, more than ten translators have faced the difficult task of translating Carroll's masterpiece. The various games of its language, the depth of its logic, and the speed of its evolving scenes are so challenging that translators of children's books dream of creating the best Japanese version. Now we can enjoy and compare these various translations. It was traditional to use polite auxiliary verbs when translating for children, and Tanaka Toshio (Iwanami Shoten Pub.) and Shono Koukichi (Fukuinkan) follow this style. They tell the story as easily, clearly and politely as possible. The girl Alice gives the impression of being a strong but polite young Victorian lady. On the other hand, new translations from less prestigious publishers are brave and adopt a new way of telling. Yagawa Sumiko (Shinchosha) uses a colloquial conversational style as if a young man tells the tale to a lively group of children in a crisp and bouncing tone. Yanase Naoki (Chikuma Shobo) is not afraid to combine sophisticated and unintelligible combinations of words and expressions. He seems not to care whether 'children' can understand them or not. He may trust in the possibility of children's willingness to learn and grow. The sentences of both Yagawa and Yanase are superb in rhyme and rhythm. The image of Alice in both translations is a little bit bolder, braver and more modern.

Now we have to go back to the beginning of the Showa Era when the translator Ishii Momoko and the publisher Iwanami Shoten opened a new era in the world of translations. The Japanese circle of the children's books, authors, publishers, librarians and readers as well, owes a tremendous debt to Ishii Momoko herself and also to Iwanami Shoten, the leading publishing house in Japan. In 1940 Ishii published *Winnie-the-Pooh* from Iwanami Shoten. The translation cannot be, and has not been replaced by anyone. It is still fresh and read widely.

Even though the Japanese language itself has greatly changed, Ishii's selection of expressions in Japanese and her unique rhythm created her own *Winnie-the-Pooh* which can endure the test of time.

She has showed the would-be translators and editors that in order to interest young Japanese readers of imported children's books they must become a sort of co-author of an original story. You sympathize with the characters, experience the numerous adventures with them, and most of all you must enjoy telling the story to a young audience. This is what Wakamatsu Shizuko began in translating *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, and Ishii Momoko completed with *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Many will agree with me in saying that we have yet to produce a single translator who could beat her. In the early part of the Showa Era, a noted writer translated *The Story of Dr. Dolittle* by Hugh Lofting, again published by Iwanami Shoten. His name is Ibuse Masuji and he is known as the author of *Black Rain*. Oe Kenzaburo, a Nobel Prize winner in literature, says how impressed he was reading *The Story of Dr. Dolittle*.⁹

After the World War II, confusion was the norm for some time. We were placed under command of the Occupation Army, and the General Headquarters decided everything—we needed GHQ's permission even in what books we could translate and publish. No wonder the publishers tried to publish American books because it was the easiest way to get permission for translation. In 1950 Iwanami Shoten Bunko, Iwanami Paperbacks for Young People, *was established*. The chief editor was Ishii Momoko herself. This year (1995), Iwanami Shonen Bunko celebrates their 45th anniversary. They have published over 900 titles and over 300 are still on sale. The following titles are seen besides the mentioned classics. They are; *Treasure Island* by R.L. Stevenson, tr. by Abe Tomoji, *Daddy Long Legs* by Webster, tr. by Endo Hisako, *Christmas Carol* by Dickens, tr. by Murayama Eitaro, *Mary Poppins* by

Travers, 4 vols., tr. by Hayashi Youkichi, *The Borrowers*, 5 vols., by Mary Norton, tr. by Hayasi Youkichi, *Tom's Midnight Garden* by Philippa Pearce, tr. by Takasugi Ichiro, *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by E. L. Konigsburg, tr. by Matsunaga Fumiko, and *Doll's House* by Rumer Godden, *Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, 7 vols., by C. S. Lewis, all translated by Seta Teiji. There are, of course, the books from other languages including Greek and Roman myths. Lucky children who had access to Iwanami Shoten Bunko could take in all these inspiring stories offered. Some of them have grown up to be engaged in writing themselves and a few in translating and contributing as a cross-cultural bridge.

