

What Did She Read?:

The Cultural Occupation of Post-War Japan and Translated Girls' Literature

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This paper tries to introduce some aspects of the US cultural politics in post-war Japan, in terms of the US Information Libraries conducted by GHQ/SCAP and their translation program, especially for girls, such as Alcott's *Little Women*, and *Anne of Green Gables* written by the Canadian writer L. Montgomery. Those translated literary works were enthusiastically received by young girls in post-war Japan, and those library and translation programs constituted an important part of re-education program for occupied Japan.

When considering the fact that the US domestic culture, especially at the early stage of the Cold War, is marked by its strict gender containment, the reception of translated literature by Japanese girls involved in some way or other their introduction to the gender deployment that was acceptable to US cultural policies. It is conceivable that those stories were instrumental in Japanese girls' construction of their version of the fantasy of the democratic nuclear family which revolved around the image of American consumer culture, and in this sense were instrumental in the construction of post-war gender configuration in Japan.

Key words : post-war Japan Cultural Policies Translation Program

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Long before the end of World War II the US government had begun planning a re-education and reorientation program for post-war Japan and its people. The objective of the program was to install "democracy" in this formerly militaristic country, and in order to promote this objective carefully selected and controlled books, textbooks, periodicals, motion pictures, radio and other media were considered instrumental. Japan was occupied and re-educated not only through the installation of a new political system, but also through the introduction of American culture..

Recent scholarship has extensively explored archival resources, resulting in clarification of how re-education of the former "axis" powers employed cultural material as a vehicle to promote the US-dominated re-education and democratization program. Reinhold Wagnleitner's study of the situation in Austria is a case in point, while in the case of Japan, Tanigawa's work, for example, minutely examines how post-war films contributed to the US program of Japanese democratization. With regard to books, Kon's series of works examines the system of CIE libraries, but her work is done from the standpoint of library science, and a thorough study linking Kon's work and the contents of the books in the libraries remains to be done.

This paper focuses on the foreign (mostly American) books and periodicals given to young women in post-war Japan through US information libraries and also on translated literary works especially for young girls, as they were a popular vehicle in promoting the American idea of democracy and the American way of life, together with moving pictures. In this time of total devastation these newly introduced cultural items offered a discursive arena for women to negotiate in creating a new female

subjectivity. And given the fact that the re-orientation of Japan was conducted mainly by the US, we can assume that the post-war gender configuration was largely in accordance with domestic US gender formation.

I. The US Information Library (CIE library)

Japan surrendered to the Allied Powers on August 15, 1945. Before the establishment of the American-dominated GHQ, the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, there was already an agency called CIE, the Civil Information and Education Section, whose mission under GHQ was to promote re-education of the Japanese in the fields of information, education, religion, culture and sociology (GHQ/SCAP CIE 5763). It is amazing that the agency began operation of a library in November, only three months after the surrender. This library grew into the CIE library and similar libraries were established in major cities around the country to offer the local people a good selection of American books and periodicals, and to function as a cultural center (Kon1994 29).

To open libraries in such a short time needs well-organized preparation beforehand. Indeed, the information library was an integral part of the State Department's Information and Educational Exchange program, which administered the worldwide operations of radio (VOA), press and publications, films, exchange of persons, and the libraries under the International Information Center Service. The origins of the information library can be traced back to the bi-national centers established in Central and South American countries during the 1930s to promote the

State Department's "good neighbor" policy, and to the Office of War Information reference libraries, which were designed to aid in promoting psychological warfare (Wagnleitner 50-52).

After World War II both were integrated into the State Department's international information program. The whole program was closely tied to foreign policy objectives and was considered an important weapon in the Cold War (James, Jr. 81). In the wake of World War II, and especially after the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948, the cultural program of the State Department was to "promote a better understanding of the US in other countries ... through press, publications, radio, and motion pictures, and other information media, and through information centers." Their emphasis was on a " 'full and fair picture' of the US, its peoples[sic], and its policies." In 1950, to counter Soviet propaganda, President Truman set up the goal of the "Campaign of Truth" (James, Jr. 77). At each stage of the policies, the library books were carefully selected to present the US in the light of the "full and fair picture" or "campaign of truth" policies, or, as Archibald MacLeish, poet and Assistant Secretary of Department of State at the end of World War II, says in the introduction to a book entitled *Cultural Approach*, to "correct the image" of American people created in the minds of foreign people (ix).

In the occupied areas of Germany, Austria, Italy, Korea, and Japan, library installations developed under the auspices of the US Army within the framework of the American Military Government, and were called information centers. They were founded to promote the specific aim of reorientation of occupied peoples and institutions, so the general principle of selection of their library was intended not only to represent the US and its democracy and way of life, but also to represent significant US publications banned in these countries during the period of dictatorship. So the presentation of US culture through US information centers and their libraries was particularly important to soften the predominantly negative image of the US and promote the re-education program (James, Jr. 84).

