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Post-War Children's Literature in Japan
戦後日本児童文学の動向

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要旨

戦後日本の児童図書の出版の傾向を綿密に描写することは容易なことではない。まず，児童をめぐる社会的環境の変貌，教育制度，教育理念の変転，マスコミ及び消費文化の急速な発達，それに伴なう家庭生活の変化等々，児童向け出版物の内容に強い影響を与える問題が数多く存在する。それに加えて，児童向け出版物の内容は，学習雑誌，漫画雑誌，単行本，全集物，学習参考書，テスト本のたぐいなど，種類は様々であり，或いは，図書の形態を明確にとるものだけとりあげても，絵本あり，幼年童話あり，昔話集あり，小説あり，科学的読物あり，はたまた，図鑑，辞典の類など，題材，対象により，その範疇を限定することも非常に困難である。

従って，この小論文に於ては，文学的色彩の濃い児童雑誌，日本の作家による創作児童文学の代表的作品の若干をとりあげて，戦後の日本の児童文学の動向を紹介しようと試みたものである。

この小論文の主な部分を占めるものは，次の如きである。1）戦後初期の物資欠乏期における児童雑誌の果した役割とその衰退。2)『ビルマの竪琴』『ノンちゃん雲にのる』『二十四の瞳』などに代表される児童文学界のアウトサイダーによる傑作とそれらの影響。3)『山びこ学校』『原爆の子ら』に代表される児童の作文にあらわれた教育の効果と，これら作品の社会的影響。4）学校図書館の発展が，児童図書出版に与えた影響。そして，最後に，戦後の新しい世代の作家が，日本の古典的伝統に加えて，西欧的な創作方法の影響を加味して，新しい作品を生みだしつつあることを,『竜の子太郎』,『北極のムーシカ，ミーシカ』などを例として紹介した。

また，外国の児童文学の名作の数々が飜訳を通じて，日本の児童図書の中で占める比重は，非常に大きなものであり，また，それらの飜訳された作品が，日本の児童図書出版の傾向及び，日本人の作者による創作に与えた影響は，計り知ることのできないほどのものであるが，この問題は，また，別の機会に，周到な調査に基づいて発表したいと願っている。

It is not easy to trace the development of children's literature in Japan during the past twenty years. It has been a crowded period, deeply influenced by the effects of World War

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II, and made confused by changes in the social structure and in the life of the country. These facts while causing an increase in the number of children's books and in the number of readers, created many problems for writers, artists and publishers as well as for educators, teachers, librarians and parents.

Still, some broad lines of development can be discerned, and it is interesting to notice how closely they parallel changes in social thought and behaviour. When World War II ended the pendulum of the society swang wildly from one extreme to the other. With defeat, militaristic and nationalistic ideas were cast aside together with a large number of the country's traditions, while a flood of new democratic ideas overwhelmed the Japanese people. The governmental system was changed and so was the educational system. Even traditional family ties were put into question.

These sudden changes were more immediately apparent in children's reading materials than in any other kind of publication, for in no other field can the public expect to get exactly what they want and in no other are they more readily satisfied. One successful experimental publication produced a host of imitations and the homogeneity of the Japanese people favoured the publication of a great number of ephemeral reading materials for children based upon the imported ideas of humanity and democracy. Irrespective of the contents of the children's books of that time, the young readers did not have any possibility to choose between "what children like to read" and "what children ought to read." The latter alternative was a need deeply felt by those adults who dared publishing reading materials for children.

Between 1946 and 1947 more than a dozen children's magazines were published. Among those we may list *Akatombo* (The Red Dragonfly), April 1946-October 1947, *Kodomo no Hiroba* (Children's plaza), April 1946-March 1950, *Ginga* (The Galaxy), October 1946-August 1948, *Dōwa Kyōshitsu* (The Classroom of Fairy Tales), January 1948-March 1949, *Kodomo no Mura* (Children's Village), February 1947-?, and *Shōnen Shōjo* (Boys and Girls), January 1948-December 1950. Those magazines were conceived and published with "good" and serious intentions to enlighten the children of the new Japan. Those magazines sold quite well for a short period of time as the public up to the end of the war had had no reading material that had not been censored. The publishers' intentions appealed to adults too as the themes of the stories such as rebellion against militarism and totalitarianism, hatred of war and hope for peace, criticism against non-scientific and non-logical thought, etc. were all sincerely felt by all. Yet there was a fatal flaw in the stories contributed to those magazines, that is, most of the writers forgot what the children liked to read and concentrated on what they ought to read. It was exactly not the same didacticism which spread during the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe and on the American continent. But the idea that a children's book of whatever type should have a "purpose," had a very strong influence on the Japanese writers. Almost no children's story could stand exclusively on its own artistic or entertaining value: it had to have a "purpose," or moral.

