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Children as Boundary-Crossers

Tracing Japanese Fantasy Literature and the Fairytales in the Years Following the Russo-Japanese War

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Introduction: The Literature without Imagination

After the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, upward mobility declined in Japan, thereby depriving many young men of the chance to become a "self-made man" (立身出世: *risshin shusse*). During the first decade of the twentieth century, entrance exams for high schools under the old education system grew increasingly competitive, which left many applicants with crushed hopes. Of the young people who did manage to pass the entrance exam and progress to further education, many still struggled to secure the career they sought.[1] Thus, Japan had a preponderance of young men locked out of an upward career path.

The question was how to integrate these young men into adult society. Regarding this matter, Bin Ueda (上田敏) stated the following in 1905, the year following the end of the Russo-Japanese War:

> The population of educated but proletarians is growing at an alarming rate. The implications of this phenomenon over the decades should hence be of concern to anyone with an interest in social matters. Whether this rising force can ever be held in check by the old mores of pre-Restoration times is doubtful.[2]

Many of the "educated but proletarians" (教育のある無産者: *kyōyō no aru musansha*) identified writing and publishing as a way to make a living. Among these literary young men was Hakucho Masamune (正宗白鳥), who later reflected on the time he embarked on fiction writing as follows:

> I decided to become a writer and started penning my own novel for the first time in my life. I did so because I needed money to cover my medical or food expenses. At the time, the *Yorozu Choho* newspaper (萬朝報) issued a weekly call for short stories, offering 10 yen as a prize.[3]

Thus, Japan had entered an age in which those excluded from the career escalator could eke a living by writing fiction.

Meanwhile, concerned by all the young men who did not conform to traditional values, the postwar Japanese government tightened moral governance of students. On June 9, 1906, the Ministry of Education

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issued its first order for "enforcing morals among students."[4] The order highlighted the problem of morally wayward students, who "indulge imaginings, thus neglecting their duty to better themselves."[5] To address the problem of students who "indulge imaginings," the order called upon universities and schools to control the content in libraries accessible to students.[6]

The ministry order was issued against the backdrop of a rise in literary naturalism. Writers of naturalist were calling for curbs on fantasy in literature. Having garnered attention as a young flagbearer of naturalism, Masamune Hakucho included an intriguing foreword in his 1907 debut compilation of short stories, titled "Red Dust" (紅塵: *kojin*). Admitting that he had once been transfixed by the novel *Hakkenden* (八犬伝) as a child, he stated the following:

> I no longer believed that the world was colored by the five-color threads as I did when I was transfixed by *Hakkenden*. (…) Everything in this world had become colorless and dull. But I still had to make a living, and for that I had to work. Thus, six years after graduating from Waseda, I started writing about this and that.[7]

In this foreword, Masamune declared that his stories in Red Dust had nothing to do with any fantasy world in his head and that he had simply written them as a means to make a living. Red Dust would therefore be deemed harmless material for students beset by "indulge imaginings;" it would not encourage their idle fancies.

Masamune had thus declared that the world of fantasy was all but lost. His belief was emphatically represented in "Whither" (何処へ: *Doko-e*).[8] The protagonist is Kenji, a "shuddering" young man who, beset by ennui, struggles to find a way forward in his life. While young people who indulge in fantasy have become a problem, "Whither" tells the story of young man alienated from the world of imagination. Set in a post-Japan-Russo-war climate in which young people's imaginary pursuits are curtailed, the story depicts a monochrome world stripped bare of imagination.[9] In the first part of the current work, the author argues that imagination was not entirely obliterated in Whither, that some nascent traces remained. In the second part, how these traces, in time, gestated into a creative fantasy genre that gained traction among publishing businesses of the time, and how this genre placed children at the center of the story are examined. Finally, this study focuses on a new wave of novelists who rose to prominence after literary naturalism dissipated and discusses how this post-naturalist authors made fantasies involving children into a literary theme.

Despite the fact that, in the years following the Russo-Japanese War, literary naturalists told stories of young men who could find no new way forward in their lives, they also sought to revive the role of fantasy in literature through the medium of child characters. Children thus became the protagonists who made their way in the world.

1. Child Characters and the Publishing Business

In Whither, Kenji yearns for a better life: “Pleasure must lie in some corner of the world somewhere. If only I could find it.” (Masamune, *Whither*, 1). However, unable to escape the suffocating world of his family and friends, Kenji starts daydreaming about the possibilities that opium could offer, saying, “Or could pleasure lie in opium?” (Masamune, *Whither*, 1). The “corner of the world” Kenji wants to find is not any actual location. Rather, it may be a place that does not exist in the real world, a place that exists only in the imagination: “If I smoked opium, I will be transported to heaven on earth.” (Masamune, *Whither*, 3). However, as he walks along an alley, Kenji beholds an out-of-the-ordinary “world” before his very eyes…

> Kenji halted in his tracks and made for Kojimachi. Arriving in Oda’s neighborhood, he wondered whether he should pay a visit. In a window on the second story of a three-story building appeared a woman with rings in her dark ears. Beside her was a pigtailed man wearing a green apron. They were chatting loudly in a strange tongue. From a clothing shop nearby emerged a tall, white Western clad in a fur coat and with a dog in tow. The Chinese couple seemed amused by the sight of this lady. Broken groups of children flocked around her. The lady whistled, spluttered out some words, and petted her dog. Out of the shop came a fat man, and the couple strode off together in a ceremonious fashion. The Chinese couple then retreated from the window. Kenji had been transfixed by this spectacle, but the townscape now returned to its usual humdrum state and a dusty wind lashed his face. Kenji shuddered and pressed ahead (Masamune, *Whither*, 14).[10]

When Kenji entered the vicinity of the residence of his friend Oda, a perfectly ordinary vista that he was used to seeing in his everyday life, he witnessed something very out-of-the-ordinary. He saw foreigners in the alley: a woman with earrings, a pigtailed man, and a fur-clad lady.[11] The figures disappeared in a trice and the townscape returned to its usual humdrum state. However, in that fleeting moment at least, Kenji inhabited a lively, vivid world. His apathy and nihilism were suddenly replaced by fascination and enchantment. What was this world that had flashed before Kenji’s eyes so suddenly and had disappeared just as quickly? In Whither, the meaning of the fleeting spectacle is never spelled out. However, if we relate it to Kenji’s daydream about opium, we can perhaps unpack the meaning.

