Eating Murasaki Shikibu

Scriptworlds, Reverse-Importation, and The Tale of Genji

Matthew Chozick

University of Birmingham, UK and Temple University, Japan Campus
m.chozick@bham.ac.uk

Abstract

The fifth-century transmission of China's sophisticated writing system to Japan prompted a cascade of textual and literary developments on the archipelago. Retrofit to support Japanese phonetics and syntax, a hybrid script and literature evolved; from this negotiation of texts emerged Murasaki Shikibu's *The Tale of Genji* in eleventh century Kyoto. While *Genji* is celebrated today as Japan's enduring national classic, it fell out of print for much of two centuries preceding its first translation into Victorian era English. This paper examines how interregional exchanges of translations and scripts have amplified the critical and popular success of *Genji*. It will be argued that English translations of *Genji* helped to provide a stylistic and typographic model for reintroducing the text to modern Japanese readers as a mass-market novel. In theorizing about such matters, the Japanese concept of reverse-importation will be introduced and intercultural transferences are contextualized within Oswald de Andrade's notion of cultural cannibalism.

Keywords

Murasaki Shikibu – *The Tale of Genji* – translation studies – reverse-importation – Japanese literature – Hannibal Lecter

• • •

Genji attracts patrons with both the quality and variety of the food on offer with its unique décor. Diners who wish to enjoy the full Japanese experience can reserve the Tatami Room, where the floor is covered in dried rushes, in accordance with the ancient Japanese tradition.

Eyewitness Travel Krakow 192

[Translation is to] what end? In order to be rescued, from death or extinction.

SONTAG 339

Introduction: From Brazil to Hollywood to Kyoto

With its shocking title, the Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade's 1928 "Manifesto Antropófago" has gained attention in recent years among Anglophone literary scholars. Published originally in a script brought to Brazil by Portuguese Jesuits, the manifesto celebrates the creative potential of cultural cannibalism, which Andrade described as an "[a]bsorption of the sacred enemy ... to transform him into totem" (43). Using this metaphor of anthropophagia, Andrade advocated for his fellow Brazilian writers to nourish their national literature by symbolically devouring—and incorporating—admirable qualities of foreign texts. On such a dietary regimen, figurative cannibals were tasked to hunt for "the best ingredients from the cultural corpus of the Old and New Worlds in order to create something unique" (Williams 77). In this way, Andrade's manifesto charged Brazilian writers to strengthen national literary traditions without indiscriminately rejecting Anglo-European culture.

After a delay of nearly seventy years, the otherness of Andrade's manifesto was translated into English in 1991. That same year, at box offices, a parallel interest in cannibalism followed the release of the Oscar-winning film *Silence of the Lambs*. The movie's anthropophagic plotline—fleshed out in prequels, a sequel, novels, and a television series—centers on a man-eating psychiatrist, who happens to have been the protégé of a Japanese martial arts master named Murasaki Shikibu.¹ Yes, Murasaki Shikibu. Bibliophiles watching or reading the series are left to puzzle over the reference: what is Japan's national literary hero, who lived a millennium ago, doing in Hollywood cavorting with a cannibal?

This paper examines the spread of Murasaki's reputation to noughties Hollywood from ancient Japan, and we will draw upon the image of the cannibal—of Oswald de Andrade's anthropophagia—to emphasize how Murasaki's writing

1 Played by the actress Li Gong, a samurai sword brandishing Murasaki Shikibu is featured most prominently in the 2007 film *Hannibal Rising*, which was based on the eponymous 2006 novel by Thomas Harris.

was first composed, and then later enriched, with a great many of foreign ingredients. In particular, our discussion focuses on interregional flows of scripts and translations between Japan, China, and the West. In broadly tracing a millennium of geographic and diachronic movements in relation to *Genji*, we will encounter a lacuna of nearly two centuries during which complete novelistic versions of the tale had fallen out of print. As G.G. Rowley has argued about the *Genji* publication history in Japan, “[a]ccording to the most comprehensive modern catalogues, not a single new edition of a complete text of *The Tale of Genji* appeared between 1706 and 1890” (2). Following upon Rowley’s research, this paper examines how from 1882 onwards, early English translations of *Genji* reinforced the classic’s standing in Japan and provided formal models that helped publishers to popularize it on the archipelago.