No wonder that Japanese children could not stand those stories of "good" intention no more than did European children stood their "godly books" in the past two centuries. All such magazines had to disappear from the children's world during the following few years, though other causes of this phenomenon could be found. In fact, by the end of 1950, all the above mentioned children's magazines ceased to exist. Instead the pendulum swang wildly backward and cheap adventure stories by hack writers and comics of a vulgar nature took their places.

But just before the quality of children's books was to be at the mercy not only of hack writers but also of unscrupulous publishers, a few outstanding works offered to the public—the word "public" being intentionally used here because adult readers enjoyed and appreciated these works no less than children did—by non-professional and unconventional writers. *Biruma no Tategoto* (A Harp of Burma), 1947

by Michio Takeyama and *Non-chan Kumo ni Noru* (Non-chan Rides a Cloud), 1947 by Momoko Ishii are the best examples.

Mr. Michio Takeyama is a professor of German Literature in Tokyo University and a well known commentator on world affairs. In the realm of criticism of adult literature, his hatred against Nazism and his anti-communism are well-known and actually some critics of children's literature have highly praised his "A Harp of Burma" for his ideological and moral content. War and Peace can be at one time the greatest and the most difficult subject to be treated in any kind of literature. Michio Takeyama proved that the subject was worth being tried in the realm of children's literature. The theme was played on the delicate strings of the harp carried by a young Japanese soldier over the embattled fields of Burma. Beautiful yet very dramatic incidents in the story captivated the minds of the children while the underlying philosophy of the story touched their hearts as well as those of the adult readers.

"A Harp of Burma" was translated into English a few years later.

Miss Momoko Ishii is probably the best known author and translator of children's book's in Japan at present. Through her facile and delicate pen and excellent knowledge of both the Japanese and English languages, such famous classics as A. A. Milne's *Winnie the Pooh*, and Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* and Eleanor Farjeon's *The Little Book Room*, have become very popular among Japanese readers. Her reputation as the author of such outstanding original stories for children as *Non-chan Kumo ni Noru* (Non-chan Rides a Cloud), *Yama no Tomu-san* (Tom of the Mountain Village), *Maigo no Tenshi* (A Stray Angel), *Sangatsu Hina no Tsuki* (March; the Month of the Doll Festival), etc. place her among best authors of books for children. Yet, until *Non-chan Kumo ni Noru* (Non-chan Rides a Cloud), her first original story, had been published, Miss Ishii was little known as an author. In fact she had been better known as an editor and a translator. "Non-chan," a small second-grade school girl climbed up a tree and while holding out her hands, she fell down and fainted. There the story starts. She meets an old man with the long white beard, who lived up on a cloud. This story could be called a dream-fantasy according to the classification, made by Miss Smith, the author of *The Unreluctant Years*.[1] In her story dream and reality are so naturally blended that few readers notice that her work follows the well-defined pattern of the great works of fantasy. The work has a slight moralizing touch but, the author aimed especially at making its reading a genuine pleasure. "Non-chan" has been translated into Chinese, English and German.

The third author who can be put in the same category as the other two writers is Mrs. Sakae Tsuboi. She didn't start as a children's author yet became our best realistic story-teller. She wrote *Kaki no Ki no Aru Ie* (A House with a Kaki Tree), *Haha no Nai Ko to Ko no Nai Haha to* (Mothers without Children and Children without Mothers), *Sakamichi* (A Sloping Road), and her best-known work *Nijū-shi no Hitomi* (Twenty-four Eyes).

None of her works is intrinsically dramatic. Instead, apart from their literary value, her novels, rather than stories for youngsters have come to interpret and reconstruct for her readers the fabric of the society of the author's times. "Twenty-four Eyes," faithfully mirrors some aspects of the period between 1928 and the end of World War II through social changes undergone by a young woman-teacher and her twelve school children at a small country-school. In this work the war itself plays an important role yet it doesn't dominate the story. The peace-loving nature of the common people and the difficulty of living in human society are her main themes throughout all of her works. "Twenty-four Eyes," since it appeared in 1952, reached a larger public than any other story written for children. Its sustained popularity confirms that her work have something that has a lasting impact on the reader, and they are close to reality and their verisimilitude is great. So, with the passage of time, they acquire value as social

history, too.

