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Reception of Western Literature in Japan and Its Influence in Japanese Literature and Film

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Abstract: The article explores the reception of Western literature in Japan during the Meiji and Taishō eras (1868–1912 and 1912–1926) and its repercussion in the development of Japanese literature and film. Modern Japanese literature started to develop at the end of the nineteenth century under the direct influence of Western literature after being isolated for more than two centuries. Writers adopted artistic ideas and styles imported from the West, creating a new type of literature radically different from the previous one. Western literature contributed likewise during both periods to the development of two new forms of theatre, *Shinpa* ('new school') and *Shingeki* ('new drama'), which coexisted with the classical forms such as Kabuki, Noh, and Bunraku. *Shingeki* theatres presented on the stage translations of plays or adaptations of novels by remarkable Western authors. At the beginning of the 1910s, the emergent film studios started to produce short adaptations of plays performed previously on the *Shingeki* stages, simultaneously launching a process of Westernization of Japanese cinema. This process was crucial to Japanese film since it facilitated its evolution, contributing to the emergence of the 'Pure Film Movement'. This movement championed the use of new narrative techniques, contributing enormously in that way to modernizing Japanese cinema.

Keywords: Reception, Western literature, Japanese literature, Japanese film, *Shingeki*, adaptation

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Reception of Western Literature in Japan and Its Influence in Japanese Literature and Film

0. Introduction

Japan had its first contact with the Western world through Portuguese merchants who arrived in 1543 in Kyushu, in the island Tanagashima, near the city of Nagasaki, when the ship in which they were traveling shipwrecked. The muskets carried by these traders awoke the interest of the local feudal lords (*daimyō*) in firearms and other foreign products. They promptly opened commercial relations with Portugal and subsequently with Spain (1584), the Netherlands (1600), and England (1613). In 1549, only a few years after the beginning of commercial relations between Japan and Portugal, the Jesuit Francisco Javier (1596–1552) arrived in Kagoshima and introduced Christianity to Japan. Many of the *daimyō* of Kyushu received the Jesuit missionaries openly, believing that tolerance would facilitate trade with the Western countries.

From that moment, European missionaries translated theological and moral-content works into Japanese. The first books translated into Japanese were religious works such as *Flos Sanctorum*,¹ *Contemptus Mundi*,² *Guia do Pecador*,³ and *Fides no Doxi*.⁴ The first Western literary work translated into Japanese was Aesop's *Fables*, which was printed in 1593 as *Esopo no Fabura*. This was a free translation, in which the nearest Japanese equivalents were substituted for unfamiliar European animals and objects (Hirakawa 356). Extracts from Homer, Aristotle, Plato, Caesar, Seneca, Cicero and other Greek and Latin authors were also translated. It is likely that other Western literary works were orally introduced and influenced subsequent Japanese literature, such as the folktale *Yuriwaka Daijin* (known in English as *The Story of Yuriwaka* and also as *The Great Lord Yuriwaka*).⁵

Soon after, the *daimyō*, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), whose political reforms laid the foundations for the future Tokugawa Shogunate, particularly came to distrust the Catholic religion and the missionaries. After converting, many subjects showed respect for the church and the Christian God, which seemed incompatible with the expected loyalty of the vassals toward their *daimyō*. Catholicism began to be perceived as a threat, and an edict of expulsion of all Western missionaries was promulgated in 1587, although it was not enforced until 1597. In 1600, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616) achieved the supremacy, starting the Tokugawa Shogunate, a military government ruled by the Tokugawa clan. With the aim of maintaining its hegemony and ensuring his power, Tokugawa Ieyasu banned Christianity in 1614, stepped up repression against Christians, prohibited Japanese from leaving the country and restricted trade contact with foreigners. This resulted in a period of

¹ This was a compendium of the lives of the saints, translated as *Sanctos no gosagyō* and published in Kazusa in 1591.

² This work was written in 1536 by Thomas à Kempis. It was translated from the Latin into Spanish by Luis de Granada in 1562. Granada's version was translated into Japanese and published in Amakusa in 1596.

³ The text was published in 1599 in Nagasaki, with a second edition in 1606. It was an abridged edition of *Guia de pecadores* ('The Sinner's Guide') by the Dominican Luis de Granada, published in 1557 and reedited in a revised version in 1567.

⁴ This was a translation of *El sumario de la introducción del símbolo de la fe* ('Introduction of the Symbol of Faith') by Luis de Granada, published in 1582. The Japanese version was printed in Amakusa in 1592.

