

Special Symposium for the Global Studies in Japanese Cultures Program (JCulP)
 “Globalizing Japanese Culture”

The Translation of Japanese Literature in Spain

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When we consider the translation of Japanese literature in Spain, we have to touch upon 2005 as an important turning point. That is because it is the year the translation of a very famous novel was published for the first time in Spain and became a big hit. That famous novel is, needless to say, *Tokyo Blues*. Yes, the book called *Tokyo Blues*. It has nothing to do with the 1964 hit song by Nishida Sachiko. It has nothing to do either with Awaya Noriko’s 1939 song. I am talking about a Murakami Haruki novel. “Murakami Haruki wrote a novel called *Tokyo Blues*?” I understand the feelings of those who are confused. One day in 2005, I had the same puzzled face as I was looking at the cover of a book with the text “Haruki Murakami *Tòquio Blues*.”

In those days, I had read almost all of Murakami’s novels translated into English. So, when I discovered *Tokyo Blues* on the new releases books corner of a bookstore in Barcelona, I thought that it must be Murakami’s latest work and promptly picked it up. When I looked closely, it was not only the title that was strange. The image on the cover was a pop-art-style ukiyo-e with a geisha wearing sunglasses. While wondering if Murakami had decided to write period fantasy, I was very surprised when I came across the page where the original title was written. The original title of *Tokyo Blues* was *Noruegi no mori* (*Norwegian Wood*).

To understand why in Spain Murakami’s *Noruegi no mori* came to be called *Tokyo Blues* with a sunglass-wearing geisha on the cover, we need to consider how Japanese literature had been introduced to Spain before then. In 2005, Haruki Murakami was not an unknown writer for readers in Spain. In 1992, *La caza del carnero salvaje* (*Hitsuji o meguru bōken* [*A Wild Sheep Chase*], Tusquets Editores, tr. Fernando Rodríguez-Izquierdo) came out. However, Murakami’s novel did not attract much attention, and other translations were not seen until the 21st century. Between 2001 and 2005, the following books had come out one after another: *Crónica del pájaro que da cuerda al mundo* (*Nejimaki-dori kuronikuru* [*The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*], Tusquets, tr. Lourdes Porta Fuentes and Junichi Matsuura), *Sputnik, mi amor* (*Supūtoniku no koibito* [*Sputnik Sweetheart*], Tusquets, tr. Lourdes Porta Fuentes and Junichi Matsuura), *Al sur de la frontera, al oeste del sol* (*Kokkyō no minami, taiyō no nishi* [*South of the Border, West of the Sun*], Tusquets, tr. Lourdes Porta Fuentes).

Following that wave, in 2005, the publisher decided that rather than following up with Murakami’s 2002 novel *Umibe no Kafuka* (*Kafka on the Shore*), it would instead go back to his 1987 bestseller *Noruegi no mori*. The translator of the Spanish-language version was again Lourdes Porta Fuentes, and the Catalan version was by Albert Nolla Cabellos.

In order to translate the title *Noruegi no mori* into Spanish, there are several possibilities. The simplest one would be using the title of The Beatles’ song “Norwegian Wood,” which is where the book’s original title comes from. Another one would be to go with “Bosques de Noruega” (“Norwegian Forests”), a literal translation of *Noruegi no mori*. By the way, according to Porta, this was the title she originally proposed to the publisher of her translation. Lastly, one could ignore the Japanese mistranslation of “Norwegian Wood,” and translate the song title directly into Spanish as “Madera noruega.”

* This essay was first delivered as a talk in Japanese for the Special Symposium, and subsequently appeared in *Tagen bunka* (Transcultural Studies, Vol.7, 2017). We’d like to thank Yung-Hsiang Kao for preparing the first draft of the English translation for this publication.

At the time, however, the Spanish and Catalan versions did not choose any of these three options for their title, but made it *Tokyo Blues*. Why is that? (Incidentally, Giorgio Amitrano's Italian translation issued by Feltrinelli Editore in 1993 had the same title.)