The daydream featured stereotypes of China. “Lighting a spirit lamp, reclining on the sofa, inhaling through the long pipe, and then sinking into a slumber, the Chinaman crossed the boundary into the very oblivion that his poetic forebears had once dreamed of. Kenji set off toward China to get a whiff of the opium. He believed he might find therein the promised land of Canaan” (Masamune, *Whither*, 3).[12]

Whither is far from the only text that associates opium with China. Such association was a prominent trope in European orientalist literature. Take the following passage from chapter 15 of Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray for example:[13]

> It was a small Chinese box of black and gold-dust lacquer, elaborately wrought, the sides patterned

> with curved waves, and the silken cords hung with round crystals and tasseled in plaited metal threads. He opened it. Inside was a green paste, waxy in luster, the odor curiously heavy and persistent.

Dorian, the protagonist, had kept his opium concealed in a "Chinese box." After smelling the odor of the opium, he heads to an opium den by the Thames and inhales opium through a pipe. The opium den is inhabited by "some Malays."[14] Orientalist tropes such as these also appear in Whither. When Kenji saw the Chinese couple in the second-floor window, he was, perhaps, momentarily projecting his desire to go to China and smoke opium onto the real world.[15] As for the appearance of the Western woman,[16] this may represent how Kenji's perception of opium was informed by the very same orientalism that informed Western perceptions of such.

In this way, "Whither" retains a trace of orientalist fantasy in the world inhabited by the listless youth Kenji. Masamune, the young naturalist writer, set out in the starkest of terms his idea that the fantastical realm had been lost, and his protagonist in Whither embodies a young man who has lost the fantastical realm. Hence, the story depicts a realm of fantasy in a refracted manner.

Meanwhile, a new literary domain in which fantasy was actively sought was emerging. Masamune himself engaged with this domain. After graduating from Waseda, he worked in an editorial position at the university press but quit after a year. "I continued to live the carefree life of one dwelling in shabby lodgings with the job I had, in which I worked on some 56 publications that Fuzambo published under the direction of Professor Tsubouchi (坪内逍遥： Shoyo Tsubouchi). The publications included world literature digests and literature collections for youth. I also translated short stories."[17] Tsubouchi had helped Masamune get a job in publishing, thus allowing Masamnue to make a living after graduation. In that job, Masamune won the esteem of Tsubouchi "by producing plain-language translations for a young readership of two or three of the stories in Arabian Nights."[18]

> The professor, who served as the reviser, lamented the dearth of Japanese literature for young people and urged me to specialize in writing for young audiences, saying, "You're great at writing stories for boys. You should consider making a career of it." I indulged the professor by answering that I would certainly think about it, but in truth I had no appetite for being what in the literary nomenclature of the time was termed a "fairytales" writer.[19]

Masamune translated Arabian Nights, and his translation was published by *Fuzambo* (冨山房) in December 1902 under the title "The Mysterious Fish" (不思議の魚: *Fushigi no Sakana*). The title was the first volume in a Tsubouchi compilation titled "Stories for Boys from Around the World" (少年世界文学叢書: *Shōnen Sekai Bungaku Sōsho*). From Tsubouchi's statement about the dearth of Japanese literature for boys, we can surmise that he had identified a gap in the market, that is, a new business opportunity in publishing youth literature. Nonetheless, Masamune had no appetite for being a writer of "fairytales."[20] When Masamune mentioned "fairytale writer," he probably had the likes of Sazanami Iwaya (巌谷小波) in mind. In April 1904, the year before The Mysterious Fish was published, Iwaya had

compiled the 29th volume of "World Fairytales" (世界お伽噺: *Sekai Otogibanashi*). The volume was titled "Aladdin's Lamp (Arabian Tales)" (奇體の洋燈-亜剌比亜の部: *Kitai no Yōtō - Arabia no Bu*). In a comparative analysis of Masamune and Iwaya's translations, Hideaki Sugita (杉田英明) notes that Masamune's translation "resembles Iwaya's translation to a high degree in both content and style."[21] Thus, although Masamune remained uninterested in inhabiting the "fairytale" domain that Iwaya had created, he was well aware of Iwaya's oeuvre.