To describe this complex trajectory of cultural flow, I will introduce the Japanese term 逆輸入 (*gyakuyunyū*), literally meaning “reverse-importation.” Reverse-importation designates a process by which sales of a domestic commodity rise in a native market due to popularity achieved in a foreign market. While the term is frequently used by Japanese in the context of industrial or commercial products, it is increasingly employed for cultural and artistic output.² Although there has been little scholarship in English on reverse-importation to date, there are several famous cases of it in Western cultural history. An example relevant to our discussion is *Conversations with Goethe*, which secured a readership in nineteenth century Germany only after finding a market overseas in translation. Ironically, the text that popularized *weltliteratur* may have been lost to us if not for a “reception abroad [that] set the state for its subsequent revival at home” (Damrosch 32). Similarly, in Japanese cultural history, I contend below that an important reverse-importation phenomenon is the reception of *Genji*. But before we further examine the reappearance of *Genji*, it would be helpful to situate our discussion within the regional network of texts and scripts from which the classic first emerged about a millennium ago.

2 A common example of *gyakuyunyū* given by scholars are ukiyo-e woodblock prints, which were “recognized as highbrow in Japan only after being valued abroad and then reverse-imported” (Sugimoto 30).

(Con)textualizing *Genji* before Reverse-Importation: Nourishment via Foreign Ingredients

The longevity of Murasaki's literary presence would probably have surprised the devout Buddhist, who sought to capture an aesthetic of ephemerality in her work. Notions of impermanence and transience permeate Murasaki's prose, and such ideas spread onto the Japanese archipelago via Sanskrit sutras, relayed in Chinese translation, around the turn of the sixth century. Approximately five centuries later, in 978, Murasaki is thought to have been born; she spent much of her life—which continued until 1014 or perhaps even as late as 1025—writing of Kyoto's imperial court. In Murasaki's day, chapters of her opus circulated among elite concubines and consorts, who also helped to hand copy and edit it. Editor-scribes passed down *Genji* primarily in the Japanese phonetic script of *hiragana*, which probably allowed them to render the textures and tenor of their spoken language more precisely than with Chinese ideograms. This usage of *hiragana* contributed to the lasting power of *Genji*, because early editor-scribes were mostly women, and therefore many lacked training in written Chinese. While none of the original *Genji* manuscripts survive today, they are, nevertheless, recognized as a “high point of works written in [the phonetic] *hiragana*-type script” (Seely 71). Such recognition was not immediate, and before modern printing technologies it was difficult to distribute, preserve, and standardize the *hiragana* of Murasaki's tale. Copies of *Genji* first reached relatively small audiences and chapters were historically challenging to acquire.³ Moreover, within the literary hierarchy of Murasaki's day, *Genji* was largely dismissed, since, by ancient Japanese Buddhist standards, fiction was viewed as a form of deception. In contrast, literati valorized the truthfulness of poetry and histories. Fortunately for us, by the thirteenth century, nobles from Murasaki's ancestral clan started to employ her work to study its poetry. Heirloom editions of *Genji* were compiled by aristocrats and eventually knowledge of the work's motifs—circulating through poems, summaries, and adaptations—spread amongst “more people than had actually read it as a whole” (Bowring 86). For much of the classic's premodern history, complete access to the chapters was limited to a relatively small and highly educated audience.

3 The eleventh century diary known today as the *Sarashina Nikki* contains detail about difficulties in acquiring and reading all of the *Genji* chapters outside of the court. An English translation is available. See Sarashina. *As I Crossed a Bridge of Dreams: Recollections of a Woman in nth-Century Japan*. Trans. Ivan Morris. New York: Penguin Classics, 1989.

It is often assumed that to understand how *Genji* had been written and historically circulated in Japan, there is no need to look beyond the archipelago. One of many reasons for this is that the phonetic script of *hiragana*, in which *Genji* was primarily written, has come to be associated with Japan's national linguistic identity. Notably, Japanese school curricula have portrayed the script as foundational since the 1890s for a "new notion of a national language" (Shirane 237). Efforts to promote a national language coincided with a shift in the Japanese literary canon towards anthologizing "national language texts" (ibid.). Not surprisingly, in 1882, the first English translator of *Genji*, Kenchō Suematsu, described *Genji* as "written in pure classical Japanese ... [which came about] quite independently of any foreign influence" (15). While *Genji* may be recognized, a posteriori, to have been written in the national language without foreign influence, its classical phonetic script of *hiragana* was clearly devised with influence from Chinese characters. According to David B. Lurie, "the trend from around the early ninth century onward was toward formal simplification, which eventually yielded loosely organized sets of phonographs that were visually distinct from their original Chinese characters" (314). Other scholars have gone further and questioned the visual distinctions between the Chinese script and Japanese *hiragana*. Christopher Seeley, for example, has argued that "*hiragana* include a number of signs which are little if at all different from cursive forms used by famous native Chinese calligraphers" (71). In any case, notions of *Genji* being purely Japanese and without foreign influence undervalue the text's rich relationship to China, which was essential to the transmission of Murasaki's work as well as to its cultural ethos.