⁵ The story is a fictional recreation of the Mongol attempts to invade Japan in the thirteenth century whose hero is a nobleman named Yuriwaka. Several scholars have found parallels between this narrative and the story of Ulysses in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

almost absolute isolation, known as *sakoku*. By 1641, the only Western country that had permission to dock in Deshima –an artificial island built in the bay of Nagasaki– and to maintain commercial relations with Japan was the Netherlands. Between 1641 and 1720, with the aim of preventing the spread of Christian ideas and thus to encourage the definitive eradication of Christianity from Japan, a ban on the entry or translation of Western books was imposed.

From 1720, the restriction was relaxed and the entry and translation of publications was authorized, but exclusively of books in Dutch of non-religious content. As such, the only knowledge of the West which entered Japan from that moment throughout the Tokugawa isolation is known as Rangaku or Dutch studies. During the first years of the abolition of the Decree of prohibition only extracts or parts of books were translated. Later, there appeared complete translations of scientific, technical, or medical books. For instance, in 1774, *Tafel Anatomia (Kaitai Shinsho)* was published, translated from a Dutch version of a treaty of anatomy written in 1731 by the anatomist German Johann Adam Kulmus (1689–1745). At the end of the century, the translation of the treaty of astronomy *New Book on Astronomy (Rekisho shinsho, 1798)* was completed. This was also translated from a Dutch version of the work of the Scottish mathematician and astronomer John Keill (1671–1721), published a century earlier. Books that were permitted to enter the country were chosen for their utilitarian content, emphasizing the practical value of Western learning, meaning that fiction, drama, or philosophical works were not translated during this time. Western literature did not appear in Japan until the beginning of the Meiji era.

1. Meiji Restoration and the Reception of Western Literature

The arrival to Japan in 1853 of Commodore Perry with his warships, requiring permission to deliver a letter from President Fillmore of the United States (1800–1874) –in which he requested the Shogunate to open its ports and settle commercial relations, among other demands– meant the end of the isolation of Japan and the beginning of the Tokugawa clan's decline. After Perry, other Western countries made similar demands and so, pressured by them, the shogun Tokugawa Iemochi (1824–1858) and his successor Tokugawa Yoshinobu (1837–1913) signed treaties unfavourable to Japan. Their inability to understand the new times and to handle the economic and political situation provoked riots and rebellions. Gradually, the *bakufu* lost political authority until Tokugawa Yoshinobu was forced to relinquish his power to the young emperor Meiji (1852–1912) in 1867, thus initiating the Meiji era.

Following the restoration of imperial power, the country was laid open, eager to leave behind its feudal past and to reach the cultural, economic, technological and military level of the Western nations. In addition to opening its doors, Japan established a system of scholarships to send young people overseas to study languages, social sciences and other scientific disciplines with the objective that, upon returning, they would disseminate the knowledge acquired and use it to cooperate in the development of the country. The growing curiosity and interest in Western culture is manifested in the large number of translations of literary and philosophical works that were published during the Meiji era. Many of these works were brought to Japan by returning students after their stay abroad and were

translated by them or by contemporary intellectuals. Some of the authors and works introduced in Japan during this time were subsequently adapted to the screen from the beginning of the cinema industry at the end of the Meiji era and the subsequent Taishō era (1912–1926).

Throughout the first two decades of the Meiji era, Western literature and philosophy invaded the country “in a tremendous wave of translations of both important and unimportant works” (Janeira 128). Throughout the 1870s, a wide range of complete or partial translations of Western books was published, sometimes separately, sometimes serially in newspapers and magazines (Beasley 89). The selection of the works was often made according to political, didactical, or practical content instead of aesthetical criteria, literary quality, or the significance of the author. However, at the beginning of the Meiji era, due to the poor training of translators or their poor command of foreign languages, the translations were actually free adaptations in which large sections were often either omitted or added and, frequently, only the most anecdotal elements of the plot were retained (Varley 261). This did not prevent interest in Western literature from widely expanding and changing throughout the next decades. At first, English and American literature was the most translated, although French and Russian literature subsequently came into vogue. Furthermore, works of German and Spanish literature and authors from other countries, such as Ibsen or Boccaccio, were translated before the end of the century, although most of these works were translated from versions in English.

1.1. Anglo-American Literature and Philosophy

During the early Meiji era, the first Western ideas entered Japan through translations of American and English philosophers. The first Western philosophical work translated into Japanese was a version of Samuel Smiles’ *Self-Help*, published in 1870 as ‘Success Stories of the West.’ As in the United Kingdom, the book was a complete success, selling more than one million copies by the end of the Meiji era (Hirakawa 102). One of the reasons for this achievement is the fact that it “resembled the ethic of the samurai class, which was taught to rely on its own moral integrity, as expressed in the code of *bushidō*, rather than on the saving grace of a divinity” (Keene 61). Following *Self-Help*, *On Liberty* by John Stuart Mill appeared in 1871, and subsequently works by other thinkers such as Henry Thomas Buckle and Herbert Spencer.