In this children's-stories genre, where Iwaya was active and in which Tsubouchi was interested, imaginative curiosity was given free rein in the name of learning about the world. World Fairytales was Iwaya's project to compile fairytales from around the world. The series ran for over 100 volumes. The first volume had been published in January 1899 by *Hakubunkan* (博文館) under the title "The World's Beginnings: Ancient Tales" (世界の始-太古の部: *Sekai no Hajimari - Taiko no Bu*). The 100th volume was published in February 1908 under the title "Southern Dog, Northern Dog: Southern American Tales" (南犬北犬-南アメリカの部: *Minami Inu Kita Inu - Minami Amerika no Bu*). It was not just the fairytales of the world that were full of magic and wonder; the world itself was also presented in imaginative, fantastical ways. Iwaya served as chief editor of a boys' magazine called "Boys' World" (少年世界: *Shōnen Sekai*), the debut issue of which was published in January 1895. The debut issue included a foreword titled "Message upon the debut publication of Boys' World: Greeting the Year 1895" (「少年世界」発刊の辞　明治廿八年を迎かう: *Shōnen Sekai hakkan no ji: Meiji 28 nen o mukau*). The message informed readers (addressed as "my dear young men") that they were "about to take to the world's new stage as young subjects of a glorious and mighty nation."[22] The "world's new stage" was the imaginative, fantastical world that the series depicted.

Iwaya also edited a series titled "Reading Books of the World for Boys" (少年世界読本: *Shōnen Sekai Tokuhon*) and published by *Hakubunkan*. The second volume was titled "China and Korea, Siam and Persia, and the Countries of the Orient" (支那朝鮮　暹羅波斯　及東洋各国: *Shina-Chōsen Shamu-Hashi oyobi Tōyō Kakkoku*)[23]. For the "China" chapter, Iwaya made a point of adding expository content about opium as follows:

> Opium is a solid substance, but when inhaled it appears like blackish molasses. There are retailers who sell opium by the ounce. People do not smoke opium standing as they do with tobacco; they rest their head on a rigid pillow and inhale as hard as they can. (…) Being an ingredient of morphine, opium brightens the person's mood, but over time it spreads toxins around the body, resulting in an addiction known as a disease of the heart.[24]

The exposition included a photograph captioned "a place where opium is consumed."[25] The picture showed a pigtailed man lying down with an opium pipe. The photo starkly evinces an orientalist imagination that associates opium with China.

Masamune never ventured any further into the business of publishing stories for boys. However, while Masamune rejected this path, another protégé of Tsubouchi's chose it, Mimei Ogawa (小川未明). In

September 1904, Tsubouchi let Ogawa, still a student at Waseda, contribute a story for the magazine *Shinshōsetsu* (新小説), marking Ogawa's debut as a novelist. The story was titled "Wandering Urchin" (漂浪児: *Hyōrō-Ji*). Ogawa then started co-editing a children's fiction magazine with Yumeji Takehisa (竹久夢二). The magazine, titled "Boys' Library" (少年文庫: *Shōnen Bunko*) and published by *Waseda Bungaku Sha* (早稲田文学社), was a project of Hōgetsu Shimamura (島村抱月). The debut issue was published in November 1906. The naturalist movement that had brought Masamune to prominence petered out after some years, and anti-naturalist novelist Jun'ichiro Tanizaki (谷崎潤一郎) made his debut in 1910, thereby marking the start of a wave of writers who were unwedded to naturalism. Mimei Ogawa and Miekichi Suzuki (鈴木三重吉) were part of this post-naturalist zeitgeist. The rise of Ogawa and Suzuki was mentioned in an article that Ishizaka Yohei contributed to the January 1913 issue of "Empire Literature" (帝国文学: *Teikoku Bungaku*). Titled "Last Year's Literature" (昨年の文壇: *Sakunen no Bungaku*), the article referred to their activities as follows: "With naturalist literature having had its day, the works published in 1910 and early 1911 encompassed a jumbled mixture of new phenomena, which collectively amounted to a post-naturalist trend. (…) In late 1911, all these new currents coalesced into a single direction."[26] Ogawa and Suzuki, as is well known, would go on to lead the field of children's fiction in the Taisho years (1912 to 1926).

While is the fact that fantasy and imagination were being discouraged in young men in the years after the Russo-Japanese War is true, that works of fantasy and imagination were on the rise in the world of children's fiction is also true. On the "Children's Literature" (少年文学: *Shōnen Bungaku*) series published by Hakubunkan in 1891, Ai Maeda (前田愛) notes that, while the first of the 32 volumes consisted of Iwaya's "Koganemaru the Dog" (こがね丸), the 32 volumes as a whole consisted mostly of historical fiction, stories about famous historical figures, and other biographical or legendary accounts. Regarding such content, Maeda states, "In the early days of children's literature, stories of famous historical figures and events were deemed to be useful genres for cultivating human resources who prove useful assets to the nation."[27] Maeda further argues the following:

> Children were expected to learn from historical and legendary role models the sort of life choices they should make in the future and to access texts that would inspire them. As adults-in-waiting, they were expected to have already familiarized themselves with the norms of the real world. To lose themselves in make-believe stories was to squander the precious time they could be using to grow up.[28]

With "make-believe stories" (空想的な物語: *kūsō tekina monogatari*) being absent from circulation in the Meiji years, publishers of children's literature in the years after the Russo-Japanese War identified this absence as gap in the market that offered a fresh business opportunity.

2. Children as Boundary-Crossers

In his later years, Masamune reflected as follows: "The literary naturalism I had espoused lasted no longer than two or three years. It left Seika and me as flowers that never bloomed in glory. We left no lasting legacy."[29] While the rise of literary naturalism in the years after the war had brought Masamune and Seika Mayama (真山青果) to prominence, it had no lasting hold over the next wave of novelists. Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, Mimei Ogawa, and Miekichi Suzuki dealt in the very flights of fancy matter that were verboten to naturalism. The characters who inhabited the fantasy worlds in these stories were children. In "The Modern Era of Children's Perception" (子ども観の近代: *Kodomo Kan no Kindai*), Kazue Kawahara (河原和枝) analyzes the worlds depicted in the stories in Suzuki's fairytale magazine "Red Bird" (赤い鳥: *Akai Tori*) and in Ogawa's stories, concluding that their works depicted "children who were good, vulnerable, and pure" and as such disseminated "a romantic conception of children as innocent beings."[30] As for Tanizaki, however, the children in his works were quite different from the innocent beings that adults expected them to be.