Arguments evincing the purity of Japaneseness were raised to a fevered pitch during the Second World War, when cultural chauvinism and territorial expansion motivated some Japanese scholars to deny Murasaki's cultural indebtedness to China. In 1944, for instance, the anthropologist Shinobu Orikuchi attempted to repudiate Chinese influences from *Genji* by posing distinctions that read like stock examples of Freud's narcissism of small differences:

ancient Chinese tales and *Genji* are completely different. While they both depict the court, *Genji* imaginatively extends to include landscapes beyond it ... whereas Chinese literature is limited to the areas surrounding the dwellings of aristocrats.

50–51

Here and elsewhere, arguments on the essential Japaneseness of *Genji* conceal how the classic owes as much to enrichment from ancient Chinese culture as it does to the writing system. Murasaki's diary suggests that she read Chinese

characters well enough to teach an empress⁴ Chinese poetry, and this literacy provided Murasaki with access to foreign texts that are referenced throughout her own. With reverence for Chinese culture, for example, Murasaki wrote in *Genji* of the *Lotus Sutra* and the Chinese story *Dwelling of Playful Goddesses* (*You xian ku*). Moreover, the very first passage in *Genji* contains an allusion to the Chinese poetry of Bai Juyi, who was so popular among aristocrats in Murasaki's day that the homage would have been easily recognizable to them. While such intertextualities in *Genji* are difficult to identify for readers untrained in the Chinese classics, confluences between ancient Chinese and Japanese literature interested early Western Sinologists—particularly Arthur Waley, who published a collection of Bai Juyi's poetry (1919) before his bestselling translation of *Genji* (1925–1933).

In addition to incorporating myriad linguistic and cultural ingredients from ancient China, more recently Murasaki's classic has acquired elements from Western literature. Murasaki composed *Genji*, for instance, without punctuation or other typographical features of Latin scripts, yet so-called "original editions" of *Genji* for sale in Japan today virtually all contain features that entered Japanese only after contact with the Latin scriptworld of the late nineteenth century. Tokuhei Yamagishi, editor of a classical Japanese edition of *Genji* that has been republished many times since 1965, has explained that adding modern punctuation makes his edition of the ancient text easier to "decipher" (3). Similarly, the introduction for another untranslated version of *Genji* that has been republished since 1995 notifies readers of Western typographical insertions, but alleges that "on principle nothing is added" (Yanai et al. 3). Such claims are deceptive because the introduction of periods, quotation marks, and commas serve to tidy Murasaki's script into discrete semantic units. Likewise, the insertion of quotation marks in "original" *Genji* editions neatly separates narration from dialogue through modern conventions, thereby increasing an aesthetic of novelistic heteroglossia.

Even if the insertion of foreign typographic elements into *Genji* helps modern readers to "decipher" Murasaki's ancient prose, the tale remains challenging to read in Japanese without translation. It is more difficult for Japanese to slog through the millennium-old work of Murasaki than it is for English speakers to, for example, read the 400-year-old texts of Shakespeare. In fact, it may even be easier for Japanese to read Shakespeare than Murasaki. A 2003 Japanese book on *Genji*—which sold over a million copies according to its

4 An excellent English translation of her diary is available. See *The Diary of Lady Murasaki*. Trans. Richard Bowring. New York: Penguin Classics, 1999.

publisher's website—explained Murasaki's plot construction vis-à-vis familiar Shakespearian tragedies:

It would be helpful to imagine one of the many Shakespeare dramas, but with its homicide removed. What kind of story would it become? The Heian era [794–1185] Japanese people constructed incredible narratives without murder plots.

KAWAI 87–88

Here Japanese readers are assumed to be more conversant with the Bard's literary culture than that of Murasaki's. It is telling that Shakespeare's plays are staged throughout Japan today and some have been available in Japanese translation since the 1870s (Toyoda 90). In contrast, complete *Genji* editions were out of print in the 1870s and it took decades for them to become as widely available in modern translation as the works of Shakespeare.

It so happens that one of the early Japanese translators of Shakespeare, Shōyō Tsubouchi, criticized his countrymen for not considering *Genji* a must-read novel. While such descriptions of *Genji* are plentiful today, genre divisions made it difficult to conflate the largely unreadable *Genji* with the foreign genre of the novel in 1885, when Tsubouchi published his influential *Shōsetsu shinzui* (*Essence of the Novel*). One of Tsubouchi's arguments was that "many Japanese classicists falsely consider *Genji* to be a didactic work" (64). Tsubouchi suggested that *Genji* ought to be seen as a native antecedent of the Western novel, a form that he claimed to be the most advanced in the global hierarchy of literature. Tsubouchi advocated for Japanese writers to emulate the novel, a term that he translated into Japanese as *shōsetsu*, which he adapted from *xiao shuo*—a Chinese word for fiction that he redefined with quotes from Anglophone scholars.

