

## Article

# Tokutomi Kenjirō's *Hototogisu*: A Worldwide Japanese Best-Seller In The Early Twentieth Century?

– A Comparative Study of the English and French Translations<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Tokutomi Kenjirō (pennname Roka) (1868-1927)'s novel *Hototogisu* (The Cuckoo, 1900) achieved an immense success in Japan at the time of its publication. It was also arguably the first modern Japanese novel to be translated into multiple languages in the years following its publication. The number of translations — fifteen from 1904 to 1918 — seems to suggest that Namiko's tragic story was positively received outside of Japan as well. The purpose of this study is to understand the novel's reception in the English and French speaking world. In the first part of the paper, we argue that two key elements may explain its success outside of Japan: The Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), which provoked a thirst for knowledge about the "real" Japan and the way novel carries "Western" values on love, family and gender roles. The second part analyses the French translation and the two English translations. We show how the shortcomings of the first English translation justified another English version, based on the excellent French translation, and explore how their styles may be linked to different targeted readerships.

### Introduction

*Aa tsurai! Tsurai! Mō – mō on'na nanzo ni – umare wa shimasen-yo. Aaa!*

Oh my heart! Such a torture! Never – never again will I be born as a woman! Aah!

This melodramatic cry of agony emitted by Namiko as she lies dying belongs without a doubt among the most famous lines of Meiji popular fiction.<sup>2</sup> Thanks to its tear-worthy plot and flowery style, Tokutomi Roka (or Kenjirō, 1868-1927)'s novel was one of the most phenomenal commercial successes Japan had ever known in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The key to this unprecedented success arguably lies in the way it managed to capture the psyche of the time, dealing

with several issues that were crucial to the newly shaped post-Meiji Restoration Japanese society: changing gender roles, different visions of love, new family structures and modern outlooks on wars and diseases. In that sense, the novel fits Martha Vicinus' definition of melodrama as "a combination of archetypal, mythic beliefs and time-specific responses to particular cultural and historical conditions".<sup>3</sup>

The novel was translated into several languages in the years following its publication in Japan. The number of translations — we counted fifteen from 1904 to 1918<sup>4</sup> — seems to suggest that Namiko's tragic story was positively received outside of Japan as well. This paper's purpose is to understand *Hototogisu*'s reception in the English and French speaking world. How did such a text, which owed its success to its localisation within a particular cultural moment, manage to gain an audience within a foreign setting?

We shall argue that elements of answer are to be found within the novel itself as well as in the way the novel was presented to the non-Japanese public and the translation strategies.<sup>5</sup> The first part of this paper analyses how the novel offered a new vision of Japan at a key historical moment. The second part presents and contrasts the English and French translations.

## **I. Realistic *And* Romantic: The Perfect Popular Novel**

### **1. A "Realistic" View On A Mysterious Land**

In 1904, *Hototogisu* was translated for the first time, into English. Its title, *Nami-Ko*, was given a subtitle: *A Realistic Novel*. Despite the apparent banality of such a subtitle, the "realistic" quality attributed to *Hototogisu* is truly crucial to understand its reception abroad. American orientalist William Elliot Griffis (1843-1928) thus underlined the uniqueness of the novel in his review: "It is the only work of fiction in English which gives a real and true picture of the home life of contemporaneous Japan."<sup>6</sup>

The emphasis on the novel's "realism" is all the more striking in that it would certainly not be considered as such today: the melodramatic plot, the stereotypical protagonists and the ready-made dialogues all appear to our contemporary eyes as contrived and bordering on kitsch. One may argue first that the understanding of realism in the Meiji era had less of an objective, scientific ambition in its transcription of life. Tsubouchi Shōyō in his essay *Shōsetsu shinzui* (1885-1886) writes: "The main emphasis of fiction is human feeling; close behind follow the state of the world and manners".<sup>7</sup> An emotional scene was thus dubbed "realistic" if it managed to convey strong feelings to the reader. "Realistic" thus refers less to a literary style than to a wider, loosely defined, truthfulness to life.

It may be that alongside major theoretical works such as Tsubouchi's, *Hototogisu* played its own role in shaping this understanding of "realism" as an authentic rendering of the way the author and/or the characters perceive reality – with all the subjectivity that this notion allows. Fujii

Hidetada thus argues that the three main elements constitutive of the novel – namely tuberculosis, war and the family system – put together “necessarily” gave birth to a “sentimentalism” that was to remain the main mode of connecting “reality” to “literature” during this period.<sup>8</sup>

Regarding this specific understanding of the links between reality and literature, the preface to the 1909 edition of *Hototogisu* is particularly significant. Roka narrates how Namiko's tragedy is based on a real story he heard one night in Zushi. This text was systematically included in later editions in Japanese and can be found in the French and the second English translations. Furthermore, reviews tended to quote this *Preface* and insist on the “true” quality of the story.<sup>9</sup> The one published in the French newspaper *Le Figaro* on 4 October 1912 claims: “All this drama actually happened”. The idea that the story was true – which was indeed totally unverifiable for the non-Japanese reader of the time – seems to have immediately enhanced greatly the value of the novel.

One may thus assume that the “realistic” aspect of the novel was so emphasised because such an outlook on Japan was radically different from the one previously privileged in Europe. Up until then, Japan was mostly associated with sophisticated visual art, and intricate, mysterious cultural habits in general. *Hototogisu* was thus presented as going against this stereotype: “The view of Japan given in this book is at times startlingly different from the idealized version customary in Japanese stories by foreigners.”<sup>10</sup> The novel thus stood in sharp contrast with the accepted representations concerning Japan up to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In a 1987 essay, Moroccan novelist and sociologist Abdelkebir Khatibi identified three main representations of the “foreigner” within French culture: the “good savage”, which concerned mainly India and Africa, the “barbarian”, associated with the Arabs and the Muslims, and the “mysterious”, which applied to the Chinese and the Japanese.<sup>11</sup> Within European culture in general, Japan was traditionally thought of as a radically different, unknowable entity. In Book Three of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Japan is quoted alongside imaginary lands such as the infamous Laputa. In 18<sup>th</sup> century France, the Philosophers used Japan as an empty symbol; it came to represent whatever they intended to argue for or against. For instance, Montesquieu in *L'Esprit des lois* (1748) uses Japan as a counter-model, a land of despotism and cruelty, while at the same time Voltaire, in his *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations* (1756), transforms Japan into an ideal nation dedicated to peace and religious tolerance. This tradition of seeing in Japan a symbolic space is not limited to France, but has been especially acute among French intellectuals.<sup>12</sup> It traveled through several centuries to reach Malraux and Barthes.<sup>13</sup>

It did not end with Japan opening up to the world in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it was given new connotations. Japan became a symbol for archaic beauty and utter sophistication. Flaubert mockingly echoed this perception of the country in his humorous *Dictionnaire des idées reçues* (written during the 1870s, published in 1911-1913). At the entry “Japan”, he indeed writes: “Everything there is made out of porcelain”.