The first English work of fiction translated into Japanese was the 1719 novel *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe. This version was written in 1850 from a Dutch translation of the English, although it was not published until 1872. It was translated into Japanese as ‘Record of Wanderings Written by an Englishman Robinson Crusoe.’ Apparently, the translator believed that Robinson Crusoe was a real character and that he had written the book to explain his experiences as a castaway. A new version of the novel was published in 1883 as ‘An Extraordinary Adventure: An account of Robinson Crusoe, the Castaway,’ but this time the translator remarked in the preface that Crusoe was a fictional character, not an actual person (Hirakawa 99). Following the success of *Robinson Crusoe*, several translations of biographies of prominent persons such as Homer, Shakespeare, Voltaire and Napoleon were published. Probably the work that was “most appreciated as a source of information of

Western manners" (Beasley 89) was Bulwer-Lytton's novel *Ernest Maltravers*, translated in 1878 as 'A Spring Tale of Blossoms and Willows.' Also successful were translations of other Bulwer-Lytton novels, such as *The Last Days of Pompeii* and *Paul Clifford*, both published in 1879. The following years saw a huge number of English and American literary works translated, such as Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* in 1880, *Lady of the Lake* by Scott in 1881, *Coningsby* by Benjamin Disraeli –a novel that became very popular– Dickens' *Oliver Twist* in 1885, and Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue" in 1887.

Most of the translations carried out in the Meiji era were actually free adaptations. Shakespeare was one of the most adapted authors during this time, beginning with *The Merchant of Venice* in 1877. In this version, the action was transferred to Japan and the names of the characters were suitably altered (Kishi and Bradshaw 84). Several adaptations of *Hamlet* appeared throughout the Meiji era: in 1879, in 1886 and in 1905. In 1911, a new version of the play was published, representing the first complete translation of the entire text to appear on the Japanese stage (Williams and Rycroft 123). A translation of *King Lear* was released for the first time also in 1879. In the following years, the first complete translations of many of Shakespeare's prominent works appeared, including *Julius Caesar* and *As You Like It* (both in 1883), *Romeo and Juliet* (1884) and *Macbeth* (1885).

1.2. French Literature and Philosophy

The first French works translated into Japanese were philosophical essays by Montesquieu and Rousseau. Montesquieu's *On the Spirit of the Laws* appeared in 1876. His theory of natural rights "was enthusiastically adopted as the intellectual basis for attacks on the government of the day which was determined not to concede political power to the people at large" (Sansom 433). A translation of Rousseau's *The Social Contract, or Principles of Political Law* was published in 1877. This book had an enormous influence on the founders of the Japanese Liberal Party, which stood for political views based on French conceptions of egalitarianism and, particularly, on Rousseau's work (Keene 79).

French literature was translated from both the original and from English translations. As with the case of works from other languages translated at this time, the translations were actually abridged adaptations of the original, in which the plot had substantial modifications and the setting of the action and the characters' names were changed. The first French novel translated into Japanese was Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, published in 1878, five years after the publication of the original. This novel, translated from the French original, was a success and came into vogue as a sort of annotated handbook on foreign travel (Beasley 265). Verne became a famous writer and due to his popularity a large number of his works were subsequently translated, such as *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*, both published in 1879.

During the next decade, attention turned to writers such as Dumas, both father and son, Zola, Guy de Maupassant and Victor Hugo, with their works becoming widely popular. Most of their writings published at this time were also free translations or adaptations. Thus, a large number of the Dumas' works, such as *The Three Musketeers*, *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *The Lady of the Camellias*, were serialized in newspapers during the 1880s. An abridged version of Zola's novel *Nana* also appeared during that time. Victor Hugo's *Les*

Misérables was translated for the first time at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was serialized in 1902 in a newspaper and later published in two volumes in 1906. A new translation was released as three books in 1914 and republished in 1918. Hugo's novel became extremely popular and was adapted for the screen several times in Japan throughout the Taishō era.

1.3. Russian Literature

Translations of Russian literature started to appear in Japan in the 1880s. Although it was introduced several years after the appearance of literary works by French, American, or English writers, Russian literature is regarded as the most influential in the shaping and development of modern Japanese literature during the Meiji and Taishō eras. The first literary work translated was Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter*, published in 1883 as 'A Diary of the Butterfly Meditating over a Flower's Souls: Astonishing News from Russia' (Shapiro 177). The same Pushkin work was translated again and published in 1904, this time directly from Russian. Soon after the first publication of Pushkin's novel, works of prominent Russian writers such as Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Gogol and Gorky were also translated, in most cases from the English versions.