Tsubouchi's thinking was highly influential. His use of the term *shōsetsu* to translate the word novel is now customary, but his argument for *Genji* being Japan's pioneer novel was not as quickly accepted. Tellingly, in 1905, two decades after Tsubouchi's book, Tokyo University Professor Sakutarō Fujioka wrote in *Kokubungaku zenshi* (*Complete History of Japanese Literature*) that "the first Japanese novel was *Tale of the Bamboo Cutter* ... the absolute greatest novel" (154). While similar, alternate interpretations of Japanese literary history are not out of the question today, they seem to have fallen from fashion once *Genji* garnered acclaim in English. At the time of its first English translation in 1882, the classic's readership in Japan had been comprised for about two centuries almost exclusively of elites with special training in a commentarial tradition. While Japan's literate public enjoyed a vibrant print culture in the

nineteenth century, it was not until the 1890s that publishers sought to “rescue *Genji* from obscurity” (Rowley 3). What created interest in reviving *Genji* at this time, G.G. Rowley has convincingly argued, was Westernization that placed the “very notions of ‘Japan’ and ‘Japaneseness’ ... under construction, as a variety of interest groups vied with one another to build their version of national identity” (3). Indeed, and I will proceed to argue that as the Japanese forged a shared vision of national identity at home, a parallel project sought to project a cohesive identity internationally. This parallel endeavor had the consequence of adding new foreign ingredients to *Genji* that would help it to become a bestselling novel in Japan.

Reverse-importing *Genji*

In 1878, a mere ten years after Emperor Meiji opened Japan and ended centuries of quasi-isolationist policies, a young man with a penchant for ancient literature was sent to Britain as a member of the Japanese legation. That young man, Kenchō Suematsu, would seek to prove the sophistication of Japanese culture in England, in part for political reasons. Meiji era Japanese were viewed by Western leaders as inferior and thereby relegated to “unfair” international treaties that placed the archipelago at a financial disadvantage (Auslin 17). As a result of unequal treaties, a goal of Japan’s Meiji era foreign policy at this time was proving its cultural equality. In the realm of literature, such a task would not be simple. Like new nations on the world stage, translations too can be subject to “‘unequal exchange’ occurring in a strongly hierarchized universe” (Casanova 288).

In 1882, under the aegis of Trübner & Company, the politically driven Kenchō Suematsu, who was then studying law at the University of Cambridge, published the first English translation of *Genji*. Since *Genji* had been out of print in Tokyo, Suematsu’s choice to translate the work may appear peculiar, but his decision makes sense if we take into account his aims as described in his book’s preface:

On the whole my principal object is not so much to amuse my readers as to present them with a study of human nature, and to give them information on the history of the social and political condition of my native country nearly a thousand years ago. They will be able to compare it with the condition of mediæval and modern Europe (17).

If we are to believe the words of Suematsu, he did not strive to produce a masterpiece of world literature, but rather he offered *Genji* as historical proof that fin-

de-siècle Japan, a new nation entering global politics, was culturally on equal keel with the colonial powers. At this time, comparatively little was known about Japanese civilization, since leaders had long eschewed foreign contact. Suematsu was thus positioned to potentially play a large role in cultivating perceptions of his nation. As Lawrence Venuti has argued, “[t]ranslation wields enormous power in constructing representations of foreign cultures” (67).

Though never explicitly mentioned in Suematsu’s preface, the novel provided an opportune typographical model for his project. Suematsu recreated *Genji* in English by horizontally flipping Murasaki’s vertical waves of Japanese text and organizing them into indented paragraphs; he also inserted punctuation, separated dialogue from narration with quotes, and standardized tenses as well as names. In this way, like the aforementioned “original” editions of *Genji* available in Japanese bookstores today, Suematsu’s translation tidied Murasaki’s text into discrete semantic units that were split up by Western novelistic conventions.

Suematsu’s critics focused less on his formal achievements than on the plot of *Genji*. A reviewer, for example, wrote in *The Spectator*: “[t]he story, if story it may be called, when there is not a vestige of anything like a plot, is exceedingly tedious” (571). Yet the novelistic formatting and ideological basis for Suematsu’s resurrection of *Genji* in England coincided well with efforts to project a modern Japanese cultural identity. By 1890, “excessive Westernization [in Japan] soon led to a more conservative response that stressed national pride and native culture in the effort to modernize” (Caddeau 2). To such ends, Suematsu’s ideological use of *Genji* fit nicely with larger discussions taking place among Japan’s elites. Suematsu’s translation was well received by key figures, including at least one powerful member of the Tokugawa family, who had famously helped Suematsu fund the English *Genji* publication (Clements 44).