Modern aspects of Japan were therefore overlooked or perceived negatively. The French

travellers of the time, not unlike some in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, wrote in appreciative terms about how Japan had maintained an untouched but refined culture preserved from the vices of modernity. One such vision can be found for instance in the art collector Émile Guimet (1836-1918)'s *Promenades japonaises* (1880), an account of his journey to Japan in 1876-1877. The painter Félix Régamy (1844-1907), who accompanied him, expressed in a letter to his brother the enchantment that was Japan in the following terms:

I write to you from the land of dreams... It is a perpetual enchantment - the naked in all its glory - the costume as beautiful as the Antique, with variety in colors and shapes added. The magnificent landscape, everything... The Golden Age; no more, nor less.<sup>14</sup>

If acknowledged, Japanese modernization tended to be considered with disdain. The following text is from Pierre Loti (1850-1923) – we shall come back to him – describing a ball at the Rokumeikan in 1883:

The first European-style ball held right in the center of Tokyo was nothing but the mimicry of monkeys. One saw young girls dressed in white muslin with gloves reaching their elbows, holding ivory-white dancebooks in their fingers, sitting in chairs with forced smiles, and then, although our rhythms are completely unknown to them and must be terribly hard on their ears, they danced the polka and the waltz at a generally accurate pace to the songs of operettas...

This vulgar mimicry is certainly amusing to the foreign passerby, but in essence, it shows that this people have no taste, and furthermore a complete lack of national pride.<sup>15</sup>

*Hototogisu*'s reception clearly marks an evolution in this vision of Japanese efforts to join the ranks of modern nations. The *Figaro* review illustrates this when it underlines the mix of “archaic” and “modern” the French reader may find in the novel: “It presents us with literary processes which are absolutely modern, some customs that appear, from our viewpoint, very far away and very archaic, and it is all in all very ingenuous, subtle and deep”.<sup>16</sup> The French newspaper notices how *Hototogisu* brings a modern outlook on Japan while perpetuating the stereotype of the “archaic” country, thus presenting the novel as interesting because new but not too different to what the French reader may be used to.

One key historical event was instrumental in the evolution of the way the world perceived Japanese modernity: the advanced technical and diplomatic skills Japan displayed during the Russo-Japanese War. The importance of the date of the first *Hototogisu* translation, 1904, cannot be stressed enough. It may have been a coincidence that the Boston publishing house Herbert Turner & Co had a translation ready by that date but there is no doubt that its reception was deeply affected by the outbreak of the war and the changing perception of Japan that followed. One

review thus states: “Especially welcome at this time is the translation of one of the most popular novels in modern Japanese literature.”<sup>17</sup>

The rise of Japanese military power had been attracting attention at least since the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). It provoked some fearful reactions exemplified by the expression “The Yellow Peril”, coined by the French economist Edmond Théry (1854-1925) in 1901. That Théry was actually referring to China in his infamous essay did not stop it from being attached to Japan as well.<sup>18</sup>

The fact that *Hototogisu* is set during the Sino-Japanese War, that the main male characters are in the military and that it describes a naval battle against China (Book 3, Chapter I: “Battle off Yalu River”) are elements that certainly greatly contributed to its success abroad. The Japanese war against Russia was indeed attracting a great deal of attention. It was the first time in world history that a non-White nation was fighting successfully against a Western empire. The foreign press covered the conflict extensively.<sup>19</sup>

Most were aware of the huge impact a Japanese victory would have on the world; President Roosevelt thus wrote about the battle of Tsushima: “This is the greatest phenomenon the world has ever seen. Even the Battle of Trafalgar could not match this.”<sup>20</sup> The general public must have been very curious indeed to have access to a “native” account of the way Japanese fought, as *Hototogisu* promised to do. The *Chicago Record-Herald* thus wrote in its review: “A realistic Japanese novel of the present day, with a divorce problem in it and a naval battle by way of climax! Here is a curiosity and it proves to be as interesting as one has reason to expect.”<sup>21</sup>

*Hototogisu* must have been all the more well received in that the general opinion towards Japan tended to be favourable. This was especially the case in the Anglo-American world; it was more mitigated among the French as France was officially siding with Russia. However, the latter did not benefit from a very positive image and Russian soldiers were associated with the stereotype of the violent and unruly Cossack. In continental Europe, Japan was mainly supported by socialists and social democrats who hoped that a victory for Japan would ultimately encourage an end to colonialism and imperialism.<sup>22</sup> Numerous literary productions reflect these opinions in England and France. In their study on the subject, David Wells and Sandra Wilson write:

In English, Herbert Strang's adventure tale, *Kobo: A Story of the Russo-Japanese War* (London 1904), is, predictably, also told from a Japanese point of view. Blatant support of the Japanese is likewise a salient feature of two book-length epic poems on the war. [Jane Oakley's *A Russo-Japanese War Poem*] [...] Anatole France's novel, *Sur la pierre blanche*, which was serialised in *L'Humanité* during 1904 and appeared in book form the same year, discusses the war at some length, and unusually for a French work adopts a pro-Japanese position.<sup>23</sup>

The respected master Anatole France was not however the only one among French intellectuals to support Japan. The avant-garde poet Guillaume Apollinaire, still a young man at the time, published on 30 July 1904 an essay untitled “Historique des relations entre la Russie et le Japon” (Russo-Japanese Relations: a History) in *L’Européen*. Pretending to prove the “superiority of the Japanese civilization” by a pseudo-scientific argumentation, the essay is violently pro-Japanese in the way that it justifies Japan’s domination over other Asian countries, presenting it as a natural right.<sup>24</sup>

In such a context, *Hototogisu*’s approach to war must have been well received. The novel indeed glorifies Japanese military skills in a non-aggressive way. The Chinese are not alluded to otherwise than as “the enemy” and there is no trace of racism or uncalled for animosity against them. The focus is on the bravery of Takeo – presented from the beginning as a highly likable character – during combat. The following passage describes how Takeo has to put aside his worries about his wife’s health:

In his country’s hour of trial, his private affairs, though they were a question of life or death to him, were lost sight of. Thus he thought, and, burying his grief, followed his duty, and with all his desperate courage engaged in battle. To him, indeed, death was no more value than a particle of dust.<sup>25</sup>

The last sentence, where death is presented as irrelevant to the young officer, may have been perceived as typically “Japanese”. The Western public must have been familiar indeed with the ethos of the samurai as expressed in 1899 in the hugely popular *Bushido: the Soul of Japan* by Nitobe Inazō. Written in English for Westerners, it widely contributed to the positive perception of the Japanese army as chivalrous, honorable and self-controlled. However, the overall glorification of bravery and dedication to duty one may observe in *Hototogisu* is not very different from European patriotic discourses of the time and must have been easily relatable for the reader. In his review of the novel, William Elliot Griffis thus wrote: “It is full of suggestive touches, showing the beauty of the country and the passionate love of the people for their native land”.<sup>26</sup>

Other reviews chose another angle; rather than praising the characters’ patriotism, it insists on the value in such times of war of a novel which shows the universality of “human nature”: “So true is its portrayal of character, and so tender and deep the pathos of its chief incident, that to the Occidental reader it brings a fresh reminder that human nature is the same world over”.<sup>27</sup> Another review puts the focus on Roka’s humanistic values, presented as inherited from Tolstoy: “Tokutomi, the Tolstoi of Japan, stands for humanity pure and simple”.<sup>28</sup>

The main reason for *Hototogisu*’s success abroad is thus to be found in the conjuncture between a major historical event and a fiction perceived as giving a faithful account of the country the whole world was focusing on. Another important aspect must not, however, be overlooked: it

is how the novel can be read as advocating for Western family values and romantic love. This must have unconsciously flattered the Western reader by confirming that it was his or her conception of the family and love that was “universal”, thus “natural” and right.