The first Tolstoy novel to appear in Japan was *War and Peace*, published in 1886 as 'Weeping Flowers and Lamenting Willows: Ensanguined Remains of the Last Battles of Northern Europe.' This was actually a free adaptation to the plot, and a complete and accurate translation of the novel was published in four volumes several decades later, in 1914. Other Tolstoy works, such as the short story *Lucerne*, the short novel *The Cossacks*, and the novella *The Kreutzer Sonata* –the last translated directly from Russian– were also published at the end of the decade and during the 1890s. Novels such as *Anna Karenina* and *Resurrection* –the latter also adapted to the screen several times throughout the Taishō era– were translated in 1903 and 1908, respectively. Interest in Tolstoy's work increased enormously at the beginning of the twentieth century. By 1925, around 250 different translations of Tolstoy's short stories, plays and novels had been published, and between 1916 and 1919 a journal dedicated entirely to studies of Tolstoy's work existed.

The first novel of Dostoevsky published in Japanese was *Crime and Punishment*, which was partially translated in 1892 from an English version. Other translations from Russian made by Futabei Shimei (1864–1909) quickly followed. He was the most remarkable translator of Russian literature and a prominent author during the Meiji era. The author whose work he most frequently translated and who had an enormous influence on his own writings was Turgenev. Futabei's versions of Turgenev's *The Rendezvous* (published in 1883) and *Three Encounters* (published in 1889) "roused great enthusiasm in the reading public and literary circles" (Mochizuko 71). Following these successful translations, Futabei Shimei translated more works of Turgenev: in 1896, he published a new version of *The Rendezvous*, the novella *Asya*; in 1897, a translation of first Turgenev's novel appeared, and stories such as *Petushkov* (published in 1898), among others, soon followed. Besides Turgenev's works, Futabei translated works by Gogol, Tolstoy, Gorky and others. His translation of Gogol's stories such as *The Portrait*, *Old-Fashioned Farmers* and *Diary of a Madman* appeared in 1898, 1906 and 1907. He translated Tolstoy's and Gorky's works at the beginning of the new

century, for instance the translation of Tolstoy's *The Wood Felling*, published in 1904. Subsequently, he published translations of Gorky's works including *Kain and Artem* (in 1905), *Melancholy* (1906), and *A Mistake* (1907) (Cockerill 266).

1.4. German Literature

German literature was less popular in Japan than Anglo-American, French, or Russian literature. Although German philosophy –particularly the writings of Nietzsche, Marx and Freud– had a major influence on Japanese literature, Japanese writers tended to learn the techniques of novel-writing from French and Russian novelists. The first translation of a German literary work was Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* in 1882. A second translation of the same play appeared in 1905. In 1884, the first translation of Goethe's work, the fable *Reynard the Fox*, was published. After its publication, three biographies of Goethe were released in Japan. The most well-known works of Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and *Faust*, were not published until 1901 and 1904, respectively. *Werther* became a literary success and, after its first publication, the book was translated several times in subsequent years. By 1960, around 30 different translations into Japanese of *Werther* had been published.

Most of the German literature published in Japan throughout the Meiji era was translations from the English, with the exception of several works translated directly from German by Mori Ōgai (1862–1922), an officer of the Japanese army who studied in Germany and became a prominent translator, novelist and poet. His most remarkable translation was Hans Christian Andersen's autobiographical novel, *The Improvisatore* (1835), published serially between 1892 and 1901. Mori Ōgai also contributed considerably to the translation and publication of poetry collections. Before the end of the nineteenth century, he published translations of works of German novelists, poets and dramatists such as Heinrich Heine, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Heinrich von Kleist, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Gerhart Hauptmann and Rainer Maria Rilke.

1.5. Spanish Literature

During the Meiji era, two prominent Spanish writers were translated or adapted in Japan, both belonging to the Spanish Golden Age (the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries). The first Spanish author to be translated was Miguel de Cervantes. As with literary works from other countries, Cervantes' novels were adapted or translated from the English or French versions. The first Spanish works to appear in Japan were adaptations of two short novels included in the collection *Exemplary Novels*. These novels were introduced as *gesaku* literature,⁶ with the original title changed and the omission or transformation of important parts of the plot emphasizing love affairs. The first, *The Deceitful Wedding*, was published in a literary magazine between 1885 and 1886 with the title 'European Story of a Beautiful Woman's Love Affairs' (Inamoto 308). The novel was translated again and published as a book in 1897, this time with the title 'The Sentimental Story in Europe: A Trap by a Beautiful Woman'. Also in 1887, the short novel, *The Force of Blood*, was published with the title

⁶ *Gesaku*, translated in English as 'playful composition', was a popular kind of fiction produced during the last century of the Tokugawa Shogunate, which was mainly about love affairs. The literary quality of the genre was typically very poor.