In December 1910, Ogawa released a fairytale collection called "Red Boat" (赤い船: *Akai Fune*), published by *Kyōbundō* (京文堂). In the foreword, Ogawa declared his commitment as a writer to keeping alive his childhood fantasies, saying, "The world is home to hundreds of millions of people. I am one of them. The fantasies I imagined as a child are more and less what you will read in this book."[31] In the collection's eponymous fairytale, Red Boat, the protagonist is a girl enamored by the organ and piano. The sound of the organ makes the girl think of "a foreign land beyond the vast, vast ocean,"[32] while that of the piano was like "the sound of wind whirling over the main or the sound of the waves lapping the shore"[33] to her ears. In other words, the organ and piano are media through which the protagonist imagines the faraway West.

Tanizaki was no stranger to fairytales either. The concept of a "fairytale" features in "The Boy" (少年: *Shōnen*), a story he contributed to the June 1911 issue of *Subaru* (スバル). In "The Boy," the protagonist, who is also the first-person narrator, visits the Hanawa household to see his schoolfriend Shin'ichi. Behind a Japanese building on the Hanawa premises lies a Western-style building. When the boy nears the Western-style house, he hears a piano being played on the second floor. The sound weaves "thousands of colored threads of imagination"[34] in the boy's mind. "Sometimes I imagined tree faeries giggling in a forest. Other times I imagined a throng of cavorting dwarves, the like of which appear in fairytales."[35] As in Red Boat, there is an overlap between fairytales and the West; the latter is imagined as a fantastical place, a place of forest fairies and dwarves.

Thus, in both Ogawa's Red Boat and Tanizaki's The Boy, fairytales serve as a medium for presenting an exotic, mystical West. However, the two stories differ markedly in how the protagonist perceives this Western world. In Red Boat, the protagonist, a girl named Tsuyuko, sees an eponymous "red boat" that is "bound for the beautiful land beyond the Pacific."[36] All Tsuyuko can do, though, is stare at the vessel

from afar: “The boat was far from me. All I could see were its red strips, its fluttering flags, its thick funnels, plumes of black smoke rising from the funnels, and its three tall masts.”[37] To Tsuyuko, the West (the red boat) was a faraway and unreachable; it remained a fantasy world that you could not enter in reality. By contrast, to the protagonist in The Boy, the West (the Western house) is a place one can enter. The boy is a protagonist who can cross the boundary into the West.

The worlds depicted in children’s fiction have many kinds of boundaries.[38] To get from his school to the Hanawa household, the boy has to cross two boundaries: “Going straight from Arima School, crossing Nakano Bridge, and passing through the imposing iron gate of the long-long wall.”[39] In the Hanawa premises, “a line of tall elms and hackberries”[40] stands between the Japanese-style building and Western-style building. Along this boundary lies “a muddy puddle, not quite a bog or pond, that might once have been a well.”[41] By crossing these boundaries, the boy fancies that he can cross from the real world to one of fantasy.

In The Boy, a “boundary-crossing child” is also a “make-believing child.”[42] At Shinichi’s house, the boy engages in make-believe play with Shin’ichi, Senkichi (another friend), and Mitsuko (Shin’ichi’s sister). In this make-believe play, the boy crosses a further threshold:

> “What did you steal and where from? Come on, open up!”
> Shinichi thus began his make-believe interrogation. Staying in character, Senkichi bragged about his make-believe crimes; he had stolen five bolts of cloth from Shirakiya and some fish sticks from *Ninben*, and had tricked the Bank of Japan into giving him banknotes.
> “That so, huh? You dirty scoundrel. Bet you’ve done other bad things too. Murdered anyone, have you?”
> “Yes, I have. I killed a masseuse on the *Kumagaya* levee and stole their purse, which contained 50 *ryo*. I spent the cash on a trip to *Yoshiwara*.”
> Senkichi’s improvised response was so elaborate that I supposed he had taken his lines from a *doncho* theater or *karakuri* puppet show.[43]

In their make-believe “cops and robbers” (泥坊ごつこ: *dorobō-gokko*) game, the boy, Shin’ichi, and Senkichi cross the boundary between childhood and adulthood. They conjure up real-world settings (*Shirokiya*, *Ninben*, and the Bank of Japan) and everyday commodities (cloth, fish sticks, and banknotes). The settings are places where adults frequent. In their play, the children become grownups and engage with the kind of objects that grownups would engage with. What a real adult would ordinarily buy in these locations, a “grownup” child steals, thereby crossing the boundary of the law. The play also features the kind of lines used in a *donchō* theater (緞帳芝居) or *karakuri* puppet show (覗き機巧), thus denoting that the children had effortlessly inverted reality into a piece of theater.

Mitsuko then joins the boys in a make-believe “vixen” game (狐ごつこ: *kitsune gokko*) in which the “piece of theater” (作り物: *tsukuri mono*) is upgraded into an elaborate and vivid world of fiction. As a vixen in the game, Mitsuko is bound as a prisoner. The sight of the bound “vixen” sparked a memory in

the boy: "I recalled an illustration in a woodblock print showing a young shogunal retainer colluding with his friends to rob a beautiful lady."[44] The bound Mitsuko was, to the boy's eyes, "suffering like the Snow Princess in the Golden Pavilion."[45] Thus, in the make-believe play with the boys and Mitsuko, reality was turned into the kind of world depicted in woodblock（草双紙: kusazōshi）illustrations and kabuki plays.