## 2. A Western Vision Of Love And Women

*Hototogisu* is first and foremost a love story. The first book of the novel is dedicated to describing the marital bliss of Namiko and Takeo. The latter is described as an overtly loving husband, and Chapter VII (Book One) consists of his letters to Namiko while he is away on duty as a naval officer. One passage shows how he does not really conform to the stereotype of the stern and silent Japanese samurai:

When I am alone on the bridge on duty [...] I seem to see your lovely face. Don't laugh at my folly. Among my comrades I feign to be careless and sing with them [...] but (please don't laugh) a picture of Nami-san is always in my inner pocket. Even while I am writing I see clearly the figure of one who will read this in the small room at home, overshadowed by the palm trees...<sup>29</sup>

One American review thus states, in somewhat comically naïve terms: “[This novel] is an eloquent protest against the foreign misconception that no Jap would be able to love woman divinely.”<sup>30</sup> “Divinely” probably means here in a romantic, thus European, way.

*Hototogisu* indeed accumulates late 19<sup>th</sup> century romantic stereotypes. The most striking one is the way the two lovers' destiny is crossed: Namiko falls ill with the archetypal romantic illness of the time, tuberculosis. In her famous essay, *Illness as Metaphor*, Susan Sontag has analysed how tuberculosis in 19<sup>th</sup> century European culture “was imagined [...] to confer extraordinary powers of seduction.”<sup>31</sup> Described by the Goncourt brothers as the “illness of the lofty and noble parts of the human beings”,<sup>32</sup> cultural productions of the time abound in sexualised and passionate but noble young women dying of “consumption”. The most famous are without a doubt Marguerite/Violetta of *The Lady of the Camellias*<sup>33</sup> (1848) and its adaptation for the opera, *La Traviata* (1853), and Mimi from Henri Murger's novel (1851) and Puccini's opera *La Bohème* (1896).

Without sharing the dissolute lifestyle of a Marguerite Gautier, Namiko fits into the stereotype of the languid and sickly but passionate and loving beauty. She is described in the first lines of the novel as “fair”, “thin”, “slender and graceful”.<sup>34</sup> When her illness is confirmed, she accepts it as a death sentence and only regrets it because death would separate her from her husband. The following lines, illustrating Namiko's passionate dedication to her beloved husband, are especially famous:

Clasping Takeo's hands tightly in hers and dropping upon his knees, she wept. “I am your wife even in death. Nothing shall ever part us – neither foes, disease, nor death. I am your own till the very end of time!”<sup>35</sup>

Namiko falling ill thus makes her the perfect victim. Because she thinks that it puts the family line into jeopardy, her mother in law instigates her repudiation while Takeo is away. This storyline has often been presented as the main reason for *Hototogisu*'s success in Japan at the time and is generally the angle chosen by academic studies on the novel. The novel is thus analysed as a *mise en scène* of the struggle between the notions of *ie* – a family system inherited from feudalism which values lineage and hierarchy – and *katei*, a new model of family based on the Western ideal of “home” (*hōmu* was a popular *gairai-go* of the time) and marital love.<sup>36</sup>

In the novel, the mother-in-law stands for the *ie* system and destroys Namiko's and Takeo's happiness by following what she thinks is her duty. Which side is “bad” and which is “good” is made very obvious by the author. *Hototogisu* indeed belongs to the category of Meiji social fiction called *katei shōsetsu*, or “domestic fiction”, that reached its peak in the 1900s.<sup>37</sup> This genre widely contributed to the awareness among the Meiji public of a new, more desirable model of the family conveyed through the notion of *katei*, “associated with health, a progressive outlook, respectability, and proper gender roles”.<sup>38</sup>

Tokutomi Sohō's Min'yūsha – *Hototogisu*'s publishing house – was particularly active in the promotion of this model of the family. In his study on the subject, Ken Ito writes:

One characteristic of the Min'yūsha was a strong pedagogical strain, and in order to spread his message to a popular audience and to women in particular Sohō started a magazine called *Katei zasshi*, or “Home Magazine”, in 1892. The stated purpose of this magazine was to “reform the foundations of society and to encourage the creation of harmonious and enlightened *katei*.”<sup>39</sup>

*Hototogisu* inherited this spirit and Roka did not try to conceal the ideological agenda of his novel. In an advertisement for *Hototogisu* that appeared in *Kokumin shinbun* when it was being serialised, he wrote:

Although the measure of Meiji now exceeds thirty years, in the very fiber of society there are more than few outdated practices that exist with frightful force. This writer has merely endeavoured to capture one of the nearest at hand.<sup>40</sup>

In the novel, Namiko and Takeo's struggle to create a loving *katei* (home) against all opposition is presented as the rightful, “natural” thing to do. As Satō Masaru has analysed, Namiko, Takeo and their supporters – mainly Namiko's father – are positioned on the side of “nature” (*shizen*) while their opponents – Namiko's mother in law, her step mother and their rivals in love – are presented as “false” (*kyōgi*) and “artificial” (*kyōshoku*). He concludes: “The story revolved entirely, in a somewhat oversimplified way, around the oppression of the “natural” by the “un-natural” (*fu-shizen*)”.<sup>41</sup>



This ode to the nuclear family would have without a doubt pleased a European readership; in the bourgeois 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, extended families with complicated lineage were not in favour compared to the family bliss promised to a respectable couple and their children. Moreover, Namiko's struggle against evil mothers-in-law and stepmothers would have sounded familiar to the English and French speaking audiences. As the *Figaro* review cleverly remarks: "It is the story of the poor little Nami-Ko, married to the ship captain Takeo who goes far away and leaves her to the mercy of her terrible mother in law, who hates her, just like the traditional ones from Europe."

The depiction of a victimized Japanese woman prompted the critics to compare Namiko with Pierre Loti's famous character Madame Chrysanthème (1887), made world famous as Madame Butterfly in John Luther Long's short story (1898) and on stage, in David Belasco's play (1900) and in Puccini's opera (1904). Perceptions of Madame Chrysanthème's character vary greatly within these various works; Pierre Loti's version only will be considered here as he is directly mentioned in the reviews.

Today, Loti's character has come to represent all the vices of Orientalist fantasies towards an exoticised and eroticised Far East.<sup>42</sup> When *Hototogisu* was published in France however, Namiko, victim of the Japanese feudal mindset and not of a careless French sailor, was considered tear-worthy in a much more obvious way than Madame Chrysanthème. The review in *Le Figaro* is particularly illuminating:

We only know the Japanese woman through the graceful, utterly poetic aspect of Madame Chrysanthème; there is another, alas! singularly more common, and whose condition is more painful and harsh. The novelist Tokutomi Kenjiro exposes it for us in a very Japanese novel, *Plutôt la mort* [*Hototogisu*].<sup>43</sup>

Namiko is thus presented as Madame Chrysanthème's opposite. In the other reviews as well, when Madame Chrysanthème is mentioned it is to put Namiko in contrast with the well-known figure. This is without a doubt another way of presenting Roka's novel as new, therefore exciting and worth reading, but the comparison seems to have deeper implications.

Looking at the plot, the contrast between Madame Chrysanthème and Namiko is not that obvious. They are both desirable women because submissive and quiet; both of their identities are defined by their love for a man; they become the passive victims of circumstances – both are completely helpless when it comes to trying to change these circumstances in their favour. They both meet a tragic but somewhat glamorous end. From today's perspective, the portrait of womanhood that is drawn through both of these characters seems to carry equally a stereotyping masculine gaze.