'Another Story in Europe of the Nightingale in the Valley'. The translators of these works asserted that they had translated parts of the *Quixote* and that the author was a French author named 'Cervanto' (Cid 217).

The first translation of the *Quixote* was published in 1887, entitled *Donkiō kikōden*. This title, which could be translated as 'The Story of the Strange Behavior of a Funny Old Man with Short Ingenuity,' emphasized the image of Don Quixote as an irresponsible fool. An abridged free adaptation of the first twenty chapters was published in a magazine in eight parts. Subsequently, partial versions of the *Quixote* appeared in the years 1893, 1896, 1901, 1902, 1909 and 1914, all translated from the English. It is remarkable that the 1893 version, translated as *Donkiō bōken tan* ('The Adventures of an Old Man with Short Ingenuity'), was illustrated with an image of Don Quixote wearing samurai armor. A complete translation of both parts of the novel, also translated from an English version, was published in 1915 as *Kōfu no timeru shinshi La Mancha no Don Kihōte* ('Don Quixote of La Mancha, Gentlemen of Many Devices'), a title closer to the original. The first translation of *The Quixote* from the Spanish did not appear until 1948.

Pedro Calderón de la Barca was the second Spanish author translated during the Meiji era. His play *The Mayor of Zalamea* was translated by Mori Ōgai in 1889, probably from a version in German. Mori Ōgai came to know about Calderón's play while studying in Germany and was fascinated by this work. The translation was serialized in a newspaper in twelve parts (Saito 486) and was published in book format in 1906, but in both cases the play made little impression within literary circles and went unnoticed by Japanese readers. Although Mori Ōgai made some changes to the title and the plot to render it more understandable for Japanese readers, the story line, characters' behavior and actions, moral message and motifs of the play –such as the sixteenth-century Iberian concept of 'blood purity'– were culturally unintelligible for the Japanese of the Meiji times (Yoshida 431). Likely for that reason, Calderón's play was not translated again until the Shōwa era in 1927.

1.6. Literature from other Countries

Besides the adaptations and translations of Anglo-American, French, Russian, German and Spanish literature and works of philosophy, notable authors from other nations were introduced in Japan during the Meiji era. For instance, a partial translation of Boccaccio's *The Decameron* and an adaptation of several tales of *One Thousand and One Nights* appeared in 1882 and 1883. Furthermore, partial translations of Henrik Ibsen's play *An Enemy of the People* and *Dolls House* were published in 1893 and 1901, respectively. After his death in 1906, Ibsen became very popular and his work exerted a significant influence upon the Japanese intellectuals of the time. An abridged version of Dante's *Divine Comedy* was published in 1903. Subsequently, throughout the Taishō era new versions of Dante's work and translations of D'Annunzio's novels, including *The Triumph of Death* (published in Japan 1913), appeared, having a profound effect among cultural circles. Translations of authors from other nationalities, including plays by dramatists such as the Czech Karel Capek or the Norwegian Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, were published and were performed on the stage during the last years of the Taishō era.

2. Western Influence on the Development of Modern Japanese Literature

Prior to the introduction of Western literature in Japan, Japanese literature “had sunk to an extremely low level. Tedious didacticism, bawdy comedy, and bloody adventure were the stock-in-trade of authors during these years” (Varley 256–257). The most popular genre was the *gesaku*, the majority of which was of dubious literary quality. *Gesaku* authors used to write about the same topics, reusing already-exhausted literary formulae over and over, mainly for townspeople who preferred to read about expected and familiar themes. Except for a few works such as Tamenaga Shunsui’s novel *Shunshoku Umegoyomi* (‘Colors of the Spring: The Plum Calendar,’ published in 1830), fiction literature “had lost all its vitality and imagination, searching for its subjects apart from social reality and the life of the people” (Janeira 128). On account of the fact that, throughout the last decades of the Tokugawa regime, Japanese literature was at a virtual standstill, Western literature was received enthusiastically.

Thus, Modern Japanese literature started to develop throughout the Meiji era under the direct influence of Western literature, instead of Chinese literature as in the past. According to Varley, Western influences wrought a change in the literature as profound as that in any other area of Japanese culture (Varley 257). The appearance of adaptations and translations of Western works, besides the visits or the stays abroad by individual authors, formed a generation of Japanese novelists who developed an extremely different concept of the literature to that of their Tokugawa predecessors. In parallel with the introduction of new literary and philosophical ideas, literary language and criticism were also revitalized and updated. Novelists introduced a new style of writing, characterized by the use of the spoken language. The adaptation of new scientific, philosophical, artistic and literary concepts provided works of realism, exactness of expression, accuracy of thought and “faithfulness of literature to life” (Janeira 130).