In this way, the children use make-believe to cross the boundary between childhood and adulthood and that between reality and fiction. The make-believe depicted in The Boy also has an element of sexual pleasure: "I felt overwhelmed by a queer kind of pleasure, the likes of which I had never experienced."[46] Because the make-believe involves the acquisition of sexual body, it does more than cross the boundary between childhood and adulthood; it blurs the boundary.[47] While still a child, the boy becomes a sexual being, dissolving the dichotomy of the child as an innocent being and the adult as a sexual being.

In the ultimate instance of such boundary-crossing and -blurring, the boy breaks into the Western building and is transformed from a human being into a candlestick by Mitsuko. This transformation features another reference to a fairytale. Taking the form of candlestick, the boy listens to Mitsuko's piano playing. "I listened with rapture to the wondrous music like someone in The Magic Violin."[48] "The Magic Kokyu" (浮かれ胡弓: *Ukare Kokyū*) was a Swedish fairytale included in the 37th volume of Iwaya's World Fairytales, which was titled "Swedish Tales Part 1: The Magic Violin" (瑞典の部　上　浮かれ胡弓: *Suēden no Bu Kami: Ukare Kokyū*) and published by *Hakubunkan* in 1902 and 1903. Thus, The Boy's tail of a boundary-crossing boy drew inspiration from the fantasy tale that Iwaya had introduced in World Fairytales.

Conclusion: The Power of Imagination

> Reminiscing about his childhood, Tanizaki described how moved he was by Iwaya's works…[49]
>
> Iwaya Sazanami contributed Shin Hakkenden to Stories for Boys in January 1898, spring of the Earth-Dog year. I was 13 then. That was the story that introduced me to the joy of fiction. It taught me to savor to the full the joy of conjuring up a fantasy world and absorbing myself therein.[50]

In these memoirs, Tanizaki gives us an idea of the kind of fantasy tale that had the power to inspire people. With fantasy being "something in which people can absorb themselves,"[51] fantasy tales present readers with that out-of-the-ordinary world. Readers can go back and forth between the real and fantasy realms and sometimes break down the everyday norms that underlie the real world. When fantasy tales involve children, they make children the ones who do the make-believing and playing and sometimes cast a child as the protagonist who acts upon the world. Tanizaki's novels cast children as protagonists who cross over to the fantasy world.

Fiction that, in this way, casts a child as the protagonist can be seen as a forerunner to fantasy literature. If this was the case for Japan's "modern" era, then it is all the truer for Britain in the late-Victorian and Edwardian era. In the case of Japan, the fairytale magazine Red Bird was a significant contributor to the

rise of the children's-literature genre. Red Bird made its debut in 1918. By comparison, children's literature in Britain enjoyed its heyday in the 1860s, as exemplified by the publication of Lewis Carrol's Alice in Wonderland 1865. Children's literature then started evolving into a fantasy genre with the rise of Edith Nesbit at the end of the Victorian era.[52] The final part of the current work discusses Edith Nesbit's The Story of the Treasure Seekers, which has parallels with Tanizaki's The Boy.[53]

Published in 1899, The Story of the Treasure Seekers was Nesbit's first novel for children. The protagonists are the Bastable children, named Dora, Oswald, Dicky, Alice, Noel, and Horace Octavius (H. O.). In the story, the children go on a treasure hunt in an effort to restore the family fortune, which Mr. Bastable had lost following a business failure. The story is narrated in the first-person by one of the children. Like the child protagonists in The Boy, the Bastable children frequently engage in make-believe play.

An example of such play can be seen in the following passage from chapter six. During an excursion in a Greenwich Park, the children pretend to go on a bear hunt:

Alice whispered:

'I see the white witch bear yonder among the trees! Let's track it and slay it in its lair.'

'I am the bear,' said Noel; so he crept away, and we followed him among the trees. Often the witch bear was out of sight, and then you didn't know where it would jump out from; but sometimes we saw it, and just followed.

'When we catch it there'll be a great fight,' said Oswald; 'and I shall be Count Folko of Mont Faucon.'

'I'll be Gabrielle,' said Dora. She is the only one of us who likes doing girl's parts.

'I'll be Sintram,' said Alice; 'and H. O. can be the Little Master.'

'What about Dicky?'

'Oh, I can be the Pilgrim with the bones.'

The roles the children play (the bear, Count Folko of Mont Faucon, Gabrielle, Sintram, the Pilgrim with the bones) are characters from "Sintram and His Companions," a work of Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué. Originally published in German in 1814, an English translation soon followed and circulated widely in the Anglosphere.[54] From the hunt-the-bear scene, we can surmise that Sintram and His Companions exerted significant influence on children's imagination.

During their game, the children find a wall in the park. In the wall is a door, through which the children go. On the other side, they find a girl who looks like a "china doll." Noel introduces himself to the girl, saying, "I'm Prince Camaralzaman." Prince Camaralzaman is the protagonist in an Arabian Nights tale called "The Adventures of Prince Camaralzaman and the Princess Badoura." In the midst of the make-believe play, Noel had thus recreated the world of Arabian Nights, and the girl was happy to join in with the children's imaginative role-playing.

Thus, The Story of the Treasure Seekers features children who, having read novels, are familiar with

various fictive worlds and who recreate these in their imagination. The treasure hunts the children go on is itself a make-believe pursuit. Role-playing as adults who have a responsibility to make money, the children are engaging with the real world through fantasy. In other words, make-believe is an occasion to project a fantasy world onto the real world. While having to live in the real, workaday world, the children, as the agents of make-believe play, can be protagonists of a fantasy world. This fantasy world is adjacent to the world of magic: when the children in The Story of the Treasure Seekers pass through the door in the wall, they enter the world of Arabian Nights.