The difference between the two characters is therefore to be looked for elsewhere. One clue is given in the "*Avant-propos*" (Introduction) of the French translation. The person who signs himself as "The Translator" writes:

The reader familiar with the tale of some globe-trotter with superficial ideas who, during his necessarily short stays, wanted to see in Japan only nice dolls, or “musume”, this reader will see new horizons opening up in front of his eyes, about the true personality of the Japanese woman; he will admire the delicate feelings of inalterable devotion that are flowing from the heart of the spouse Nami-Ko.<sup>44</sup>

The author of the text does not need to name Loti; whom he is referring to is made clear through the use of the word “musume”. The author is attacking here the reification of the Japanese woman in Loti’s work, the fact that his writing presents her more as a piece of art than as a living person. In *Hototogisu* on the contrary, the emphasis is put on Namiko’s feelings of love and suffering.

Namiko is thus an anti-Madame Chrysanthème in the sense that her story, contrary to the latter’s, does not function by stereotyping Japan and the Japanese – how much more complex a portrait of a woman Roka’s novel draws is a different issue. Therefore, these attacks on Loti’s novel that are made in the reviews to valorise *Hototogisu* are to be put back within the context of the evolution described above: Japan could be no longer considered as this artistic, sophisticated and mysterious country but as a “real”, powerful nation whose people’s “true personality” was worthy of being discovered.

## II. The English And French Translations: A Comparison

### 1. Two Different Strategies

The first English translation we are considering here was made directly from the Japanese. It is the very first ever published in a foreign language. It was done by a Japanese woman, Shioya Sakae, in collaboration with a certain E. F. Edgett. Although we could not find any information about the latter, the first seems to have been relatively well known as a teacher of English at Aoyama Gakuin. At the time she translated the novel, she was studying in the United States.<sup>45</sup>

The French translator Olivier Le Paladin, on the other hand, is unknown. It seems highly likely to be a pen name. A “paladin” refers, in French as in English, to the most eminent among Charlemagne’s knights. Olivier (called de Vienne or de Gennes) happened to be one of them. He appears in numerous *chansons de geste*, epic poems from medieval Europe, especially in the famous *Song of Roland*. The reference is thus transparent enough to be immediately understood as a pen name by the French reader of the time. Does a famous figure hide behind it? We have not found any clue concerning his or her true identity as of yet. What is certain to us is that whoever translated *Hototogisu* into French had access to the original text and a good understanding of Japanese culture. It is thus possible that, as for the English translation, several people worked on it, one of them being Japanese.

We did not have access to the Finnish and Italian translations; moreover, we do not possess a good knowledge of German, Spanish or Portuguese, even less Swedish. We cannot therefore

state anything for certain, but some hints seem to show that the French translation is the only one not based on the English version. The Spanish and Portuguese ones open with a translation of the “Introduction” to the English edition, clearly presented as such: *Introducción de los traductores al inglés* and *Introdução dos autores da versão inglesa*.

What differentiates the French translation from the other non-English ones in a more conclusive way, however, is the use of Japanese words. We will analyze this further in detail below, but it is very obvious from the first page of the novel that the French translator has chosen to keep in Japanese numerous words that are translated in the English version as well as the European versions. One of them is “*shōji*”, translated in English as “screen”. None of the European translations we have been able to have access to use the word “*shōji*”, while they use words that appear in Japanese in the English version such as “*marumage*”. Finally, the French translation respects the Japanese spacing between paragraphs, which the English and the other European translations do not.

However, one aspect of the French translation shows that the translator(s) took the English translation, or a European translation done from the English, into account: the names of the chapters. The Japanese text is divided into three books, each divided into multiple very short chapters; none of these have a title. Shioya and Edgett divided the text into longer chapters and gave a title to each; so does the French version. Moreover, the titles themselves are the same in English and French, as the first five quoted here show:

The Honeymoon / *La lune de miel*  
Nami-ko / Nami-Ko  
The Fern Gathering / *La cueillette des fougères*  
The House of Yamaki / *La maison de Yamaki*  
The General at Home / *Le général chez lui...*

Before identifying the main characteristics of the Shioya and the Le Paladin translations, let us stop at the threshold of the novel and examine how the two translators deal with Namiko's portrait. Situated at the very beginning of the text, it is a crucial passage as it is at once the first contact between the reader and the world of the novel and also establishes the main character as a slightly frail but lovely young woman. In these couple of sentences, a different approach to the Japanese text already reveals itself. Here is the Japanese text followed by the English and the French versions:

*Jōshū Ikaho Chigira no sankai no shōji hirakite, yū keshiki o nagamuru fujin. Toshi wa jūhachi-kyū. Hin yoki marumage ni yuite, kusairo no himo tsukeshi komon chirimen no hifu o kitari.*<sup>46</sup>

It was evening at Ikao, the famous town of hot springs in Jōshū. A lady stood gazing at the beautiful scene revealed through an open screen in the third story of the Chigira Hotel. Her age was eighteen or thereabouts. Her hair was dressed in a tasteful magé<sup>1</sup>, and she wore a gray crape gown, relieved by green bows at her breast.<sup>47</sup>

*La scène se passe à Ikao, une ville d'eaux thermales dans la province de Kōzuke. Au second étage de l'hôtel Chigira, une femme vient d'ouvrir un shōji (1) pour contempler le spectacle du soleil couchant. Elle paraît âgée de dix-huit à dix-neuf ans; sa magnifique chevelure est surmontée du maru-mage (2); elle est vêtue d'un hifu (3) de crêpe à ramages, fixé par deux rubans de soie verte.*<sup>48</sup>

First, the name of the province where the hot spring Ikaho is situated differs. Shioya stays the closest to the Japanese text and puts “Jōshū”, while the French translation states: “Kōzuke”. Both are correct, the later being the official name of the old province that is now Gunma Prefecture, which was also called “Jōshū”. Le Paladin’s choice shows that he was well aware of the geography of Japan at the time. One may assume that he deliberately changed Roka’s text to put a name that would be more easily identified by the French reader. Indeed, it is probable that if the reader had consulted a map of Japan, the place would have been mentioned as “Kōzuke-no-kuni”. If this is the reason for the French translator’s choice, the hypothetical reader as the translator conceived him/her was highly attentive to detail and well informed.

Both translations add a precision that is nowhere to be found in the Japanese text after “Ikao”: “the famous town of hot springs” and “une ville d’eaux thermales” (“a city of thermal waters”). This seems quite justified as a foreign reader was not supposed to know what Ikao stood for, while it was obviously a hot spring for the Japanese reader. To grasp the fact that the main characters are taking a holiday - it is in fact their honeymoon - is important to understand their situation at the beginning of the novel: a young, newly married, trouble-free couple traveling for leisure. Shioya adds “famous” when Le Paladin does not.

One of the most obvious differences between the two translations is the number of Japanese words followed by a note: one in English, three in French. The tone of the notes themselves is very different. In the English version, the only note reads: “Magé, or, in full, marumagé ; the head dress of a married woman”. By comparison, the French explain “mage” as follows: “(2) « Mage » signifie coiffure. Le mage diffère pour les femmes suivant leur âge et leur condition. Il y en a de nombreuses variétés. Celles dont il est parlé dans ce roman sont : le maru-mage, mage rond qui est celui des femmes mariées. Le shimada est la coiffure des jeunes filles qui visent à l’élégance. Le sokuhatsu est la coiffure à l’européenne ou chignon qu’ont indistinctement les femmes mariées ou non.” (“Mage” means hairstyle. The mage differs for women according to their age and condition. There are numerous kinds of them. Those mentioned in this novel are: the maru-mage, round mage for married women. The shimada is the hairstyle of young women who want to be elegant.