The reception of Western literature and thinking, and its subsequent influence, reinvigorated and modernized Japanese literature after its isolation for more than two centuries. In that period, writers adopted artistic ideas and styles imported from the West, creating a new type of literature radically different from the classical literature and the popular *gesaku* works fostered before the Meiji Restoration. Modern Japanese literature is considered to begin with the essay of Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859–1935), *Shōsetsu Shinzui* (‘Essence of the novel’), published in 1885. Tsubouchi, in this theoretical and critic study, argued that it was necessary to reform the novel, emphasizing the idea of realism by showing real people in an authentic social environment. For Tsubouchi literature should be independent of morality and should deal with truth and not conventions, portraying human emotions and the actual conditions of life. Moreover, he criticized lewd, bloodthirsty, or didactic aspects of the literature, demanding new Japanese literary works based on Western novelistic models. After the publication of Tsubouchi’s essay, remarkable works that initiated Modern Japanese literature appeared, such as Futabei’s *Ukigumo* (‘The Drifting Cloud’), written in 1887 and considered Japan’s first modern novel. With this novel, strongly influenced by Russian realism and especially by Turgenev, Futabei introduced Western-style realism to Japan and used colloquial Japanese language in literature for the first time.

The influence of Western literature can be seen in the works of other prominent writers of the Meiji and Taishō eras. For instance, it is possible to find Turgenev's influence in both Shimazaki Tōson's (1872–1943) and Futabashi's novels, as well as in authors like Kunikida Doppo (1871–1908), Oguri Fuyo (1875–1926) and Tayama Katai (1871–1930). The ambiance and character types of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* are present in Shimazaki's Tōson's (1872–1943) novel *Hakai* ('The Broken Commandment,' 1906). Dostoevsky also influenced writers of proletarian literature that appeared in Japan throughout the Taishō era after World War I. Resemblances of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* can be perceived in Arishima Takeo's (1878–1923) novel *Aru onna* ('A Certain Woman,' 1919). Moreover, Tolstoy's literary techniques and anti-authoritarian way of thinking also are latent in the works of Tokutomi Roka (1868–1927), *Omoide no ki* ('Memory,' 1901) and *Kuroshio* ('Black Current,' 1903).

French authors also had a profound influence on Japanese writers, especially romantic and naturalist authors. For instance, Nagai Kafu's (1879–1959) writings were strongly influenced by Zola. Furthermore, resemblances with Zola's *Nana* can be seen in Kosugi Tengai's (1865–1952) novels *Hatsusugata* ('New Year's Finery,' 1900) and *Hayari-uta* ('Popular Song,' 1902). Guy de Maupassant was probably one of the authors most imitated during the Meiji era by young writers. On the other hand, Anglo-American literature, particularly that of Walt Whitman, Jack London, Mark Twain and Poe, had a strong influence throughout the Taishō era. Poe was probably the most influential American writer. His works inspired novelists such as Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886–1965), Satō Haruo (1892–1964) and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892–1927), who shared anti-naturalism positions. For instance, Poe's *Landor's Cottage* and *The Domain of Arnheim* inspired Satō Haruo's short story *Supeinken no ie* ('The House of the Spanish Dog,' 1917) and Tanizaki's tale *Konjiki no shi* ('The Golden Death,' 1914), respectively.

Works and authors from other countries, such as Cervantes' *Quixote*, also influenced some Japanese writers. Although its importance in the literary and academic worlds was not as significant as in the West (Bantaro 132), there is no doubt that Cervantes' novel influenced authors such as Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916) or Shimazaki Tōson. Critics found in Sōseki's novel *Gubijinso* ('The Poppy,' 1907) a resemblance between the two main characters and Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Scholars also highlight the fact that Sōseki, in the novel *Kōjin* ('The Wayfarer,' 1912), imitated Cervantes' novella *The Man Who Was Recklessly Curious*, which appears interpolated in *The Quixote* (Kuramoto 57). In the case of Shimazaki Tōson, the influence of Cervantes and *The Quixote* is overt, since both are cited in Shimazaki's novel *Shinsei* ('New Life,' 1918).