E. Nesbit's novels depict children who imitate adults but who inhabit a world different from the adult world. The children relate to the adult world through make-believe play, and such play ultimately transforms the ordinary, workaday world into another world, one filled with brighter prospects.

In E. Nesbit's novels, the protagonists are children who, through play, cross the boundary between reality and fantasy, and in which their fantasy world has an impact on reality. Her oeuvre became the forerunner to creative fantasy literature, significantly shaping a later generation of writers of fantasy literature, not least of whom was C. S. Lewis. In the case of modern-era Japan, a further wave of fantasy novels, not just the children's stories Iwaya's World Fairytales and Red Bird, was required for fantasy to eventually become established as a literary genre.[55] However, the fact that the moments of fantasy that first made an appearance in Tanizaki's The Boy traced a similar path that in late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain remains the case.

With the modern era witnessing the proliferation of publishing businesses and the circulation of fantasy literature, children started having access to fantasy stories, thereby encouraging more stories featuring children who play in a make-believe world. By letting their imaginations run riot, the boundary-crossing children star as the heroes in a new world.

Notes

[1] See Earl H. Kinmonth, *The Self-Made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought* (University of California Press, 1982), 1. Yo Takeuchi, *Risshi, Wakamono, Shussei: Jukensei no Shakai Shi* (Kodansha, 1992), 2 (竹内洋『立志・苦学・出世　受験生の社会史』講談社).

[2] 「教育のある無産者が驚くべき速力を以て、増加して行く。是がどう云ふ活動を十数年先に試みるかと云ふことに就いては、社会のことに意を用ゐる者は深く考へなくてはならぬことである。維新前の旧道徳で以て此新事実を圧することが出来やうか」Bin Ueda, *Sengo no Shiso Kai* (Jidai Shicho, 1905), 9 (上田敏「戦後の思想界」『時代思潮』). Ueda's concerns were later echoed by Ishikawa Takuboku, a humanities student at the time. In 1910, Ishikawa raised his concern in an article titled "the closed age" (*Jidai Heisoku no Genjo*), "Of the hundreds of people who graduate from state and private universities, half fail to secure a job and end up in shabby lodgings. (…) Dozens or hundreds of times more young men are deprived of their right to an education in the course of their education. (…) In this way, we are witnessing in Japan the steady growth of a peculiar "nomadic" class" (「毎年何百といふ官私大学卒業生が、其半分は職を得かねて下宿屋にごろ／＼してゐるではないか」…「彼等に何十倍、何百倍する多数の青年は、其教育を享ける権利を中途半端で奪はれてしまふではないか」…「かくて日本には今『遊民』といふ不思議な階級が漸次其数

を増しつつある」) Takuboku Takuboku, *Ishikawa Takuboku Zenshu*, Vol. 4 (Chikuma Shobo, 1967), 9 (『石川啄木全集』第四巻、筑摩書房).

[3] 「『一つおれも書いて見よう』と思ひ立つて生れて初めて小説の筆を執つたのは、医薬や滋養物の費用を得たいためであつた。その頃萬朝報では毎週、十円の懸賞で短編の新作を募集してゐた」Hakucho Masamune, "Watashi no Bungaku Shugyo," *Jiji Shinpo*, September 6, 1913, 7, 9, 14 (「私の文学修業」『時事新報」』).

[4] 文部省訓令第一号「学生生徒ノ風紀振粛ニ関スル件」

[5] 「空想ニ煩悶シテ処世ノ本務ヲ閑却スルモノ」Ministry of Education, *Gakusei Hyakunen Shi*, Teikoku Chiho Gyosei Gakkai, 1981 (文部省『学制百年史』帝国地方行政学会).

[6] 学生生徒ノ閲読スル図書

[7] 「予は最早八犬伝心酔時代のやうに世の中が五色の糸で色取られてゐるとは思へない…世の中の事は何もかもつまならくなつてしまつたが、兎に角生存はしたい、生存するには何か仕事をしなくてはならぬ、その為に早稲田卒業後六年間いろんな事を書いて来た」Nabuto Nishimoto, "Introduction," *Kojin*, 1907, 9 (「序」『紅塵』).

[8] Hakucho Masamune, "Doko-e," *Waseda Bungaku*, 1908, 1–4 (「何処へ」『早稲田文学』).

[9] See the following source for more on how the ministry order affected Masamune's novel writing, Yoshiaki Yamamoto, "'Kuso ni Hanmon' suru shonen: 'Dokuritsushin' 'Doko-e' o jikushite. Masamune Hakucho noto 1," *The Annual Collection of Essays and Studies of the Faculty of Letters, Gakushuin University* 33, 1987, 3 (山本芳明「「空想ニ煩悶」する青年―「独立心」・「何処へ」を軸として 正宗白鳥ノート 1―」『学習院大学文学部 研究年報』).