The sokuhatsu is a European hairstyle, or bun, that any woman, married or not, can wear.) This information, albeit somewhat superfluous to the understanding of the story, seems more accurate than the laconic English note. “Head dress” refers indeed more to an ornament to be put on the head rather than to a way of styling the hair itself, which *maru-mage* clearly is. There must have been a misunderstanding here between the two translators.

In the same way, the English description of Namiko's clothes is not exactly correct. “A gray crape gown relieved by green bows *at her breast*”: “gray” and “at her breast” are not in the Japanese text and “*komon*” - which designates a kind of formal kimono with small patterns all over - is not translated. Le Paladin tries to convey “*komon*” by “à *ramages*”, “with a foliage pattern”. However, Shioya translates correctly “*hin yoki marumage*” by “in a tasteful *magé*”, while Le Paladin ignores the adjective and transfers the positive quality to the hair itself: “*sa magnifique chevelure*” (her magnificent hair).

Another noteworthy point is the way both translators chose to transcribe Japanese sounds. Shioya uses “é” while Le Paladin does not. Instead, he adds another note at the foot of the page: “Remarques. - *En japonais, tous les u se prononcent ou ; le g est dur ; j - dj ; e - é.*” (Remarks. - In Japanese, all the *u* are pronounced *ou*; the *g* is hard; *j - dj*; *e - é*.) This confirms the slightly different hypothetical readership the two translations are addressing: the French version has a more scholarly approach to all things Japanese, while the English one privileges the efficiency of the narration.

Namiko's portrait unfolds as follows:

*Iroshiro no hoso-omote, mayu no awai yaya semarite, hoo no atari no niku samugena-ruga, kizu to iwaba kizu naredo, yasegata no surarito shiorashiki hitogara.*

She was of a fair and clear complexion, and though her eyebrows were a little too close together and her cheeks were somewhat thin, she seemed to be as gentle in nature as she was slender and graceful in figure.

*Son visage ovale, son teint de neige lui donnent un air fort distingué; peut-être pourrait-on faire la remarque que ses sourcils sont trop rapprochés l'un de l'autre et que ses joues sont un peu maigres. Sa taille est fine; ses traits sont ceux d'une personne tranquille et des plus aimables.*

Here again, the English translation remains flat while the French version takes its time and adds flourishes. Shioya ignores “*hoso-omote*” (thin face) and instead uses two redundant adjectives. Le Paladin extrapolates: he mentions “*Son visage ovale*” (her oval-shaped face), which is clearly a characteristic of beauty according to European criteria, while there was no question of the shape in the Japanese text. He also translates “*iroshiro*” (pale) by “*son teint de neige*” (her snow-like

complexion) and adds “*lui donnent un air fort distingué*” (this gives her a very distinguished air). The French Namiko appears slightly more sophisticated than the original Namiko; the focus being put on her flaws as well as her beauty in the Japanese text through the expression “*kizu to iwaba kizu naredo*” ([about her hollow cheeks:] if one should say it is a fault, it is certainly one), she appears somewhat more relatable in Japanese and English.

Finally, the last part of the portrait is most important as it contains an elaborate comparison between Namiko and various kinds of flowers that may appear out of context in a European realistic novel.

*Kore ya hokufū ni ichirin tsuyoki o hokoru umebana ni arazu, mata kasumi no haru ni kochō to bakete tobu sakura no hana nimo arade, natsu no yūyami ni honoka ni niyou tsukimisō, to hin sadamemo shitsubeki fujin.*

She was not like the plum-blossom, daring to bloom in the bleak north wind, nor like the cherry-flower, whose petals are blown hither and thither like butterflies in the spring morn. She was, indeed, like the shy daisy dimly discovering itself in the dusk of a summer eve.

*Cette jeune femme ne peut pas être comparée aux fleurs du prunier qui osent étaler leur solide floraison aux vents glacés du nord, ni aux fleurs du cerisier dont les pétales pareils à des papillons s'éparpillent au premier brouillard du printemps. Non, elle ressemble plutôt à la belle-de-nuit qui exhale un faible parfum à la brune, un soir d'été.*

The plum-blossom part is translated in a rather similar way in French and English, except that Shioya omits to translate “*tsuyoki*” while Le Paladin does not (“*leur solide floraison*”). Shioya then commits two mistranslations. “*Kasumi no haru*” reads “the spring morn”, all allusion to the mist having been erased. She then ignores “*honoka ni niyou*” to put the ambiguous expression “dimly discovering itself”, which meaning is quite unclear. Le Paladin stays closer to the Japanese text on every aspect. The name of the flower is not translated correctly in both French and English but this seems to be inevitable as the flower called “*tsukimisō*” does not, as far as we know, exist in either language.

One striking difference between the two translations is thus the use of Japanese words within the text, systematically followed by footnotes to explain their meaning. How can they be accounted for? May one assume that the French audience would open a “Japanese novel”, as the title page announces, to live an exotic experience while the American reader would be rather looking for a simply entertaining story?

What is certain is that one characteristic of the French translation’s footnotes is their complexity. In the English translation, the suffix “-san” is used without any explanation. In the French version, the first time Takeo calls Namiko “Nami-san”, the text presents a footnote: “« *San* »,

*contraction de « Sama », est un titre honorifique ajouté au nom des personnages ou des choses que l'on veut honorer. Ex. : Nami-san signifie Madame Nami ("San", contraction of "sama", is a honorary title added to the name of persons or things one wants to honor. Ex.: Nami-san means Madame Nami)".*<sup>49</sup> This difference between the two translations may be interpreted as a sign that the targeted audience was supposed to be more aware of Japanese habits and customs in the Anglo-American world than in France. For instance, the English text also uses "kimono" without any explanation while the French text adds: "*Kimono, habit japonais* (Kimono, Japanese clothes)".<sup>50</sup> In the English-speaking world, Arthur Sullivan and William S. Gilbert's comic opera *The Mikado* had known an immense success since its first staging in London in 1885. Superficial knowledge of some Japanese words may have been thus more widespread than in France; although Pierre Loti also introduced some Japanese vocabulary - such as the controversial "*mousmé*" - his works, albeit successful, do not exactly belong to popular culture.

However, the footnotes in *Hototogisu*'s French translation, by their complexity, clearly fit a wider purpose than pure information or exoticism. For instance, during a very simple scene where the characters are having a discussion indoors, two consecutive lengthy footnotes describe what *toko-no-ma* and *chigai-dana* are. Here is the first one:

*« Toko-no-ma », sorte d'alcôve ou enfoncement pratiqué dans une chambre et dont la partie inférieure est un peu plus élevée que le plancher de la chambre. La place la plus rapprochée de la colonne, qui soutient le toko-no-ma, est celle qu'on offre dans une réunion à l'hôte le plus distingué.*

("Toko-no-ma", a kind of alcove or recess in a room in which the bottom part is a little higher than the room's floor. The part that is closest to the pillar, which supports the toko-no-ma, is the one offered to the most distinguished guest during a meeting.)<sup>51</sup>

Another footnote, totally absent from the English edition, explains what Takeo means when he tells Namiko "If I could write verse, I might challenge the poet Hitomaro".<sup>52</sup> The French explanation reads:

*Hitomaro (Kakinomoto), célèbre poète des septième et huitième siècles, servit les empereurs Jitô et Mommu, et mourut en Iwami, probablement en 729. Honoré comme dieu de la poésie, il a son temple à Akashi (Harima).*

(Hitomaro (Kakinomoto), famous poet from the seventh and eighth centuries, served the emperors Jitô and Mommu and died in Iwami, probably in 792. Honored as the god of poetry, he has his temple at Akashi (Harime).)<sup>53</sup>

This kind of footnote seems to illustrate a nearly anthropological interest in the customs and culture of the foreign land. Under the influence of Japonisme notably, Japan was maybe more strongly categorised in France as a sophisticated and artistic culture; therefore, the translator(s) may have

assumed that a reader who would choose to pick up a “Japanese novel” would be naturally curious about cultural facts.