These three works by three different authors won the Ministry of Education "Prizes for Fostering the Arts" in 1951 and 1952.

It should be noted that these three authors were not originally professional writers of books for children. "A Harp of Burma," "Non-chan Rides a Cloud," and "Twenty-four Eyes" have become new classics of the post-war period while conventional and professional children's writers were reticent in saying what they thought of these works by outsiders and what they themselves were doing. They were reticent perhaps because by children's stories they had meant, traiditionally, only short fairy tales so that they had nothing to say about long novels written for children. Or perhaps because they were given no chance to publish in any form their original works for almost all children's magazines had discontinued publication during that period.

While authors of children's books remained silent, student writers with adult editorship put out collections of their diaries. Some of these became best-sellers and were translated into foreign languages. *Yamabiko Gakkō* (The Echo of Mountain School) and *Genbaku no Kora* (Children of the Atomic Bomb) were the best examples.

Both *Yamabiko Gakkō* (The Echo of Mountain School) and *Genbaku no Kora* (Children of the Atomic Bomb) put extremely controversial questions to the public in many ways.

The collection of students' diaries based on their isolated life in a mountain village and compiled by their young teacher, Seikyō Muchaku, then an utterly unknown young man, was highly praised as the best result of democratic and free education and enthusiastically supported by progressive group of young teachers and educators, while strong objections were raised by the conservatives and the conformists.

"Children of the Atomic Bomb," went spreading like wildfire over the dried-up realm of human justice and sympathy. It put the fire of hatred against the manufacturers and droppers of atomic bombs and at the same time it urged men's hearts to long for peace. A critic in the coming centuries may comment that this book led to the world peace movement as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had led to the antisegregation movement. Be that as it may, apart from its literary value "Children of the Atomic Bomb" is and will always be a witness to the misuse of scientific inventions.

These contradictory reactions to the same works were reflected by the unstable social conditions. While adults were seriously concerned with lack of school facilities, the teacher union movement was torn by ideological struggle, strong opposition was made by the Zengakuren (Student Union) against the MSA in bloody fight against police, the economic depression, and many other problems gave rise to new types of sensational, barbaric and sentimental comics and magazines put forth in large quantity by unscrupulous publishers. These publications almost dominated the world of children's literature in Japan in those years. Because of the depression, a good number of small publishers went out of business. Only a few experienced publishers with large capitals barely managed to survive by repeatedly putting out coarse editions of the same favorite classics, most of them translated from foreign languages. Even these few large publishers might have had to close their children's book departments, had not school teachers started setting up a great number of school libraries.

In 1950 the Japan Library Law was promulgated. This law authorized prefectural governments and local authorities to establish public libraries in their communities. At that time the SCAP CIE libraries had strong influences and gave suggestions for setting up new public libraries and for improving the pre-war library facilities.

It should be noted that the outstanding leadership and constructive advice offered during the following ten years by Dr. Robert L. Gitler and by other foreign visiting professors to the Japan Library School, Keio University, and to all types of Japanese libraries played an impressive role in the development of our libraries.

In February of that year the Japan School Library Association was created, the first of

its kind in Japan's history. With the strong support and advice of the U.S. Education Commission to Japan matching the enthusiastic requests for new school library services made by Japanese school teachers and librarians, the School Library Law was passed by the Japanese Diet in 1953. Under the School Library Law each school had the legal obligation to establish a school library. In fact, starting in 1954 the Ministry of Education subsidized more than forty thousand public schools to help them build their library facilities and book collections. The subsequent development of the Japanese school libraries and the changes which have taken place in the library world are such a large topic that an whole separate essay would be necessary. Here this writer can only relate a fact namely that the development of school libraries increased the number of children's books and allowed the publishing houses to make large profits while possibly raising the standards of children's literature in Japan.

As shown on Table 1 the number of children's books being published increased dramatically during those years and continued to increase steadily up to 1957, when the Ministry of Education changed its policy with regard to the government subsidy to school libraries. It was believed that the first basic needs of the school library had been satisfied and that there was no urgent need for additional new books. At about the same time it was clear that school librarians were increasingly dissatisfied with the cheap and ephemeral editions of the favorite classics then on the market. The publishers thus found they could no longer sell such kind of books in large quantities. To partially replace these cheap editions new works by twentieth century children's authors of high reputation in various countries, began to be translated into Japanese. Hugh Lofting, Hendrich Van Loon, Hans Baumann, Meindert de Jong, Dola de Jong, Eleanor Estes, Eleanor Farjeon, Erich Kastner, E. Nesbit, Astrid Lindgren, just to name a few, were made accessible to the Japanese readers.