[10] 「足は行き場所に迷つて、遂に麹町に向ふ。織田の住んでる町まで来て、訪はうか訪ふまいかと躊躇してゐると、前の三階建の二階の窓には、色の黒い耳に輪を嵌めた女と、青い腹掛けをした辮髪の男とが頭を並べて、声高に分らぬ言葉で饒舌つてゐる。路地を隔てゝ隣りの洋服店から、背の高い色の白い毛皮をぐる／＼巻つけた西洋婦人が犬を連れて出て来た。二人の支那人はそれを見ては面白さうに笑つた。その辺に散ばつてた子供等は婦人の前に集まつた。婦人は口笛を吹いたり、何か早口に云つて、犬を綾してゐたが、やがて店から肥満の男が出て来ると、一緒に勇ましく去つた。支那人も引込んでしまふ。健次は無心に見てゐたが、町が元のやうに淋しくつて、埃を含んだ風が顔に吹き付けると、身震ひして路次を入つた」

[11] 「色の黒い耳に輪を嵌めた女と、青い腹掛けをした辮髪の男」「背の高い色の白い毛皮をぐる／＼巻つけた西洋婦人」

[12] 「アルコールランプに点火し、長椅子に身を埋め、長い煙管で匂ひを呼び、沈睡に陥る支那人は、祖先の詩人が夢想した無何有の境に進んでゐるのだ。阿片を嗅ぎに支那へ行く。迦南の楽土は其処にありと思はれる」

[13] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Penguin Classics, 1890.

[14] 「マレイ人たち」

[15] 「色の黒い耳に輪を嵌めた女と、青い腹掛けをした辮髪の男」

[16] 「背の高い色の白い毛皮をぐるぐる巻つけた西洋婦人」

[17] 「坪内博士の立案と監督で富山房から出版された世界文学の梗概叢書や少年向きの文学叢書を五六冊執筆したり、短編小説の翻訳をしたりして、気儘な下宿生活を続けてゐた」Hakucho Masamune, *Bundanteki Jijoden*, Chuokoron, 1938, 2–7 (正宗白鳥「文壇的自叙伝」『中央公論』).

[18] 「少年物として、アラビアンナイトの短い話二つ三つを解り易く訳し」

[19] Masamune, *Bundanteki Jijoden*, 2–7.

[20] 「当時の文壇語で言ふ『お伽物』作家になる気は毛頭無かつた」

[21] Hideaki Sugita, *Arabian Naito to Nihonjin* (Iwanami Shoten, 2012), 9 (『アラビアンナイトと日本人』岩波書店).

[22] 「名誉ある新強国の小国民として、今や将さに世界の新舞台に立たんとす」

[23] Sazanami Iwaya and Shiso Kaneko, "Shonen Sekai Yomihon," in *Shina-Chosen Shamu-Hashi oyobi Toyo Kakkoku* (volume 2 of *Shonen Sekai Yomihon*), ed. Iwaya Sazanami (Hakubunkan, 1907), 5 (『少年世界読本』第二巻「支那朝鮮暹羅波斯 及東洋各国」博文館).

[24] 「阿片は固形体ですが、喫む時には半黒色の糖蜜のやうにしてある、一オンス幾何と小売する者が有つて、之を吸ふには煙草のやうに起きて居るのではない、屹度枕をして横になつて、一生懸命に吸ふのです」「何しろ阿片はモルヒネを作る原料ですから、吸へば気持は良いけれ共、長い間には毒が身体中へ廻つて、兎もすると癈と云う中毒に罹ります」

[25] 「阿片を飲んで遊んで居る所」

[26] 「四十三年より四十四年の前半期に至るまでの文壇には、自然派文芸全盛の後を承けた反動として錯雑紛糾せる幾多の新現象、新傾向が起つた」が、「四十四年の後半に入りてから次第に一つの方向に徐々と歩みを進め」
[27] 「国家有為の人材を育成するために、草創期の児童文学が有用と判断したのは伝記と歴史のジャンルであった」
[28] 「子どもたちに期待されるのは、歴史や伝記からかれらが将来選択すべき人生のモデルを学び、自己激励の資料を手に入れることである。大人の予備軍であるかれらは現実世界の掟をあらかじめ承知していなければならないし、空想的な物語の世界に我を忘れることは、大人になるための貴重な時間を浪費することを意味していたのだ」Ai Maeda, "Kodomotachi no Jikan: 'Takekurabe' Shiron," in *Tenbo* (Chikuma Shobo, 1975), 6 (「子どもたちの時間―『たけくらべ』試論」『展望』筑摩書房), and in *Higuchi Ichiyo no Sekai* (Chikuma Shobo, 1989), 9 (『樋口一葉の世界』筑摩書房).
[29] 「なんでも自然主義で囃し立てた時代は二三年間に過ぎず、従って、私と青果を、栄えない花形に仕立てただけで、後が続かなかった」 Hakucho Masamune, *Shizenshugi Bungaku Seisui Shi* (Rokko Shuppan Bu, 1984), 11 (『自然主義文学盛衰史』六興出版部).
[30] 「善良で弱く純粋な〈子ども〉」…「子どもを無垢な存在とみるロマン主義的な子ども観」Kazue Kawahara, *Kodomo Kan no Kindai: "Akai Tori" to "Doshin" no Riso* (Chuokoronsha, 1998), 2 (『子ども観の近代 『赤い鳥』と「童心」の理想』中央公論社).
[31] 「世界に幾億の人間が居る。私は其の中の一人です。其の私が子供の時分描いた空想は大抵斯様なものでありました」
[32] 「広い、広い海の彼方の外国」
[33] 「大海原を渡る風の音と聞えたり、岸辺に打寄せる波の音と聞えた」
[34] 「幾千の細かい想像の綾糸」
[35] 「或る時は森の奥の妖魔が笑う木霊のやうな、或る時はお伽噺に出て来る侏儒共が多勢揃つて踊るやうな」
[36] 「太平洋を渡つて美しい国へ行く」
[37] 「遠く隔つてゐますので、たゞ赤い筋と、ひら／＼翻つてゐる旗と、太い煙突と、其の煙突から上る黒い煙と、高い三本の檣とが見えたばかりであります」
[38] Nobuo Kasahara (笠原伸夫) argues that the text has "a multilayered spatial structure:" "In the perfectly ordinary world that was the Nihombashi vicinity, the boy beheld an out-of-the-ordinary world that lay beyond the gate. Beyond there lay an even more mystical place, the secret enclosure (the Western house)." Kasahara Nobuo, *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro: Shukumei no Erosu* (Tojusha, 1980), 6 (『谷崎潤一郎――宿命のエロス』冬樹社). Koichi Isoda (磯田光一) presents the following argument regarding the Kakigaracho district of Nihombashi, the place where Tanizaki spent his childhood and where Boy is set: "Here, the old and the new are mingled together, with the decline of the old civilization prompting some nostalgia and with the rise of a new civilization prompting amazement and unease. It was a jumble of different elements." Koichi Isoda, "Kosho, Nihombashi Kakigaracho: Shonen Jun'ichiro no Kukan," *Kaishaku to Kansho*, (1976): 10 (「考証・日本橋蛎殻町――少年潤一郎の空間」『解釈と鑑賞』).
[39] 「有馬学校の前から真っ直ぐに中之橋を越え」…「長い／＼塀を繞らした厳かめしい鉄格子の門」[をくぐらなければいけない]
[40] 「欅や榎の大木」
[41] 「古井戸の跡でもあろう、沼とも池とも附かない濁った水溜り」
[42] In his review of the story, Kunihiro Shimbo (新保邦寛) notes that "make-believe play had been cruelly spoilt by early-20th-century modern values such as labor, study, functionality, and rationalism" (労働、勤勉、有効性、合理主義といった近代の価値観のもとに、不当にスポイルされてきた〈遊び〉) and applauds the story for "capturing the essence of the child in the course of make-believe play" (〈遊び〉の相において子供を捉えている). Kunihiro Shimbo, "'Shonen' o Yomu: Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, Shoki Shosetsu no Tame ni," *Journal of Hokkaido University of Education. Section I. A*. 36, no. 2 (1986): 3 (「「少年」を読む――谷崎潤一郎・初期小説のために――」『北海道教育大学紀要第一部 A 人文科学編』).
[43] 「何処で何を盗んだか、正直に白状しろ」