Generally speaking, it is not uncommon to change the title of a translated version. In the case of *Norwegian Wood*, Ursula Gräfe's German translation was titled *Naokos Lächeln* (*Naoko's smile*, Dumont, 2001), and Rose-Marie Makino-Fayolle's French translation was *La ballade de l'impossible* (*The ballad of the impossible*, Belfond, 2007). Particularly when the original title seems to be difficult to understand, it is often changed to a more easily comprehensible one. For example, there is a very recent translation of Tawada Yōko's *Yuki no renshūsei* (Shinchōsha, 2011). Because there is no common Spanish word that expresses *renshūsei*, the Spanish translation was published under the title *Memorias de una osa polar* (*Memoirs of a Polar Bear*, Anagrama, 2018, tr. Belén Santana). By reading the translation's title, the reader knows that the main character is a polar bear and can somewhat imagine what kind of story it might be.

However, changing *Noruei no mori*'s title to *Tokyo Blues* was not done to make the title easier to understand, as in the case of *Yuki no renshūsei*, so there must be another reason. The titles of the German and French translations that I mentioned earlier may have been aimed at making it easy for the reader to imagine the story to a certain extent, but *Tokyo Blues* is likely different. Even if the setting of *Noruei no mori* is the city of Tokyo, the connection between "Blues" and the content of the novel is weak no matter how you think about it.

To solve the mystery of this strange change of title, one needs to consider as well the cover featuring a geisha with sunglasses in the Catalan version of the work. What is lacking in all of the possible translation titles mentioned earlier is the image of "Japan." In *Norwegian Wood*, *Bosques de Noruega* or *Madera noruega* there is nothing that quickly gives readers the impression that they are holding a Japanese novel. The titles of the German translation and French translation do not directly convey that the setting is Japan, even though they are close to the content of the novel to some extent. In other words, by publishing the book under the title *Tokyo Blues*, the publisher wanted to emphasize that the work was a "Japanese" novel more than a Murakami novel.

This interpretation may seem to be an exaggeration, but the interesting thing is that the title *Tokyo Blues* and the cover changed after the novel became a big hit in Spain. The title from the reprint of the translated version is *Tokio Blues. Norwegian Wood* (Spanish), *Tòquio Blues. Norwegian Wood* (Catalan). The "geisha with sunglasses" disappeared from the cover, and has been missing from the Catalan version since its first edition. Only after Murakami Haruki became a familiar brand for readers in Spain did *Noruei no mori* change in Spain from being a "Japanese novel" to becoming a "Murakami novel."

Because it had already been published as *Tokyo Blues*, the words were left in the title, but the publisher must have thought that adding *Norwegian Wood* would keep the connection to Haruki Murakami's entire body of work. For example, when readers of *Tokyo Blues* look up Murakami on the Internet and see *Norwegian Wood*, this prevents them from mistaking that novel as being different from *Tokyo Blues*.

Subsequently, translations in Spain of many other Murakami works appeared in rapid succession, and right now there is no Murakami novel that cannot be read in translation. Murakami's popularity in Spain can be seen in the extremely short time it takes for his works to be translated. The Spanish-language versions of the short story collection *Onna no inai otokotachi* (*Men Without Women*, Bungeishunjū, 2014) and the novel *Shikisai o motanai Tazaki Tsukuru to, kare no junrei no toshi* (*Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*, Bungeishunjū, 2013) were available within a year of the original publication. In both cases, translations into Spanish appeared much quicker than in English.

In addition to Spanish, Murakami's works have been substantially translated into other languages of Spain. In addition to the many Catalan translations published by Empúries, Galaxia has put out three Galician translations by Gabriel Álvarez Martínez: *Tras do solpor* (*Afutā dāku* [*After Dark*]), *Do que estou a falar cando falo de correr* (*Hashiru koto ni tsuite kataru toki ni boku no kataru koto* [*What I Talk About When I Talk About Running*]), and *IQ84* (joint translation with Mona Imai). *Afutā dāku* can also be read in a Basque translation by Ibon Urbarri Zenekorta called *Gauaren sakonean* (Erein, 2009).

In a sense, the story of how *Noruei no mori* became *Tokyo Blues* with "the geisha with sunglasses" on its

cover is symbolic of the introduction of Japanese literature in Spain before 2005. In short, a stereotypical image of “Japan” was always at the center. After 2005 this stereotypical image of “Japan” has not completely disappeared, but with the growth in the number of available translations, Japanese literature has become normalized for more readers in Spain, and the number of publishers consistently emphasizing the exotic side has decreased considerably.