The Japanese information centers had the mission of re-educating the Japanese people. The number of such centers grew to 23 by 1951, spread over Japan. Unfortunately, a correct picture of the original collection cannot be obtained as no reception date was given on the registration cards until 1950. It can, however, be assumed that the basic collections did not differ greatly among countries; considering that CIE libraries were under the supervision of the State Department after 1949 (James, Jr. 85), it is likely that the libraries had been originally under the influence of the State Department library program, whose selection of books had been made, according to James, Jr., by the State Department, American Library Association, and Library of Congress in consultation with other specialists (82).

How did these libraries work? Referring to the basic collection from one of the Information Libraries, which gives us some idea about the basic collection of the Japanese counterparts, I will mention only magazines as an example and introduce what those magazines showed (as there were rather few people who

could actually read English books properly). The basic magazine collection comprised three categories: first, there were nationally popular items from the US such as the *Saturday Evening Post*, the *New Yorker*, and *Reader's Digest*; then there were slightly more specialized items like the *Journal of Home Economics*; and finally, government periodicals such as *Foreign Commerce Weekly*. Women's magazines belong to the first category, and include such publications as *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *McCall's*, *Mademoiselle*, and *Woman's Home Companion* (RG59 811.42700).

To commemorate the reunion of former librarians and visitors in 2002, the people who attended wrote down their reminiscences and compiled essays. Most of them say they were really pleased to see how the new, free, democratic life would look when in reality they did not have anything after the devastation of war. One of the women could not wait for the latest issue of *Life* to see the American way of life and yearned for it. She was "overwhelmed" by what she saw in the magazines, which contained lots of advertisements for electric appliances and mass circulated brand foods, featuring housewives dressed in Dior's New Look style dresses and looking happy in the kitchen, parlor, or garden. A woman working for a company in the same building as the library remembers frequently dashing into the library during the lunchtime. Many women could not read English at that time and just enjoyed the beautiful color pages. Japanese women took in democracy and freedom through the consumerist image of post-war American life. A further research of the linkage between the iconography of the color pages of American magazines and that of Japanese counterpart will provide for a wider-ranging analysis of the function of American magazines.

II. Translated girls' literature

Around 1950, publishers in Japan resumed full-scale business and were able to start new series of foreign literature. GHQ launched the Supreme Command for the Allied Powers (SCAP) Translation Program, which selected suitable books to be translated into Japanese, and encouraged Japanese publishers to translate and introduce American books ("List of Books Translated"). In particular, juvenile literature such as *Little Women* was emphasized as a means of re-education. The CIE also started the Gift Book Program to introduce "Democratic America" to Japanese children (Kon1996, Ishihara 64). In response to this program, the Japanese publishing industry at first concentrated on republishing major pre-war Japanese texts, and when this had been accomplished around 1950, they turned to foreign literature and began to translate juvenile books which had positive, imaginative, and peaceful themes and messages (McCabe and Kevin 434).

Among the publishers famous for translated literature was Mikasa-shobou. It released a series of translated girls' literature called "Wakakusa-bunko". "Wakakusa" literally means green grass, but the word was famous as part of the translated title of

Alcott's *Little Women*, “Wakakusa-monogatari” or “Wakakusa Story”. This title was originally used for the film adaptation of the novel in the 1930s and then came to be applied also to the novel. Mikasa-shobou used the word Wakakusa to suggest the youthfulness of adolescent girls and in allusion to *Little Women* itself, as the representative of domestic novels.

The Wakakusa-bunko series included such major US girls' classics as Alcott's *Little Women*, Jean Webster's *Daddy Long Legs*, Eleanor Porter's *Pollyanna*, and Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did*. Out of the 57 titles in the series, these classics and other works by the same authors amount to 14 titles. In all, books by US authors account for more than 30 of the 57. Basically these classics have happy endings by virtue of the natural goodness of their heroines, or because their heroines learn goodness in the course of the story; in short, they don't conflict with Japanese traditional gender norms. They had already been translated before the war and so were familiar to Japanese girls, thus assuring good sales.

But the most eye-catching entry in the series is that of 9 books by one author formerly unknown in Japan. This is the Canadian author Lucy Maud Montgomery, with all of the books being translated by Muraoka Hanako.

Montgomery published *Anne of Green Gables* in 1908 and its great success led her to write its 7 sequels. The story begins when Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert, brother and sister, both unmarried and getting older, think about adopting an orphaned boy to help with work on their farm on Prince Edward Island. As it turns out, however, a girl orphan, Anne Shirley, is sent to them mistakenly. It is thus the story of an orphaned girl finally becoming the beloved daughter of Matthew and Marilla. The process by which she acquires a home is also a process of fashioning herself into a beautiful, lovable girl: from a skinny, redheaded, determined, romantic, imaginative and very talkative girl to a beautiful, strawberry-blond, smart, but still independent-minded girl, who attracts her handsome classmate Gilbert.