A second edition of Suematsu’s partial *Genji* translation was released in 1898 and this new printing helped further spread word of *Genji* despite more negative publicity. A *New York Times* reviewer lambasted the tale as “difficult to appreciate [the verses are] utterly meaningless” (“Japanese” 257). Perhaps due in part to a spate of poor reviews, the importance of Suematsu’s *Genji* translation has not received a great deal of attention. Ouchi Hidenori claimed about Suematsu: “in terms of literary accomplishments, naturally Suematsu cannot be said to be well-regarded” (10). With less subtlety, Donald Keene wrote that Suematsu’s *Genji* “exercised no influence on Western readers” (314). And Richard Bowring has asserted: “to all intents and purposes the *Genji* simply did not exist until Arthur Waley’s translation, finished in 1933” (95). While the first English translation of *Genji* did not become a bestseller like subsequent translations, Suematsu succeeded in providing a model for modernizing the

classic and bringing it back into print. Suematsu's English translation was followed by the first modern movable Japanese type editions of *Genji* in 1890, and he influenced future translators in conceiving of the tale as a novel.

The second English translation of *Genji* (1925–1933) was undertaken by the autodidact Arthur Waley, who taught himself classical Chinese and Japanese while working in the British Museum's division for Oriental Prints and Drawings. Waley's knowledge of East Asian scripts combined with his masterful English prose put him in an extraordinary influential position. Before attempting *Genji*, in the late 1910s, Waley was publishing translations in several distinguished literary magazines, including *The Little Review*, which printed his work contemporaneously with James Joyce's serialization of *Ulysses*.

Waley's translation of *Genji* was the first in any language to become a massive bestselling novel, and, like Suematsu, Waley had no misgivings about presenting *Genji* as a novel. He denoted the book's genre in his unabridged title, *The Tale of Genji: A Novel in Six Parts*. John Walter de Gruchy has suggested that Waley's choice to translate *Genji* as a novel was influenced by Suematsu's earlier decision:

The Tale of Genji had already been presented as a masterpiece in novel form to English readers in 1882 by a Japanese translator, Kenchō Suematsu, and so Waley felt free to recreate it once again and offer it to his own contemporaries as a modern novel.

118

Indeed, Waley was familiar with Suematsu's translation and liked it enough to recommend it in a 1921 article for *New Statesman*. Moreover, Waley's motivations for translating *Genji* were closely akin to those of Suematsu. According to biographer Sukehiro Hirakawa, as a Jew in British society, Waley identified with colonized groups and aimed to use East Asian masterpieces to peacefully subvert notions of Western cultural superiority: "the book [*Genji*] would present doubts against the supremacy of European civilization" (13). In this way, the ideological project started by Suematsu was continued by Waley, who offered a more extensive translation of *Genji*.⁵

When Waley's *Genji* was climbing up bestseller lists in 1920s Britain and America, Japanese readers were gaining a parallel appetite for Western literary classics. At this time it was still relatively new for Japanese to be able to

5 Suematsu published seventeen chapters, whereas Waley translated—albeit with omissions—all but one of the fifty-four *Genji* chapters.

enjoy foreign novels in translation. And in the 1920s, the book market started to be flooded with affordable translations of Western classics. Between 1927 and 1930, the publisher Shinchōsha, for example, sold half a million 38-volume sets of a translation series titled the *Sekai bungaku zenshū* (*World Literature Complete Collection*) (Fowler 141). These books retailed with other translations for an affordable single yen, and their literary penetration was nothing short of a historic turning point, which is precisely how one manufacturer of the books described them: “they were a turning point, a phenomenon that left their historical mark, because no one before had ever put out over a hundred thousand book copies” (Dync Group). The sheer number of single yen translations led to surpluses, and the already affordable publications were discounted further (Nagamine 202). Such price reductions enabled many Japanese to newly acquire foreign novels and to gain an appetite for world literary classics. Opportunely, Waley had already been cultivating a Japanese national classic that was being read abroad on par with how the *World Literature Complete Collection* was being read in Japan.