An example of this trend is the modern Japanese literature series in Catalan translation (translated jointly by Ko Tazawa and Joaquim Pijoan) published by Lapislàtzuli from 2015. The first two books released were Higuchi Ichiyō’s *Takekurabe* (*Child’s Play*) and Mori Ōgai’s *Abe ichizoku* (*The Abe Family*). The translated versions are titled *A veure qui és més alt. Midori, una petita geisha* and *Harakiri. El cas de la família Abe*. As you can see, “international Japanese words” like “geisha” and “hara-kiri” have been added to the translation of the original title, very probably with the intention to convey a “Japan-like” image to appeal to the reader, as I mentioned earlier.

After that, once the series became in some sense established, the titles of the translated versions have followed the translation of the original title without adding anything: Natsume Sōseki’s *Deu nits, deu somnis* (*Yume jūya* [*Ten Nights of Dreams*], 2016), Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s *Història de Shunkin* (*Shunkinshō* [*A Portrait of Shunkin*], 2017), Akutagawa Ryūnosuke’s *Rashōmon* (2017), and so on. In other words, instead of relying on stereotyped “Japan” images, the translations are appealing to each work’s distinctive features.

Let’s go back to 2005 as a tipping point. The following table shows the importance of this year.

Year	Number of translations (Into all languages of Spain)
1964 and earlier	22
1965-1974	13
1975-1984	23
1985-1994	55
1995-2004	76
2005-2014	356

Source: Alba Serra Vilella, *La Traducció de llibres japonesos a Espanya (1900-2014) i el paper dels paratextos en la creació de l’alteritat*, PhD dissertation, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2016, p. 157.

Serra’s research goes up to 2014, but when I calculated the numbers from 2015 to 2017, I found that 114 books have been translated in the last three years. In other words, an average of 38 books per year, which can be said to be an even speedier pace than the annual pace between 2005 and 2014.

Since 2005, not only the number of translations, but also the quality of the translations has changed greatly. Broadly speaking, the translation of Japanese literature in Spain before 2005 was a “secondary” translation activity. Back then, only Japanese literary works that had been translated into other languages (mainly English and French) were subsequently translated in Spain, and even then it was only works that had already become well-known internationally to some degree. In comparison, since 2005, it has become a “primary” activity, taking the initiative to translate without relying on other translations. So, what was the quality of the translations of Japanese literature in Spain before 2005?

The first literary work from Japan translated in Spain was a novel by Tokutomi Roka called *Hototogisu* (*The Cuckoo*, 1898-1899). When it was published in 1904 by Maucci in Spanish the title was changed to *Nami-ko*, after its female protagonist. “Juan Cañizares” is listed as the name of the translator. By 1945, three Spanish translations of *The Cuckoo* had been published. Other than the Maucci version, in 1923 came one by Rivadeneyra called *¡Antes la muerte! Novela japonesa (Better to die! Japanese novel)*, and in 1945 again under the title *Nami-ko* there was a version from Reguera. These works were not reprints, but completely separate translations. In the case of Rivadeneyra, the initials “J.F. de A.” are the only reference to a translator, but the Reguera version is attributed to “Jorge Manrique.”

When hearing that there were three separate translations of *Hototogisu* from 1904 to 1945, one may reasonably

think that there was a considerable Japanese literature boom in Spain back then. That was certainly not the case. Tokutomi Roka was translated, but representative novelists of the same generation, such as Ozaki Kōyō, Kōda Rohan, Natsume Sōseki, Mori Ōgai, etc., were not introduced in Spain at that time.

In fact, from 1904 to 1945, besides *Hototogisu*, only three other Spanish translations of Japanese novels were published in Spain. In 1908, Fernando Fe published Tamenaga Shunsui and Tamenaga Shunsui II's *Iroha bunko* in a Spanish translation called *Los 47 capitanes: Novela trágica (The 47 Captains: A Tragic Novel)*. As can be guessed from the translation's title, *Iroha bunko* is a retelling of *Chūshingura*. In 1941, Juventud released *Genji Monogatari: Romance de Genji* (tr. Fernando Gutiérrez) and *La guerra y el soldado* by Hino Ashihei (*Mugi to heitai [Mud and Soldiers]*, 1939, tr. José Lleonart).