## 2. The French Version Re-Translated into English

However, these scholarly footnotes do not mean that the French translation is dry or neglects the plot. The footnotes sometimes are there to make explicit subtleties that would be lost if not explained. For instance, during the first crucial scene which purpose is to make the reader understand how Namiko and Takeo are a couple in love, the Japanese text describes as follows the way Takeo sits: “*zabuton no ue ni agura o kaki*”<sup>54</sup> which is translated as: “He sat down on the cushion unceremoniously” in English.<sup>55</sup> The French version reads: “*il croisa ses jambes (he crossed his legs)*”.<sup>56</sup> A footnote explains:

*Les Japonais s'asseient (suwari) en pliant les genoux l'un contre l'autre sur la natte et reposant le bas du dos sur la plante des pieds. Ce n'est que dans son particulier ou avec des intimes qu'on se permet de s'asseoir à la façon des tailleurs (agura-kaki)*

(The Japanese sit (suwari) by folding the knees one against the other on the mat and resting the bottom of the back on the foot's sole. It is only in one's intimacy or with intimate people that one can allow oneself to sit cross-legged (agura-kaki).)

The French translation thus stays closer to the text - it does not add “unceremoniously” - but still manages to convey the meaning of this gesture as far as the relationship between the characters is concerned.

Moreover, the French translation is, all in all, livelier than the English one. One major aspect demonstrates this point: the translation of spoken language. Roka's text abounds in dialogues that are often punctuated with laughs (“*hohohoho*”), exclamations, hesitations and interruptions. The English translation makes relatively little effort to transcribe these. The French dialogues are not always faithful to Roka's text. For instance, they tend to ignore the laughs and translate them, like the English ones, as “he/she said, laughing”.

However, the French dialogues are more varied than the English ones. To begin with, they try to transmit the different level of politeness in each character's lines according to their status: servants address their masters and refer to them in a specific way. This is certainly especially the case in Japanese and all the nuances of the *keigo* cannot be translated, but the French version tries to illustrate each character's status. For instance, when Namiko's old servant Iku says “*ano, tonosama no go-jō de...*”<sup>57</sup> the English reads: “A letter from our Lord?” while in French it goes: “*Une lettre de not' maître?*”<sup>58</sup> By eluding the last two letters of the possessive “*notre* (our)”, the text tells the reader that the speaker is not only calling Namiko's father “*maître*” in front of her but also that she is from an inferior social class.

This attention to details also shows in the way Namiko talks to her old servant. In English, it is always “*Iku*” while in French, when the Japanese text reads “*bāsan*” instead of “*Iku*” there is



“*Maman Iku*”. Whether the habit of affectionately calling old women “*bâsan*” (literally “grandmother” or “aunt”) in Japanese amounts to a very intimate “*maman* (mom)” is debatable but the text at least is trying to convey the very close relationship that these two characters display throughout the novel. Numerous other little touches contribute to make the French dialogues livelier: onomatopoeia, for instance. When the English text reads: “How cold it is here!” the French version goes: “*Brr! qu’il fait froid ici!*”<sup>59</sup>

As the above comparison shows, Shioya and Edgett’s English translation is less entertaining to read than the original text and than the French translation. In one of the few academic articles on the subject of *Hototogisu*’s translations, Andō Yoshirō comes to a similar conclusion:

It is inevitable that reading *Hototogisu* in Japanese and reading it in English must be two very different experiences. Reading the English version however, even though the meaning of the text appears sometimes clearer, one is left with an overall feeling of dissatisfaction, as if one were only sucking the bones and not eating the meat [*hone dake o shabutte-iru yōna kanji*].<sup>60</sup>

Can this be the reason why *Hototogisu* was re-translated in English in 1918? The second translation was made by a certain Isaac Goldberg and published in Boston by the Stratford Company. It opens with a lengthy introduction by the translator that, interestingly enough, does not mention once the prior English translation. The motivations for a new translation are, on the other hand, alluded to. The first one is, once again, the historical context: “With the rapid rise of Japan as a power, especially since the outbreak of the present conflict, has come an increase of interest in the land of the Rising Sun”.<sup>61</sup> The First World War has here replaced the Russo-Japanese War, which we presented as the main explanation for the abundance of translations around 1905. The second motivation mentioned in the Goldberg’s introduction is *Hototogisu*’s success in Japan: “A book that has sold hundreds of thousands of copies in Japan alone, and that has gone into more than a hundred editions, must contain something that reaches to the heart of Japanese problem”.<sup>62</sup>

One footnote at the end of the introduction states that the translation was not done from the Japanese: “This version is based upon continental translations”.<sup>63</sup> Without a detailed comparison of all the existing “continental translations” it is impossible to prove it with certainty but it is our impression that Isaac Goldberg created a mix of the English and French translations, staying closer in spirit to the latter. One may wonder why the word “continental” is used as the first English translation was published in the USA. Does it mean that Goldberg did not directly read Shioya and Edgett’s translation but the European translations that are based on it? Or is it simply that “continental” may have sounded more elegant? One may also imagine that the Stratford Company did not own the rights to the first English translation and thus had to pretend it played no part in the new version.

Let us have a look at Goldberg’s rendering of Namiko’s portrait, as we have already

compared it in details above for the two previous versions:

She looks like a girl of eighteen, only for her artistic head-dress, with her tresses crowned by a dignified *marumagé*<sup>1</sup>, thus revealing the married woman. She wears a gown of ash-colored crape, open at the neck and at the wrists, showing an elegant bodice of pale green silk. The contrast of these two colors produces a most delicate effect, but no more delicate than that which may be discerned between the pallor of her face and her jet black eyebrows, which almost unite in a single arch. Her agile, supple body, the genteel expression of her glance, the perfect oval of her aristocratic profile, call to mind a flower: not the plum blossom that fearlessly defies the cold blasts of the north wind, nor the cherry blossom whose petals float gaily to the ground, like butterflies, in the fruitful awakening of spring, but of a diffident little daisy opening in the twilight of a warm summer evening.

[1. The ‘marumagé’ is the round style of head-dress belonging to a married woman. The ‘shimada’ is the style assumed by the singers, geishas and young girls of elegance. The ‘sokuhatsu’ is the European fashion, indiscriminately adopted by the married and unmarried.]<sup>64</sup>

It seems that Goldberg took the French version’s ornate and melodramatic style to an even higher level, thus creating a very different version from Shioya and Edgett’s and a nearly totally different text from Roka’s. The first English translation’s influence is clearly visible in the use of words such as “ash-colored” when describing the kimono – absent from both the Japanese and French texts – and “daisy”. Meanwhile, Goldberg wanders far away from both the first English translation and the French one, which are both rather faithful to the Japanese texts. The pale green ribbons are transformed into “an elegant bodice of pale green silk”, and the following passage about the contrasts of the grey and the green compared with the one of the black and the white of Namiko’s face is totally invented.

The impression given by the description of Namiko’s face is closer to the one the French version gives: Namiko is made much more noble in appearance and sophisticated than in the Japanese text and than in the first English translation. Goldberg mentions the same meliorative characteristic given in the French translation, “oval”, which is absent from the original text and the Shioya and Edgett’s version. It seems that he picked on the general impression given by the French portrait but exaggerated its lofty characteristic: the oval of her face is “perfect”, her expression “genteel” and her profile, “aristocratic”. All mention of her imperfections present in the Japanese text and alluded to in the other two translations is gone.