Yūsaku Shimanaka, the then president of book publisher Chūōkōronsha, took notice of the popularity *Genji* enjoyed abroad and he saw it as a chance to create a similar boom in Japan (Mizukami and Chiba 346–349). Shimanaka contacted his friend, the celebrity novelist-turned-translator Junichirō Tanizaki, and sent him a copy of Waley’s translation along with a request to place his clout behind the first comprehensive modern Japanese translation of *Genji*.⁶ Tanizaki was an ideal choice to popularize *Genji*, insofar as he was a celebrity who embodied the contradictions of Japanese literary modernity: Tanizaki was famous for his foreignized writing style, yet he openly criticized contemporaries for abandoning traditional Japanese literature.

Tanizaki’s first novelistic translation of *Genji* in modern Japanese (1939–1941) catapulted Murasaki Shikibu’s tale into the popular imagination. It was sold in 26 volumes by subscription at a price of a single yen, repeating the reasonable cost of the 1920s *World Literature Complete Collection*. However, after a decade of inflation, the price was now more affordable. Tanizaki and his publisher did not seek a wealthy, elite audience; rather, they aimed to duplicate the popular success of *Genji* abroad. Tanizaki made such intentions clear in a promotional *Mainichi Shinbun* newspaper interview in 1938: “I have sought over this long haul to bestow an understanding of the substance in *Genji*, the world’s pride,

6 Akiko Yosano published the first modern translation of *Genji* in an abridged format between 1912 and 1913. See G.G. Rowley. *Yosano Akiko and the Tale of Genji*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2000.

among the many citizens of our country Japan" ("Koten" 7). In this remark, we can glimpse how Tanizaki aimed to present his compatriots with what Anglophones readers had already enjoyed for about a decade—an accessible novelistic version of *Genji*.

Tanizaki's translation sold so well in the days following its launch that suppliers failed to meet demand. Roughly a quarter million late subscriptions exceeded production capacities (Shiozawa 64–65). As compensation in 1939 to empty-handed subscribers, Tanizaki's publisher ran a hybrid advertisement/apology campaign. In the *Yomiuri Shinbun*, Japan's largest circulating newspaper, the print delay was explained in a relatively small font while bold, prominent text proclaimed *Genji* to be "A Masterpiece in the History of World Literature" (3). This description would have reminded readers of the book's popularity abroad as well as of its place among esteemed works of the *World Literature Complete Collection*. Suffice to say, Tanizaki's translation went on to perform as a top book in 1939 and was well received by critics at large. A columnist in the *Yomiuri Shinbun* wrote an article with the telling title: "Well Done Master Tanizaki" (2). A writer at the *Asahi Shimbun* commented that Tanizaki's efforts made Murasaki's work accessible despite it originally being a "difficult read" (Okazaki 7). Another critic in the *Asahi Shimbun* argued that Tanizaki had succeeded in delivering *Genji* to the general public (Nagao 7). Indeed, Tanizaki's translation could be read by masses of Tokyoites in a similar fashion to how New Yorkers and Londoners had been indulging in Waley's translation, without knowledge of classical Japanese, since 1925.

Conclusions

Although we are fortunate to have many extraordinary *Genji* translations available today, they remain somewhat misunderstood in popular culture.⁷ Perennial claims about *Genji*—that it is the first novel, that it has exerted influence for a thousand years, that there is an original, that it is purely Japanese—remain and belie a more complex history. As we have seen, the reception of Murasaki's classic is larger than any single national tradition. Despite the position of *Genji*

7 Dennis Washburn's outstanding 2015 English translation of *Genji* is the first to include an introduction with analysis on presenting the work as a novel: "[Calling *Genji*] the world's first novel is, from a historical standpoint, anachronistic and critically problematic, since it gives priority to a Western genre that arises much later and has no connection with Murasaki Shikibu's stylistics. Still, it is difficult completely to discount all of the qualities ... that seem familiar to modern readers" (xxxii).

in Japan as a staid bastion of cultural and linguistic tradition, its creation, fame, and textual presentation owe much to exchanges between foreign writing systems and literatures. To draw attention to these connections, in this paper we have broadly retraced the reception of *Genji* across a millennium of cultural intersections—focusing on ancient links to China as well as more recent links to the West. Moving geographically and diachronically, we have seen shifts in perceptions of *Genji* in terms of canonicity, genre, and formal attributes. We have also observed that the critical and popular success of *Genji* in English helped it find a Japanese readership via reverse-importation.⁸

The phenomenon described in this paper as reverse-importation has previously been examined in the West without a critical term to serve as a reference point to link research on the topic. James English, for example, wrote compellingly about international exchanges of culture that provide “symbolic profit that can only be realized outside strictly domestic markets” (266). We have observed a similar transmission of symbolic profit, and it is my hope that the term employed to describe it, reverse-importation, proves helpful for conceptualizing this complex topic, which could benefit from more attention.