(3) PATRICIA WRIGHTSON'S *BALYET* AND OTHER STORIES

The Japanese version of *Balyet* was the third book by Ms. Patricia Wrightson published by Iwanami Shoten. Her epochmaking *Nargun and The Stars* (1974) was translated by Inokuma Yoko and published from Hyoronsha Publishing House¹⁰⁾. It was highly acclaimed by the reviewers. No books before had introduced Aboriginal fairies in the setting of modern Australia. Japanese readers were limited to familiar Japanese and European fairies. Through those native Australian fairies, we learned the necessity of understanding cultures. Ms. Wrightson published *A Little Fear* (1983), *Moon=Dark* (1986) and *Balyet* (1989). The above mentioned publisher, however, was not interested in introducing more. Although the story of *Nargun and The Stars* was a revolutionary one and the translation was of the highest level, the Japanese readers who were accustomed to Japanese and European magic could not digest the tales to their fullest extent. The unfamiliar flora and fauna of the continent was another cause for the difficulty in accepting her literary world.

Iwanami Shoten must have realized the importance of what Wrightson was going to show the young people of the world. They decided to introduce these stories in Japan. *A Little Fear*¹¹⁾ was published with the illustrations done by an artist famous for his traditional Japanese brush painting. He found the land's native people who survived thousands of years rather similar to those of Japanese legendary beings. His illustrations helped to draw both the old Australia and the modern Australia much closer to Japanese culture. *Moon = Dark*¹²⁾ evolves its story deep in the mountains. The characters are the native animals in the bush and the gully. The man in the moon also plays an important role. The publisher chose a specialist in drawing animals and plants as an illustrator. This considerate arrangement helps the readers build the imaginative world of the story easily.

Ms. Wrightson carefully researches existing published myths and legends. She clearly indicates her creative additions to the stories to prevent confusion or alteration of the tribal heritage of the native peoples. *Balyet*¹³⁾ is a moving story based on an Aboriginal legend. A Mrs. Ethel Hassel used to listen to the orally transmitted stories and heard the tale of Balyet from an Aboriginal lady and wrote it down at the end of the last century. Her record, *My Dusky Friends* was published in 1975. Balyet means 'echo' in the South-West Aboriginal language and is the name of a young and pretty Aboriginal girl in the tribal legend. She played around with two boys at the same time. The boys were blood brothers, required to protect each other. In order to become Blyet's most favorite man they fought and died. Balyet was held responsible for destroying the blood brotherhood which was crucial to their society. She was sentenced to eternal exile in the lonely, rocky mountains and is still there crying because she can never die. In Ms. Wrightson's story, a girl, Jo, goes to the mountain with an old Aboriginal woman, Mrs. Willet, and meets Balyet who

has been looking for a friend for a thousand years. Balyet tries to catch Jo. Mrs. Willet knows that this would mean 'death' for Jo. Jo, being a young white woman in modern Australian society, would not listen to Mrs. Willet. For Jo, the tribal punishment is too cruel, and Mrs. Willt's fear is outdated and not worth paying attention to. Mrs. Willet, being an Aboriginal wise woman, knows that the blood brotherhood tradition has been a necessary survival custom, and that Balyet's deed was much worse than Jo could imagine. At the same time, living in a modern society, she can understand that the tradition means little now. In the end, the old, mythical power of the old, mythical land releases Balyet and changes her into many things:

'She shall be warmth in the sunlight, frost in the shade, and movement in the wind; honey in blossom, poison in leaves and the fang of the snake. She shall speak only in birdsong, hear only in rock, catch only in cobweb. She shall hide in the glimmer of water, and in sunlight or starlight cast no shadow. And this, her last change, will become the truth of Balyet; by this new making she shall journey into rest.'¹⁴⁾

This compromise is beautiful because the modern, young Australian readers can feel that the bridge between the old Australia and the new Australia was completed and also because the modern, young Japanese readers can feel that the bridge between the two different cultures is possible. The young people of any culture will feel that Nature has its own life and it can be derived from the ancient, mythological world of the native people.