Montgomery's works have been translated into more than 15 languages, including Polish, French, Italian, Icelandic, Dutch and Finnish. But Japanese girls and women constitute its most enthusiastic audience. Muraoka's translation, first published as one of the Wakakusa-bunko series, was transferred to the Shincho-sha publishing company, and Shincho-sha alone has sold more than 2.5 million copies, and its Anne series has sold more than 13 million copies in all, without counting other translators' versions (Baldwin 123).

Japan has developed the commercialization and commodification of Anne as a popular cultural and media image, so that an “Anne industry” has developed. Anne materials such as animations and movies, theater performances, periodical magazines and books are always available. In particular, books on Anne can make up a whole library. For instance, the Amazon.co.jp website shows 213 items, including various translations. Aside from translated Anne books, books about country life, cooking recipes, or handicrafts are published with titles containing the name “Anne”. For example, there are titles like *Akage No Anne No Tezukuri*

Ehon (Anne's Book for Handicraft), *Akage No Anne Oryouri Note* (Anne's Cooking Notebook) and *Akage No Anne, Recipe Note--L.M.Montgomery No Daidokoro Kara* (Anne's Recipe Notebook; from L.M.Montgomery's Kitchen) (what these books show are recipes of Montgomery's day), as well as *Akage No Anne No Painting Book* (Anne's Painting Book), which is actually a book about “country-style” handicraft inspired by Anne books. In the original novel Anne herself does not actually like sewing, quilting or cooking, but this is something such books conveniently overlook.

Also, more and more Japanese tourists head for Prince Edward Island every year. In 1986 there were only 1186 Japanese visitors, but in 1991 about 15000 Japanese visited the island and 15 Japanese couples got married in the house where Montgomery was married. If you pay an additional fee, Anne will be there at the wedding reception (Baldwin 124).

There are, moreover, innumerable “Anne Clubs”, societies ranging from research-oriented ones, such as Buttercups and Anne Clan, to those whose aim is to make country-style handicrafts, such as The Hot Heart Anne Room (Allard). Now it looks as if good old country life is often called “Anne something”. And not only girls of ten or twelve, but also adult women are absorbed in “Anne's world”.

This phenomenon has attracted the attention of scholars overseas, who wonder what lies behind it all. Some scholars attribute Anne's popularity to the Japanese cult of innocence, others to Anne's frankness, which Japanese people cannot acquire easily, or to Anne's creativity and imagination (Baldwin 125), or to the Japanese sympathy for a poor protagonist who triumphs over long odds (Trillin 219).

Here several elements can be added which probably contributed to the initial reception of Anne in the 1950s. First, there is translator Muraoka's romantic style of expression, and second, her presentation of the story in a way suiting the post-war ideal of the democratic family as well as the post-war representation of American life as affluent and democratic.

Well before the war there had been a long literary tradition in Japan called girls' fiction. Authors such as Yoshiya Nobuko had presented beautiful girls who tried to conquer a series of hardships. As the settings of such stories were often schools managed by Christian churches, the stories conveyed the atmosphere of Western culture. Girls' magazines containing such stories had pages featuring letters from readers, where girls assumed that they belonged to the exclusive few who enjoyed mission school life. Their writing, imitating the style of girls' fiction, contained a lot of decorative, poetic expressions (Honda 186-89). Muraoka, who had started her writing career as an author of girls' fiction, was well acquainted with these hyper-romantic expressions and adopted them when she translated Anne's imaginative expressions such as “White Way of Delight” or “Lake of Shining Water” into Japanese. In doing so, Muraoka grafted Anne's story onto the literary tradition of the girls' story, and the imagined girls' community.

In translating *Anne of Green Gables*, Muraoka omitted several

parts of the story, such as intricate historical descriptions or difficult literary allusions. This may have been partly because of the shortage of paper, the supply of which had been strictly controlled after the war. In fact, each page of the first edition of *Anne of Greengables* shows that the publisher pushed the contents to the limit with the smallest typefaces and smallest margins. Also the Japanese custom of abridged translation may have been in the translator's mind, the intention being to convey the essence of the story. At any rate, the whole story was as a result somewhat simplified to underscore the growing up of Anne into a good girl who could discard her teaching career to take after Marilla and choose a marriage based on an equal-footing relationship with her partner, Gilbert. Moreover, the cover picture of early editions featuring Audrey Hepburn, or a blonde haired model as Anne must have fortified the image along with her representation of American life as affluent (figure1, 2). Although the story is Canadian, the image of their love was presented as a post-war American ideal. As Akamatsu points out, the story of Anne's overcoming difficulties provided Japanese girls a role model and an important means of access to Western society (209). It is important to note that role model was presented together with that American ideal embodied in the girl's figure on the cover. In a sense the image of happy American girls in American magazines was utilized there.