By connecting the modern translations of *Genji* in English with its reception in Japanese, perhaps most significantly in this paper, we found that translators learned from one another and built upon each other’s legacies both intralinguistically and cross-linguistically. Suematsu’s first English *Genji* shaped the formal and ideological underpinnings of Waley’s hit follow-up, which in turn inspired Junichiro Tanizaki’s bestselling Japanese version, and—while there was not room to cover the topic—subsequent English translators have also consulted Tanizaki’s translation for their own.⁹ With no definitive source text, *Genji* translators have creatively built on each other’s work, adding to Murasaki’s global reputation, which has come to underpin a massive multi-sectored economy, not only of books but also of commercial goods.

8 It is worth noting that when much of this research on the reverse-importation of *Genji* was being completed as part of a doctoral thesis, Michael Emmerich published an exceptional book on *Genji*, arguing that Murasaki’s classic “was re-created first as a masterpiece of ‘world literature’ ... and only afterward as the quintessential masterpiece of Japan’s national literature” (37). This conclusion of Emmerich’s parallels those found independently in this research, although the current paper examines the international reception of *Genji* through its typographic and formal history, whereas Emmerich’s focus is more on shifts in media and visual images associated with *Genji*.

9 Edward Seidensticker, for example, noted in his translator’s introduction to *Genji* (1976) that he had consulted one of Tanizaki’s translations as a reference (xii) and that he had also read Waley’s translation an uncountable number of times (xiv).

Murasaki enthusiasts can now dine internationally on Genji Sushi, pamper themselves at a *Genji*-inspired Ritz-Carlton, dance to J-pop of the boyband Hikaru Genji, indulge in clothing from a Genji fashion label, and see *Genji* movies. Incidentally, this paper began with a description of Murasaki moonlighting on the silver screen and cavorting with a cannibal psychiatrist. This portrayal of Murasaki was juxtaposed with Oswald de Andrade's notion of cultural cannibalism. For Andrade, national literatures were strengthened not by their purity, but through their blending with ingredients from all over the world. And now we have seen many instances of Murasaki's legacy, vis-à-vis China and the West, being enriched by foreign cultural elements. The ancient tale partakes in its own kind of cannibalism—while being passed down in new, blended forms.

Works Cited

- Andrade, Oswald de. "Cannibal Manifesto." Trans. Leslie Bary. *Latin American Literary Review* 19: 38 (1991), 38–47.
- Auslin, Michael. *Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2009.
- Bowring, Richard. *Murasaki Shikibu: The Tale of Genji*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.
- Caddeau, Patrick. *Appraising Genji: Literary Criticism and Cultural Anxiety in the Age of the Last Samurai*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006.
- Casanova, Pascale. "Consecration and Accumulation of Literary Capital: Translation as Unequal Exchange." Trans. Siobhan Brownlie. *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker. New York: Routledge, 2010, 285–303.
- Clements, Rebekah. "Suematsu Kenchō and the first English translation of *Genji monogatari*: Translation, Tactics, and the 'Women's Question.'" *Japan Forum* 23: 11 (2011), 25–47.
- Damrosch, David. *What is World Literature?* Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003.
- De Gruchy, John. *Orienting Arthur Waley: Japonism, Orientalism, and the Creation of Japanese Literature in English*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003.
- Dynic Group. "Shinsai Juyō to enpon būmu" ("Earthquake Disaster and Single Yen Books"). Web. 13 Sep. 2015.
- Emmerich, Michael. *The Tale of Genji: Translation, Canonization, and World Literature*. New York: Columbia UP, 2013.
- English, James. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards and the Circulation of Cultural Value*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2005.
- Eyewitness Travel Krakow*, ed. Ewa Szwagrzyk. London: Dorling Kindersley, 2013.