Another interesting aspect that is, in our view, revealing of this evolution towards the melodramatic is the translations of the novel’s title. The first English title, which is the one used in most translations, is very sober: *Nami-Ko*. The French title stands out: *Plutôt la mort*, “rather death”. In the preface to the French translation, the reason for such a peculiar title is given: “In Japanese, this novel has as a title *Hototogisu*, onomatopoeia for the plaintive cry of a Japanese cuckoo, but

the meaning of the three characters used to form the word 'hototogisu' is 'Rather Death!' and the reader, by reading the book, will understand the reason".<sup>65</sup>

The three kanji used for "hototogisu" put together do not mean "Rather death".<sup>66</sup> However, in Goldberg's introduction, the same erroneous explanation is given.<sup>67</sup> Goldberg chose to use the first English translation's title - no doubt that the novel was by then relatively known as *Nami-Ko* - with some modifications: *The Heart of Nami-San*. He added a subtitle: *A Story of War, Intrigue and Love*. While *Nami-Ko*, a simple woman's name like so many realistic Western novels, seems to promise to the reader an objective and exhaustive portrait of a woman, in Goldberg's title the main character is made immediately lovable by the affectionate suffix "-san" and the emphasis is rather put on the heroine's feelings than on a description of her characteristics. The subtitle sells the novel as an entertainment susceptible to please absolutely any reader... and by doing so might be losing a more cultured readership animated by a certain disdain against popular literature. The evolution from the way the novel was presented in 1904 - as a "Realistic novel" - is very striking overall.

## Conclusion

If it is true - as Andō Yoshirō claims in the title of his article without giving any more precision - that *Hototogisu* is the first Japanese novel ever presented to the US and Europe, it certainly deserves our attention. We have examined how the historical conjuncture was instrumental in raising an awareness of Japanese modernity that resulted in a thirst for first-hand accounts of the "real" Japan. By offering to the public a novel advocating Western views on love and family, the Christian liberal Roka was indeed providing to the world an unheard-of portrait of a country longed pigeon-holed as sophisticated and archaic.

However, many unresolved questions about the translations of *Hototogisu* remain. First of all, finding sufficient information about their reception seems extremely difficult. Who were the readers? What effect did the novel have on them? What were the publishing houses' intentions in creating such a book? Despite the shortage of information, analysing *Hototogisu*'s translations does not come without many rewards. The main one has to be the encounter with an early French translation from the Japanese of such a high quality. One cannot but regret that, one century later, the translator's identity seems unknown.

One of the biggest mysteries surrounding the topic is comprised within the translations themselves. Namiko's famous cry of agony is quoted at the very beginning of this paper. In its denunciation of women's inferior condition, it perfectly encapsulates the novel's spirit and has justly so been remembered in Japan for its strong message. However, none of the three translations we have been examining translate the sentence faithfully. Shioya and Edgett write: "Oh, my heart! Such a torture!"<sup>68</sup> while Goldberg provides an even simpler rendition: "Oh! My heart! My

heart!.....”<sup>69</sup> The French translation is, once again, the most elaborate: “*Ah, mon pauvre cœur !... Quelle torture ! quelle torture ! Mieux eût valu n’être pas née !... Je souffre !* (Ah, my poor heart! What a torture! It would have been better not to be born! How I suffer!)”<sup>70</sup>

Was asking not to be reborn – an obviously Buddhist concept – considered too foreign to be translatable? Even so, the translator could have found a way to add the nuance concerning the pain of being born *a woman*. Was that deemed too heavy for a novel that was capitalising on its entertaining quality? The omission is all the more unexplainable because the French text translates Roka’s “Introduction to the 100<sup>th</sup> edition” where the same episode is narrated. The author writes about his encounter with the woman who told him Namiko’s true story: “*Elle nous racontait l’agonie dans ses détails poignants : « Oui, il paraît qu’elle dit : je ne veux pas plus naître femme une seconde fois ».* (She was narrating the agony in all its poignant details: “Yes, it is said that she cried: I do not want to be born a woman a second time.”)”<sup>71</sup> Goldberg alludes to this in his introduction: “As the teller of the tale came to the end of her story she burst into tears, and seemed to say, “Yes, I don’t care to be born a woman again!””<sup>72</sup>

Despite this apparent knowledge of the fundamental episode and despite his clearly high linguistic skills, the French translator thus omitted to include the famous lines within the novel itself. Today in Japan, this lament is nearly the only part of the novel that is still remembered and often alluded to. The posterity and circulation – here rather non-circulation – of such a short sentence are part of the wonders and mysteries provided by following a text around the globe.

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## Notes

- 1 This article is based on my MA thesis submitted at the Graduate School of International Culture and Communication in January 2015.
- 2 *Hototogisu* (The Cuckoo, 1900) tells the story of the young Namiko who, despite living with her loving father Lieutenant General Kataoka, is unhappy at home as she does not get on well with her cold stepmother. She marries Baron Takeo Kawashima, a naval officer, in April 1893; the couple is deeply in love. However, in the following March, she is diagnosed with tuberculosis and is sent to the coastal town of Zushi in order to get better. Takeo then has to leave her as he goes off to the Sino-Japanese War. His mother, Namiko's mother-in-law, takes advantage of his absence to instigate a divorce between the two lovers; she indeed thinks that Namiko's highly infectious and deadly disease may put the whole family line in jeopardy. The young woman despairs and thinks of throwing herself into the sea but is stopped at the last moment by a Christian lady. In July 1895, she dies. Takeo and Lieutenant General Kataoka, both back from the war, hold hands and cry in front of her grave.
- 3 VICINUS, Martha (1981). " 'Helpless and Unfriended': Nineteen-Century Domestic Melodrama". In: *New Literary History* 13(1). 127-143: 132.
- 4 As they have not been republished since the 1920s, *Hototogisu's* translations are relatively hard to find. We relied on the collection provided by the Japan Foundation Library in Tokyo.
- 5 Very little research exists on the subject. Two Japanese articles focus on the English translations: AOKI Tsugihiko (1971). "*Hototogisu* no honyaku-hon to kanren-shoshi" (*Hototogisu's* Translations and Related Documents). In: *Bunka gakunen-pō* (Annual Report of Cultural Studies, Dōshisha University) 21. 1-21, and ANDŌ Yoshirō (1976). "Hajimete ōbei ni shōkai sareta Nihon no shōsetsu - *Hototogisu* to sono eiyaku ni tsuite" (The First Japanese Novel Presented to the West - *Hototogisu* and its English Translations). In: *Keizai shūshi* 46. 1-12. The research on its reception in Asia is more abundant; see Karen Laura THORNBURGH (2009). *Empire of Texts in Motion. Chinese, Korean and Taiwanese Transculturations of Japanese Literature*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.
- 6 *Nami-Ko. A realistic novel* (1905). Trans. by Sakae Shioya and E. F. Edgett. Tokyo: Seibun-dō: 315.
- 7 Quoted by ITO, Ken K. (2008). *An Age of Melodrama: Family, Gender, and Social Hierarchy in the Turn-of-the-Century Japanese Novel*. Redwood City, CA.: Stanford University Press: 14.
- 8 FUJII Hidetada (1990). *Hototogisu no jidai - suitei no Sōseki to seinen-tachi* (The Time of *Hototogisu* - *Sōseki* and Other Young Men on the River Bottom). Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppan-kai: 197-198.
- 9 "His novel will be remembered as a true history in the future" [*The Bookman*]; "So true is its portrayal of character..." [*Outlook*]; "Doubtless its pictures of Japanese life are truly drawn" [*Chicago Inter-Ocean*]; "The conviction it carries with it of absolute truth" [*New York Times Saturday Review of Books*]. *Namiko* 1905: 315-316.
- 10 From the *Chicago Record-Herald. Nami-Ko* 1905: 316.
- 11 KHATIBI, Abdelkebir (1987). *Figures de l'étranger* (Figures of the Foreigner). Paris: Denoël: 38-52.
- 12 The French Japanese Studies scholar Michaël FERRIER calls it the "French temptation to see in Japan a purely imaginative space". (2003). *La Tentation de la France, la Tentation du Japon : regards croisés*.