In 1957, Paul Hazard's *Books, Children and Men* was translated from the French original edition into Japanese and met with great success. *The Unreluctant Years* by Lillian H. Smith has been translated in 1964 and is becoming one of the best primers for the students of children's literature. A study of the trans-

Table 1

Year	Number of titles*	Ratio of children's books to the total publication
1950	1,408	? %
1951	1,388	8.9
1952	1,633	9.4
1953	2,076	20.5
1954	2,869	15.1
1955	3,260	15.0
1956	3,551	14.5
1957	4,042	16,0
1958	3,397	13.6
1959	2,725	11.3
1960	2,435	10.3
1961	2,359	10.8
1962	2,419	11.0
1963	2,509	11.0
1964	2,206	9.7

* Number of titles includes both new titles and revised editions but not text-books and readers.

Table 2. Number of children's books (titles) published in 1963 and 1964

Subjects by N. D. C.	New titles and revised editions		New titles only	
	1963	1964	1963	1964
General	91	95	63	63
Philosophy	40	37	7	22
History	373	305	123	83
Social Sciences	47	42	27	25
Natural Sciences	248	184	104	121
Technology	87	68	62	64
Industries	22	19	18	16
Arts	354	195	329	191
Languages	32	22	20	18
Literature	1,215	1,239	467	514
Total	2,509	2,206	1,220	1,117

lations of foreign children's books should occupy a large segment in the history of children's literature in Japan. But it is again another large topic that would require separate treatment.

Another important trend related to the development of the school libraries is the wide variety of children's books which had been published in the last ten years. Retellings of folktales and myths, biographies not only of famous people but also of individuals of merit and who had a distinct personality, books of history and geography, books on discoveries and explorations, and picture books, have proved to be very popular. And yet, during this period of time and even now our librarians did not have enough influence on authors and publishers to make them turn out good children's books. As for original works by Japanese authors, this period seems to have mainly served to advance the reputation of those few prewar authors who were favoured by grown-ups for some sentimental reasons and whose books they bought for their children. Lack of intelligent criticism and reviewing have been one of the principal reasons which is preventing so many parents and teachers to realize the need for better books. It would also help to have an informed editorial policy as it would improve the status of authors of integrity, who in the past had to plough a lonely furrow, often with inadequate rewards and always without recognition outside a small circle of specialists.

In 1960 *Kodomo to Bungaku* (Children and Literature for Them) written jointly by six authors created a big controversy because of its critical approach. The six writers who had in one way or another, something to do with children's reading—Miss Momoko Ishii, author and translator, Miss Tomiko Inui, author and editor, Mr. Shinichi Suzuki, journalist, Mr. Teiji Seta, editor and translator, Mr. Tadashi Matsui, editor, and the writer of this article had started a friendly study group several years earlier. They intended to compare Japanese children's literature and foreign children's literature, especially books by European and North American authors. What the group wanted to prove was simple enough: no force in the world can compel children to read what they do not want to read. Only books of value should be put into the children's hands—books of honesty, integrity, and vision—books which would help them to mature emotionally and intellectually. Following this approach, re-evaluated six of the most representative Japanese authors. They made a somewhat negative criticism of Mimei Ogawa, Jōji Tsubota and Hirosuke Hamada while praising the works by Kenji Miyazawa, Shōzo Chiba, and Nankichi Niimi. By evaluating the works of these six authors they tried to indicate what was lacking in the Japanese children's literature.

As Frank Eyre stated in his *20th Century Children's Boohs*, "the twentieth century's principal contribution to children's literature has been in the invention of fantastic and improbable adventures for that enchanted time when children are first beginning to experience the delights of fitting together a story in the mind. . . .This field is in fact the only one in the whole range of children's reading about which it is possible to say with confidence that there is no reason at all why the most voracious of young readers should ever be given anything but the best. . . There are several reasons for this twentieth-century phenomenon. It may or may not be the century of the common man, but it is certainly the century of the child. . ."[2)]