- Fowler, Edward. *The Rhetoric of Confession: Shishōsetsu in Early Twentieth-Century Japanese Fiction*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Fujioka, Sakutarō. *Kokubungaku zenshi: Heianchō hen (Complete History of Japanese Literature Heian Period)*. Tokyo: Kaiseikan, 1905.
- “Genji monogatari to nihonjin” (“the Tale of Genji and the Japanese People”). Kodansha Book Club. Web. 13 Sep. 2015.
- Hannibal Rising*. Dir. Peter Webber. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 2007.
- Harris, Thomas. *Hannibal Rising*. New York: Delacorte Press, 2006.
- Hirakawa, Sukehiro. *Āsā ueirī Genji monogatari no honyakusha (Arthur Waley: The Translator of Genji)*. Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 2009.
- “A Japanese Romance.” *New York Times* 16 April 1898, 257.
- Kawai, Hayao. *Genji to nihonjin (the Tale of Genji and the Japanese People)*. Tokyo: Kodansha, 2003.
- Keene, Donald. “Japanese Literature in the World.” *Southern Humanities Review* 27: 4 (1993), 305–319.
- “Koten no sabi o ikashi Genji monogatari no gendaiban” (“A Modern Version of the Tale of Genji. Utilizing the Aged Beauty of Classicism”). *Mainichi Shinbun*. Morning ed. 11 Sep 1937, 7.
- Lurie, David. *Realms of Literacy: Early Japan and the History of Writing*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011.
- Mizukami, Tsutomu and Shunju Chiba. *Tanizaki sensei no shokan: aru shuppansha shachō e no tegami o yomu (Tanizaki Sensei's Correspondences: Reading Letters to the President of a Publishing Company)*. Tokyo: Chūōkōronshinsha, 2008.
- Nagamine, Shigetoshi. “Enpon būmu to dokusha” (“Single Yen Book Boom and Their Readers”). *Kindai Nihon bungakuron* 7, ed. Aoki Tamotsu. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1999, 185–204.
- Nagao, Takeo. “Tanizaki Genji ni yosu” (“To the Tanizaki Genji”). *Asahi Shinbun*. Tokyo Morning ed. 6 June 1939, 7.
- Okazaki, Yoshie. “Tanizaki Genji ron 1” (“Tanizaki Genji Criticism 1”). *Asahi Shinbun*. Tokyo Morning ed. 23 May 1939, 7.
- Orikuchi, Shinobu. *Orikuchi Shinobu bungeironshū (Collection of Shinobu Orikuchi's Critical Writing on Art and Literature)*. Tokyo: Kōdansha bungei bunko, 2010.
- Ouchi, Hidenori. “Suematsu Kenchō no eiyaku” (“The English Translation of Suematsu Kenchō”). *Kōza Genji monogatari kenkyū dai 12 maki*, ed. Haruki Ii. Tokyo: Ohfu, 2008.
- “Review of the Tale of Genji.” *The Spectator*. 29 Apr. 1882, 571.
- Rowley, G.G. “Literary Canon and National Identity: The Tale of Genji in Meiji Japan.” *Japan Forum* 9: 1 (1997), 1–15.
- “Sasuga wa dai Tanizaki” (“Well Done Master Tanizaki”). *Yomiuri Shinbun*. Evening ed. 3 Feb. 1939, 2.

- Seeley, Christopher. *A History of Writing in Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000.
- Seidensticker, Edward. Trans. *The Tale of Genji*. By Murasaki Shikibu. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978.
- Shikibu, Murasaki. *Genji monogatari 1 (the Tale of Genji vol. 1)*, ed. Tokuhei Yamagishi. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1994.
- Shikibu, Murasaki. *Genji monogatari 3 (the Tale of Genji vol. 3)*, eds. Shigeshi Yanai, Shinsuke Murofushi, Yūji Ōasa, Hideo Suzuki, Sadakazu Fuji, and Ichirō Imanishū. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995.
- Shiozawa, Minobu. *Shōwa besuto serā sesōshi (the Historical Conditions of Shōwa Era Bestsellers)*. Tokyo: Daisanbunmeisha, 1988.
- Shirane, Haruo. "Curriculum and Contemporary Canons." *Inventing the Classics: Modernity, National Identity, and Japanese Literature*, eds. Haruo Shirane and Tomi Suzuki. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000, 220–249.
- Sontag, Susan. *Where the Stress Falls*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001.
- Suematsu, Kenchō. Trans. *The Tale of Genji*. By Murasaki Shikibu. Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1978.
- Sugimoto, Masahiro. "Nihon no animēshon, āto, soshite bijutsu bunka" ("Japanese Animation, Fine Art, and Art Culture"). *Atomi Gakuen Joshi Daigaku bungakubu kiyō* 44 (2010), 27–42.
- Toyoda, Minoru. *Shakespeare in Japan: An Historical Survey*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1940.
- Tsubouchi, Shōyō. *Shōsetsu Shinzui (Essence of the Novel)*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2011.
- Venuti, Lawrence. *The Scandals of Translation*. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Williams, Scott G. "Eating Faulkner Eating Baudelaire: Multiple Rewritings and Cultural Cannibalism." *The Faulkner Journal* 25: 1 (2009), 65–84.
- Waley, Arthur. "An Introspective Romance." *New Statesman*. 10 Dec. 1921, 286–7.
- Washburn, Dennis. Tr. *The Tale of Genji*. By Murasaki Shikibu. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015.