- Paris: Philippe Picquier: 34.
- 13 How Barthes wants to see in Japan an absolute symbol of the unknowable is clearly expressed in *Empire of Signs*. He writes that the dream is “To know a foreign language and yet not to understand it: to perceive the difference in it without that difference ever being recuperated by the superficial sociality of discourse, communication or vulgarity”. Trans. Richard Howard (1982). New York: Hill and Wang. 6.
- 14 Letter of 6 November 1876. Quoted by MACOIN, Francis & OMOTO Keiko (2001). *Quand le Japon s’ouvrit au monde. Émile Guimet et les arts de l’Asie* (When Japan Opened to the World. Émile Guimet and the Arts from Asia). Paris: Gallimard: 59.
- 15 *Femmes japonaises*, 1890. Translated from the Japanese and quoted by LEVY, Indra A. (2001). *Sirens of the Western Shore: Westernesque Women and Translation in Modern Japanese Literature*. Columbia University PhD thesis. Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest: 8.
- 16 “Petite Chronique des Lettres”, *Le Figaro*, 4 October 1912.  
<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k289725j/texteBrut> (last consulted 26/12/2014).
- 17 *Outlook. Nami-Ko* 1905: 315.
- 18 WELLS, David & WILSON, Sandra (1999). *The Russo-Japanese War in Cultural Perspective, 1904-05*. London: Macmillan: 3.
- 19 “The world’s press was greatly interested in the war, and readily expanded on its larger significance.” Wells & Wilson: 14.
- 20 Quoted by Wells & Wilson: 23.
- 21 *Nami-Ko* 1905: 316.
- 22 Wells & Wilson: 15.
- 23 Wells & Wilson: 16.
- 24 The essay has been republished recently in Alain Quella-Villéger & Dany Savelli (eds.) (2005). *1905 : Autour de Tsoushima*. Paris: Omnibus.
- 25 *Nami-Ko* 1905: 207.
- 26 *Nami-Ko* 1905: 315.
- 27 From *Outlook. Nami-Ko* 1905: 315.
- 28 From *Boston Herald. Nami-Ko* 1905: 316.
- 29 *Nami-Ko* 1905: 76-77.
- 30 From *The Bookman. Nami-Ko* 1905: 315.
- 31 SONTAG, Susan (1978). *Illness as a Metaphor*. New York, N.Y.: Macmillan: 17.
- 32 In *Madame Gervaisais* (1869). Quoted by Sontag: 22.
- 33 It seems significant that the translator of *Hototogisu* from English to Chinese in 1908, Lin Shu, was also the translator into Chinese of Alexandre Dumas’ novel. See Michael Gibbs Hill (2012). *Lin Shu, Inc.: Translation and the Making of Modern Chinese Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 54.
- 34 *Nami-Ko* 1905: 1.
- 35 *Nami-Ko* 1905: 144.
- 36 HIRAOKA Toshio (1985). *Nichiro sengo bungaku no kenkyū 2* (Studies on Post-Russo-Japanese War Literature). Tokyo: Yūseidō: 173.
- 37 Ito: 52.
- 38 *Ibidem*.
- 39 Ito: 56.

- 40 Translated and quoted by Ito: 50.
- 41 SATŌ Masaru (1958). “*Hototogisu ni tsuite*” (About *Hototogisu*). In: *Hototogisu*. Tokyo: Kadokawa bunko. 186-20: 199.
- 42 There is an abundant literature on the subject. See for instance Prasso, Sheridan (2005). *Asian Mystique: Dragon Ladies, Geisha Girls & Our Fantasies of the Exotic Orient*. New York: Public Affairs
- 43 Review of 4 October 1912. A review in English, in the *Boston Herald*, adopts the same approach: “This famous writer in his romance has stripped the Japan of Pierre Loti and Lafcadio Hearn bare of all flowery and picturesque hangings, and photographed a modern nation in its realistic struggles.”
- 44 *Plutôt la mort*: II.
- 45 Aoki: 2; Andō: 4.
- 46 *Hototogisu* (1938). Tokyo: Iwanami shoten: 11.
- 47 *Nami-Ko* 1905: 1.
- 48 *Plutôt la mort. Roman japonais* (date unknown). Trans. by Olivier Le Paladin. Paris: Plon-Nourrit: 1.
- 49 *Plutôt la mort*: 5.
- 50 *Plutôt la mort*: 6.
- 51 *Plutôt la mort*: 83.
- 52 *Nami-Ko* 1905: 8.
- 53 *Plutôt la mort*: 8.
- 54 *Hototogisu* 1938: 16.
- 55 *Nami-Ko* 1905: 6.
- 56 *Plutôt la mort*: 6.
- 57 *Hototogisu* 1938: 13.
- 58 *Nami-Ko* 1905 and *Plutôt la mort*: 4.
- 59 *Ibid.*
- 60 Andō: 3.
- 61 *The Heart of Nami-San*: xi.
- 62 *The Heart of Nami-San*: xii. What “Japanese problem” exactly means is not made clear.
- 63 *The Heart of Nami-San*: xviii.
- 64 *The Heart of Nami-San*: 1-2.
- 65 *Plutôt la mort*: II.
- 66 A complex symbolism is attached to the cuckoo in China and Japan and its name can be written with several different kanji. One translation for “hototogisu” spelt with the three kanji may be “Never to return!”; its meaning is ambiguous. It can be understood as “I do not want to go back” and would be linked to an episode in Chinese history where a young bride is repudiated by her mother in law and is pleading not to be sent back to her parents’ home. Another meaning could be, on the contrary, “I would like to go back” and would be attributed to a wife longing to be reunited with her husband [Wei: 8]. In any case, it is clear that Roka chose this title because in the Japanese reader’s mind it evoked both marital love and tragic death. The cuckoo is indeed said to die when separated from its mate and its red throat is a famous metaphor for death by coughing up blood, thus cherished by tubercular artists such as Masaoka Shiki.
- 67 “The original title itself is at once symbolic, onomatopoeic and deeply expressive. As onomatopoeia [*sic*] it represents the cry of the Japanese cuckoo, plaintive in sound and haunting in portent. [...] The



actual significance of the characters employed to from the word are “sooner death!” This, indeed, is the name that has been given to the French translation of the work” [p. xii-xiii]. Goldberg’s introduction in general is very close to the French one, quoting for instance the same French scholar on Japanese habits concerning marriage. Basing his argument on a comparison of the two prefaces, Andō concludes: “[Goldberg’s text] is probably based on the French translation”, p. 8.

68 *Nami-Ko* 1905: 301.

69 *The Heart of Nami-San*: 360.

70 *Plutôt la mort*: 287.

71 *Plutôt la mort*: VII.

72 *The Heart of Nami-San*: xvi.