と、信一は出鱈目に訊問を始める。仙吉は又、やれ白木屋で反物を五反取つたの、にんべんで鰹節を盗んだの、日本銀行でお札をごまかしたのと、出鱈目ながら生意気な事を云った。

「うん、さうか、太い奴だ。まだ何か悪い事をしたろう。人を殺した覚えはないか」
「へいございます。熊谷土手で按摩を殺して五十両の財布を盗みました。さうして其のお金で吉原へ参りました」
緞帳芝居か覗き機巧で聞いて来るものと見えて、如何にも当意即妙の返答である。

[44] 「此の間見た草双紙の中の、旗本の若侍が仲間と力を協はせて美人を掠奪する挿絵の事を想ひ泛かべ」

[45] 「金閣寺の雪姫のやうに身を悶えて苦しんで居る」

[46] 「私はこれ迄出会つたことのない一種不思議な快感に襲はれた」

[47] Takashi Yasuda (安田孝) argues that Tanizaki projected his idiosyncratic notion of sexuality into the protagonist of The Boy, “The fact that a literary domain had expanded the world of the child was attributable in part to a change people’s notion of the human being (…) Tanazaki Jun’ichiro’s interest in the world of the child implies that the sexual world he depicted was not restricted to heterosexual intercourse; it also reflects his understanding of the human being.” Takashi Yasuda, “Tanizaki Jun’ichiro ‘Shonen’ o Megutte,” *The Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tokyo Metropolitan University)* , no. 146 (1981): 1 (「谷崎潤一郎「少年」をめぐって」『人文学報』).

[48] 「『浮かれ胡弓』の噺の中の人間のやうに、微妙な楽の音に恍惚と耳を傾けた」

[49] Jun’ichiro Tanizaki, “Bungaku Juku,” in *Yosho Jidai*, ed. (Bungei Shunju, 1957), 3 (「文学熟」『幼少時代』文藝春秋社).

[50] 「巌谷漣山人の「新八犬伝」が少年世界に連載され出したのは明治卅一年の正月、戊戌の春となつてゐるので、私の十三歳の時であることが分るが、私に小説と云ふものゝ楽しさ、――、空想の世界を仮定して、それに浸りそれに遊ぶことの喜びを、思ふ存分味はせてくれた最初の作品はあれであつたと云へよう。」

[51] 「それに浸りそれに遊ぶことの喜び」

[52] Recent research on E. Nesbit includes the following: Julia Briggs, *A Woman of Passion: The Life of E. Nesbit 1858-1924* (New Amsterdam books, 1987); Elisabeth Galvin, *The Extraordinary Life of E. Nesbit* (Pen and Sword Books Limited, 2018); Eleanor Fitzsimons, *The Life and Loves of E. Nesbit* (Duckworth Books, 2019).

[53] Edith Nesbit, *The Story of the Treasure Seekers: Complete and Unabridged*, (Puffin Books, 1996).

[54] See the following for more on German novels for children that circulated in late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain. David Blamires, *Telling Tales: The Impact of Germany on English Children’s Books 1780-1918* (Open Book Publishers, 2009).

[55] On this matter, further research is required to understand the impact of Kan Kikuchi’s (菊池寛) “Complete Collection of Stories for Primary Schoolers” (小学生全集: *Shōgakusei Zenshū*), published between 1927 and 1929.