The Japanese edition of Balyet has no illustrations. The whole story is told in rhyming sentences and there is much room for a reader's own imagination. Thus, the three Wrightson's books published from Iwanami Shoten are in completely different styles. You can tell how

considerate the editing has been in order to make the Japanese editions attractive. There is no alteration, no omission as far as the text is concerned. At the end of each book, the translator explains the unique animals and plants, and includes geographical information in a note. The Legend of the Echo is also introduced in the Japanese version of *Balyet*. This translator's note is customary in a Japanese edition. If young readers themselves may not appreciate a translator's note, it is useful for parents, teachers, librarians and researchers and reviewers. As mentioned, our isolation lasted about 200 years, from 1641 to 1854. It has been only 140 years since Japan opened her doors to other literary worlds. Some more time will be needed before illustrations which an original book does not have and a translator's note become unnecessary. Until then, until many solid bridges are completed, editors and translators should continue to seek better ways to attract young readers to an innovative, creative work and make every effort to distribute it. Appropriate illustrations and translator's note are one means to stimulate the readers' imagination and to broaden the readers' view. Japanese children's favourite books are not the translated versions but books written by Japanese writers. Books with foreign cultural backgrounds are read only by avid readers with ample practice in reading. If many more readers are to be attracted, editors and translators of children's books should continue the task of 1) finding a good original book, 2) having the most matching illustrations, and 3) including an enlightening note. In order to accomplish, especially, No.1, we need information from our colleagues abroad.

Ms. Patricia Wrightson's newest book is *Shadows of Time*. Iwanami Shoten will soon decide whether to introduce it in Japan. The story begins just after white people came to Australia. There are two main characters, a boy and a girl. The boy is half Aboriginal and half

white. Because of his blue eyes, he is chased away as a devil. The girl is an orphan and escapes because of a minor, but for her important, incident. They travel through time until modern days without aging. Their journey covers the east and the south coasts. They see the drastic change on the continent such as the newly built towns, roads, rails and the appearance of television and flying machines. The children are brave and robust, enduring their destiny with the help of the land's ancient creatures. The story is speedy, surprising, and a little sentimental. Ms. Wrightson's writing is, as always, very poetical. If I am going to translate Ms. Wrightson again, the note should cover the history of Australia. The readers will enjoy what are there in the shadows of time. It is always challenging to discover a new literary work. Translating it means gaining satisfaction by learning of another bigger, deeper, better part in one's self. When a book is published, an added joy comes in sharing that satisfaction, especially when it is shared with new generations whose tomorrows are yet to come.

Notes:

- ¹⁾ This paper had originally been submitted to the 6th International Japanese/English Translation Conference in a colloquial style, but was not read at the seminar as the theme was changed.
- ²⁾ Seta Teiji, Inokuma Yoko, Jingu Teruo, *A History of English and American Children's Literature*, 1971, Kenkyusha, Tokyo. Seta, Inokuma, and Jingu have published their own research works as well as many translations of children's books.
- ³⁾ Matsuoka Kyoko, *Ehon no Sekai, Kodomo no Sekai, Kodomo · Kokoro · Kotoba* and many others. Matsuoka is also a noted translator of children's books.
- ⁴⁾ Shimizu Masako, Noriko Yagita, *The Chronological Table of the Translated Versions of English and American Children's Literature*, 1971,

Kenkyusha, Tplyo. Both Shimizu and Yagita are active in translating children's books from English to Japanese.

- ⁵⁾ Nagauta is one of the genres of traditional music which accompanies Kabuki dramas.
- ⁶⁾ Seta Teiji, "How British and American Children's Literature Was Introduced to Japan," *A History of English and American Children's Literature*, 1971, p.17.
- ⁷⁾ *Ibid.*, p.17.
- ⁸⁾ Yoshida S. *An Approach to English Children's Literature by Genres and Themes*, 1987, Chukyo Shuppan, p.450
- ⁹⁾ Oe Kenzaburo, *Aimaina (Ambiguous) Nihon no Watakushi* (© The Nobel Foundation, 1994), Iwanami Shoten, 1995, pp.115-6.
- ¹⁰⁾ Patricia Wrightson, *The Nargun and the Stars*, 1973, Hutchinson, London, tr. Inokuma Yoko, *Hoshini Sakebu Iwa Nargun*, 1982, Hyoronsha, Tokyo.
- ¹¹⁾ Patricia Wrightson, *A Little Fear*, 1983, Hutchinson, London, tr. Momo Yuriko, *Mrs. Tucker to Kobito Nimbin*, 1986, Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo.
- ¹²⁾ Patricia Wrightson, *Moon=Dark*, 1987, Curtis Brown, London, tr. Momo Yuriko, *Moon=Dark no Tatakai*, Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo.
- ¹³⁾ Patricia Wrightson, *Balyet*, 1989, tr. Momo Yuriko, *Imishie-no-Shojo Balyet* 1991, Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo.
- ¹⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, pp.100-101.