Muraoka had absorbed the turn-of-the -century Western progressive ideal of "good wife, good mother" during her days in a famous mission school for girls, Touyou Eiwa Jogakuin, from 1904 to 1913, and actively promoted that ideal after the war. In



figure 1 Courtesy of Anne Memorial Room/
Hanako Muraoka Study Room



figure 2 Courtesy of Anne Memorial Room/
Hanako Muraoka Study Room

1946, just a year after the war's end, she edited a book entitled *Shin Nippon No Josei Ni Okuru* (*A Book for New Japanese Women*) and contributed an essay to it called "Ai To Kekkō Ni Tsuite (On Love and Marriage)". That she could publish a book in those days when all publications were under strict censorship is not surprising when we consider that she had been very well known before the war as a didactic personality on a radio program for children and also as a translator of children's literature including Mark Twain's *The Prince and The Pauper*. She was a suitable person to publish a book teaching the idea of post-war democracy and a new relationship between men and women under that democracy. In her essay she writes about ideal love and marriage in post-war democratic Japan. According to her, women should have co-education and work as hard as men. Love should be based on equality between men and women, and once married, women should be good and smart homemakers, as well as working outside the home (39-54). The relation of Anne and Gilbert is the one which represents Muraoka's idea.

We can find an amazing similarity between her account and the one in the *Report of the US Education Mission to Japan* submitted to GHQ/SCAP in 1946. There we can find a passage about women in a democratic society which says "women must see that to be good wives, they must be good; and to be wise mothers, they must be wise ... it grows from wide social experience and from political practice" (12).

Muraoka, who worked as a translator for the first post-war Prime Minister, Higashikuni Naruhiko (Ogura 259), was involved in the CIE library¹, and was later a translator for Helen Keller when she came to Japan, was indeed an advocate of the post-war ideal family and ideal womanhood, and functioned as a bridge between pre-war and post-war ideas about family.

III. Containment culture transplanted as "Western/American"

As is clear in Muraoka's account, the post-war idea of the family looks rather conservative in hindsight. Certainly she puts

emphasis upon the equality between men and women, but women were still considered homemakers. Even if she is working outside, a woman should not neglect the duties of homemaking. Hers is the idea of womanhood of turn-of-the-century progressivism, and so the contemporary idea of sharing domestic work and child-rearing is yet to come. Muraoka's ideal clearly aligns itself with post-war domestic US culture, where nuclear families living in suburban towns were thought to be the basic units of the nation. And it has been pointed out that the centrality of the nuclear family facilitated the containment of gender and sexuality: the containment of women in the home, and the containment of sexuality within heterosexuality (May).

So, in a sense, the difference between the Japanese pre-war pre-democratic family and the post-war democratic family was not a large one, as long as women were advised to be good housewives. Indeed, as in the US, women were advised to go back home, and tax deductions for housewives and small so-called 2DK houses designed for nuclear families would be introduced later on.

But in re-orienting the Japanese, the political ideal of democracy was realized by assuming the image of a new family, and distributed through US and Japanese women's magazines and girls' literature. Such Westernized images were presented as something good and advanced, forming a sharp contrast with life in the traditional Japanese style. Many Japanese girls' magazines featured articles about how to improve everyday life by using imagination and small inventions, and they often featured illustrations of Western-style rooms and girls. Nakahara Junichi's famous periodicals such as *Himawari* (Sunflower) (1947-52) and *Junior Soleil* (1954-60) offered post-war Japanese girls a model of a new life modeled on the Western style. It is interesting that one of his famous girls' illustrations is of Anne. In short, democracy wore Western dress, and in so doing contained Japanese girls and women in a seemingly revised womanhood.

The reconstruction of Japan involved massive educational effort through books, periodicals, motion pictures and other cultural materials. As an antidote to Japanese imperialism, the American and Western way of life functioned as a representation of democracy, and as such it was distributed, and favorably shared by the Japanese people, which in turn produced a self-colonizing hegemony; in the process, it also conveyed a renewed gender deployment. In other words, the political discourse of democracy materialized as cultural and economic discourses about Western and American family life.

Seen in this light, reconsideration of the cultural occupation in terms of the export/import and distribution/circulation of cultural representations and their reception will serve well in tracing the construction of present-day gender configuration.

Note

This paper is a revised version of the paper read for Women's World 2005, Seoul.

¹ I have not found any documentary source so far about Muraoka's involvement with the library; it is what Muraoka's daughter was told, and she in turn handed it down to her daughters, that is, Muraoka's granddaughters.

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