These outlined ideas show that Western literature had a profound influence on Japanese writers of the Meiji and Taishō eras. There is no doubt either that Western writers also influenced authors of the Shōwa era (1926–1986) and contemporary literature, such as that of Mishima Yukio (1925–1970) –whose works *Confessions of a Mask* and *The Golden Pavilion* are reminiscent of a Dostoevskian depiction of human condition– or Murakami Haruki (1949-), whose novels are strongly influenced by American authors such as Raymond Chandler, Truman Capote, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Kurt Vonnegut. It is essential also to highlight that Western literature contributed likewise to the development of two new forms of

theater during the Meiji and Taishō eras, *Shinpa* ('new school') and *Shingeki* ('new drama'), which coexisted with classical forms such as Kabuki, Noh, and Bunraku (puppets' theater). *Shinpa* theatre appeared in the 1880s as a potential replacement for Kabuki, whose feudalistic forms were incapable of reflecting the society and values of a modernizing Japan (Satō 20). Unlike Kabuki, which treated historical subjects set in past ages using old Japanese language, *Shinpa* dealt with contemporary themes in a melodramatic style, using colloquial language and relaxing the formalized and stylized movements, characteristics of the Kabuki. *Shinpa* theatre, however, maintained many features of Kabuki, such as the style of declamation, mannerisms in acting and the presence of *oyama*.⁷ *Shingeki*, on the contrary, was a Western-style theater that aimed at realism. From the first decade of the twentieth century, and especially throughout the 1920s, *Shingeki* theaters presented on the stage translations of plays or adaptations of novels by remarkable Western authors such as O'Neill, Ibsen, Chekhov, Gorki and Tolstoy, and also plays by Japanese writers such as Osanai Kaoru.

Both new movements encouraged the development of Japanese film. On the one hand, *Shinpa* theatre made possible the beginning of a more sophisticated type of cinema (Richie 29). On the other hand, *Shingeki* dramatists were an important influence on the emergence of the 'Pure Film Movement' (*Jun'eigageki undō*) during the 1910s. This movement championed the use of new narrative techniques, contributing enormously in that way to modernizing Japanese cinema, which was still using, from its beginnings, Kabuki methods. Several film directors that adopted the ideas of the 'Pure Film Movement' adapted a significant number of Western literary works to the screen, some of which had been performed previously on the stage in *Shingeki* theaters.

3. Adaptations of Western Literature in Early Japanese Film

Soon after its invention, cinema arrived in Japan in 1897, during the Meiji era. The Cinématographe Lumière was shown in Osaka and Thomas Edison's Vitascope was seen in Tokyo shortly after. In the same year, the first motion-picture camera was imported and, as in many other countries, the first cameramen began filming scenes of the streets. In 1899, Komada Koyo formed the *Nihon sossen katsudo shashin kai* (the 'Association of Japanese Motion Pictures'), starting the film industry in Japan. Subsequently, new companies appeared. The Japanese film industry grew rapidly during the last decade of the Meiji era and developed economically and artistically during the Taishō and subsequent eras. Unfortunately, few films produced before 1945 are available today, as most were destroyed during natural disasters, such as the *Kantō daishinshai* ('The Big Kanto Earthquake') in 1923 that devastated Tokyo City, where the majority of studios and film companies were sited at the time, and events such as the continuous fire-bombing of Japan's main cities during the war and the postwar Allied Occupation burning of banned films.

The growing cinema industry of the first decade of the twentieth century noted that Kabuki scenes attracted audiences, so the studios increased the production of adaptations of

⁷ *Oyama* actors, also known as *onnagata*, took Kabuki's female roles since 1629, when the Shogunate issued a decree prohibiting all women from the stage, arguing that women acting had a negative effect on public morality.

Kabuki sections and also started to film scenes of *Shinpa* plays. At the beginning of the 1910s, studios also started filming short adaptations of *Shingeki* plays that were being performed on the stage as translations of plays and theatrical adaptations of novels written by prominent Western authors. The first adaptations of a *Shingeki*-type play were filmed in 1910 and the first to be released was the short *Aa mujō* ('Ah, no Mercy'), based on Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, produced by the Kinen Daishokan and M. Patê companies. The director and cast are unknown. The second to be released was the short *Fukkatsu* ('Resurrection'), produced by the Yoshizawa Shoten Company and based on Tolstoy's homonymous novel. The names of the director and the cast are also unknown, except for one of the main actors, Satō Toshizō, a well-known *Shinpa* performer of that time. It is likely that those shorts followed, as the Kabuki or *Shinpa* play adaptations, a theatrical *mise-en-scène* consisting of 'one-scene, one-shot'.