Mr. Eyre's statement, if it did materialize, would beautifully fill the serious gap in Japanese children's literature. Ever since there have been books written for children in Japan there have been many interpretations of what an ideal children's book should be. Emphasis was alternatively placed on making children polite, well-informed on every subject, or aware of some social or economic problems with which the adults of the time were preoccupied. And I am afraid this is still true to a great extent. But fortunately this situation has gradually been improved by a host of younger writers. Tomiko Inui's first long story, *Nagai Nagai Pengin no Hanashi* (A Long Long Story of Penguines) was published in 1954. In Japan

stories for younger children and school children of the intermediate grades have consisted of mostly fairy-tales, usually rather short stories. "A Long Long Story of Penguines" was the first attempt to offer the young a long story written for them. *Kokage no Ie no Kobitotachi* (Little Men in the House under a Tree) was her second work meant for older children. *Hokkyoku no Mūshika Mīshika* (Mūshika and Mīshika at the North Pole), her third work went up on the runner's-up list of the Hans Christian Andersen Award for 1964.

Chibikko Kamu no Bōken (Adventures of tiny Kam), 1961 is another work of fantasy of a type rarely written by a Japanese author. The author, Mrs. Toshiko Kanzawa has that rare gift for creating dramatic episodes in a fantastic world. The giant who lives on the top of a volcanic mountain and tends the fire and the smoke of the volcano, the lake of magic water, a huge bear having super-natural powers, etc. may be conventional tools for tellers of fantastic stories in the English-speaking countries but among the Japanese young writers it is rare quality, one to be praised and cultivated as it would spur the imagination of our children.

These two authors' success brought out a host of imitators who just invented imaginary world of elves and dwarves and fairies and utterly improbable plots. Among those imitators some of them tried to bring in the dwarves of the Ainu legends. But, alas, lack of careful preparation on the part of the writers and especially lack of creative imagination prevented them from drawing the inner characters of the heroes and their outward figures and images. No matter how smartly the plot had been conceived, how could children cherish the story of heroes who have almost no face and who existed in a vacuum?

Tatsunoko Tarō (Dragon Tarō) written by Mrs. Miyoko Matsutani and placed on the honour list of the Hans Christian Andersen Award for 1962 is another masterpiece written by a post-war young author. The folktale on which "Dragon Tarō" based was very little known until discovered by Mrs. Matsutani and her husband in the mountain region of *Shinshū*. But their discovery would have meant just one more folktale among the few that have been recently offered to the public had not Mrs. Matsutani rewoven the tale into an adventure story of real fantasy. This work might not be compared with Farjeon's *Glass Slippers* or her *Silver Curlew*. Yet, I would say, it was a good attempt in the right direction and a success.

If "cute" is a wrong word for praising a children's book "very pretty and vivid portrayal of children behaving naturally and yet fancifully" is a good definition of Mrs. Reiko Nakagawa's *Iya Iya En* (The Naughty Nursery), 1962 and its sequence, *Kaeru no Eruta* (Eruta, the Frog), 1964.

In the field of realism a large number of stories and works have been written by authors who started their activities in the past cover period. Their themes were based upon world peace, on the contrast between rich and poor, and other social and economic aspects of our society and of the world in general. Their intentions are good and sincere. However, it's difficult to see how these works, based as they are on political and social situations which lasted for a short time only, can keep on appealing to the children, once the events which prompted their authors to write them, have become a thing of the past. In any case, an appraisal of these works can be made at a later time.

The post-war period has produced many such writers and books, for it is one of the surprising aspects of the publication of children's books in Japan, that, despite all that has been said against certain aspects of it, a high proportion of the best children's books of the century has in fact been first published in Japan including a large number of translations of foreign children's books. This last phenomenon is evidence that the world itself is getting increasingly smaller and that we are having a much easier access to literary works published in foreign countries.

Yet these books in Japan came out, not as a part of a consciously planned publishing programme nor from any preconceived idea of

what constitutes a good children's book, but seemingly in a haphazard fashion put out by a number of indifferent and strongly competing publishing houses. Some of them set the fashion for a time. Multi-volume anthological publications are the best example. Others were lonely stars like Fukuinkan's picture books, and still others were best mentioned as works which stand on their own, rather than being representatives of this brief historical period.

This brief historical survey is far from complete nor is it a comprehensive essay but only a brief report which, I hope, can take the place of an individual reply to the many letters from abroad which inquired about recent trends in children's literature of Japan.

1) Smith, Lillian H. *The unreluctant years;* a critical approach to children's literature. Chicago, A.L.A., 1953. p. 160.
2) Eyre, Frank. *20th century children's books*. London, The British Council, 1952. p. 40.