The mode of representation of pictures made during this period continued in force until the mid-1910s, when the theatrical mode of filmmaking changed drastically. The film industry increased the production of *Shingeki*-based plays, simultaneously starting a process of Westernization of the Japanese cinema industry. This was crucial to the evolution of Japanese film since the adaptation of *Shingeki* plays facilitated its evolution, contributing to its modernization. As previously stated, *Shingeki* theatre also stimulated the appearance of the 'Pure Film Movement.' The initiators of this movement considered Japanese film to be overly theatrical and defended the utilization of more realistic narrative and visual techniques. Furthermore, critics that promoted the emergence of this movement championed the use of cinematic screenplays, criticized the film's narrative reliance on life commentators known as *benshi*, and attacked the existence of the *oyama*, claiming that actresses should play female roles.

Thus, innovative directors such as Hosoyama Kiyomatsu and Tanaka Eizō, following the realistic narrative style of the *Shingeki* plays, adapted several Western literary works to the screen, most of which had been previously performed on the stage in *Shingeki* theaters. In the few extant stills of the films and in the reviews published in newspapers and magazines of that time, it is possible to observe that Hosoyama and Tanaka sought to film faithful adaptations of the original literary work, keeping the main events of the plot and recreating the cultural milieu of the book through the settings, *mise-en-scène*, costumes and the like. Western-realistic style, filming innovations and acting techniques defended by the 'Pure Film Movement' and adopted by Hosoyama Kiyomatsu and Tanaka Eizō became so popular that, by the 1920s, the traditional form of Japanese cinema had become old-fashioned. Studios and filmmakers progressively abandoned certain theatrical conventions such as the use of *oyama* and created movies with close-ups, flashbacks, a more elaborate *mise-en-scène* and complex editing.

Film directors interested in Western literature continued to adapt works that had been previously staged in *shingeki* theaters and began also to make free adaptations of plays, novels and short stories that had never previously been performed in theaters. These filmmakers discarded theatrical practices followed in former adaptations such as the faithful reproduction of the plot and the use of a realistic Western-style settings and customs. Directors and scriptwriters were no longer concerned about theatrical conventions or

imitating the cultural framework. On the contrary, the adaptations were made following an intercultural and intertextual process in which the hypotexts were freely modified and adjusted to the Japanese cultural context.

The first innovative adaptation based on a Western work produced in the 1920s following the 'Pure Film Movement' cinematic modes of filmmaking was *Rojō no reikon* ('Souls on the Road', 1921), directed by Murata Minoru in cooperation with *Shingeki* theater director Osanai Kaoru. Murata is considered one of the most remarkable directors of the 1920s due to his ability to combine symbolism and realism (Jacoby 191). Besides *Rojō no reikon*, Murata filmed other adaptations of Western literature works renowned in Japan: *Osumi to haha* ('Osumi and her Mother,' 1924), based on Vicente Blasco Ibáñez's short story *La vieja del cinema* ('The Old Woman of the Movies'); *Tsubakihime* ('The Lady of Camellias,' 1927), based on Alexandre Dumas *filis'* novel; and *Sakura no sono* ('The Cherry Orchard,' 1936), based on Chekhov's play.

Rojō no reikon was one of the first movies to use actresses instead of female impersonators, to show deprived people as main characters, and to employ the technique of flashbacks to sustain the action. The movie was inspired by D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*, "both in its concern for social significance and the manner in which unified under a single theme several paralleling stories" (High 73). One of the stories was based on Wilhelm Schmittbonn's play *Mutter Landstrasse* ('Children on the Street,' 1901), while the other was based on Maxim Gorky's play *The Lower Depths* (1902). That play became very popular in Russia and Japan, as well as in other European countries. In Russia, the publication was so popular that by 1903 it had reached fourteen editions. In Japan, the play had been successfully presented on the stage by Osanai Kaoru in 1913, in a performance in which he applied Stanislavski's acting method for the first time in Japan (Nakayama 198).

Murata's picture received general acclaim due to its technical innovations, the way how identifiable misfortune of the characters was portrayed, and the message it depicted. A new trend thus appeared in the country and the public demanded to see Japanese films about Japanese life and heroines and heroes that were like everyone else, with ideas about their own and a modern consciousness. There was no longer a place for adaptations based on realism and faithfulness to the original story. From that moment, most film based on Western literature would comprise free adaptations in which the story was suited to the Japanese cultural context, making it more plausible and appealing to the audience.

4. Conclusion

Western literature had a deep influence on Japanese writers of the Meiji and Taishō eras and contributed to the development of the *Shinpa* and *Shingeki* new forms of theater. Both encouraged the development of Japanese film, making possible the beginning of a complex type of cinematic narrative. During the 1910's the adaptations of *Shingeki*-type plays fostered also a process of Westernization of the Japanese cinema industry, facilitating its evolution and contributing to its modernization. By the end of the decade, *Shingeki* plays were adapted to the screen through a cross-cultural intertextual process, resulting in films with which the spectators could identify.

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