All the translations that I have mentioned above share the common feature of being retranslations. In other words, the Japanese text is not directly translated into Spanish, but the translation of the Japanese to another foreign language is the "original" that then is translated into Spanish. In the case of *Hototogisu*, the two *Nami-ko* books are retranslated from the 1904 American translation *Nami-ko: A Realistic Novel* by Sakae Shioya and E. F. Edgett, released by H.B. Turner. *¡Antes la muerte! Novela japonesa* is a retranslation of *Plutôt la mort: Roman japonais* issued by French publisher Plon-Nourrit in 1912 and translated by Olivier le Paladin. *Genji Monogatari: Romance de Genji*, as you can guess, is a retranslation of the famous Arthur Waley English version *The Tale of Genji* (George Allen & Unwin, 1925-1933). *La guerra y el soldado* is a retranslation of Lewis Bush's *Mud and Soldiers* (Kenkyūsha, 1939).

In the second half of the twentieth century, when the works of newly popular writers came to be translated, the policy for Japanese literature on the part of the Spanish publishers was not so different from before. Even though the number of translated writers increased, the overall image of Japanese literature among Spanish readers was still shallow. This was because Spanish publishers chose to translate multiple works by writers who were already familiar to their audience, rather than introduce a wider range of writers that would reflect the diversity of Japanese literature.

For example, if you look at the works that were translated in the 1960s, you can see a great number of novels by Kawabata Yasunari. In 1961, *País de nieve (Yukiguni [Snow Country])*, Zeus, tr. César Durán) appeared, followed in 1962 by *Una grulla en la taza de té (Senbazuru [Thousand Cranes])*, Vergara, tr. Luis de Salvador). As expected, the number of translations increased after Kawabata received the 1968 Nobel Prize in Literature. In 1969, *El clamor de la montaña (Yama no oto [The Sound of the Mountain])*, Plaza y Janés, tr. Jaime Fernández and Satur Ochoa), *Kioto (Koto [The Old Capital])*, Plaza y Janés, tr. Ana María de la Fuente Rodríguez) and *La danzarina de Izu (Izu no odoriko [The Dancing Girl of Izu])*, Plaza y Janés, tr. Ana María de la Fuente Rodríguez) came out. In the 1970s many more translations followed such as *Jūroku-sai no nikki (Diary of My Sixteenth Year)*, *Mizuumi (The Lake)*, *Utsukushisa to kanashimi to (Beauty and Sadness)*, *Nemureru bijo (House of the Sleeping Beauties)*. Needless to say, the works of Kawabata listed above were almost all retranslations. Only *El clamor de la montaña* is a direct translation from the original, while the rest are retranslations of French, English, or German versions.

There have been such mini-booms for Japanese writers several times in Spain. Entering the 1970s, Mishima Yukio became popular. From 1963, when *El pabellón de oro (Kinkakuji [The Temple of the Golden Pavilion])*, Seix Barral, tr. Juan Marsé) was released until the 1986 publication of *Madame de Sade* (MK, tr. Francisco Melgares), fourteen of his books came out. In the case of Mishima's works, the 1970s and 1980s works were mostly retranslations of English versions, but in the 21st century, the same works were again directly translated from the Japanese.

In addition, although not as much as Mishima, Endō Shūsaku, Yoshimoto Banana, and Ōe Kenzaburō (Nobel Laureate in Literature in 1994) also had multiple works translated and became well-known to readers in Spain. However, in every case, writers were introduced individually. In short, Shiga Naoya and Yokomitsu Riichi were not translated in the wake of Kawabata's boom. Despite Mishima's popularity, works by Ishihara Shintarō and Yoshiyuki Junnosuke did not follow his path. There were no publishers who tried to sell the novels of Yamada Amy or Ekuni Kaori to fans of Yoshimoto Banana either.

Now, when we look at the translation of Japanese literature in Spain since 2005, there have been some major changes. In addition to the dramatic increase in the number of translations I mentioned above, there has been also an

increase in direct translations. Retranslations have not disappeared, but from the 1990s, the number of direct translations has gradually increased, and now it makes up the majority of translations of Japanese literature published in Spain. In addition to that, the Murakami boom made possible the rise of independent publishing companies that specialize in Japanese literature.

The publishers who have recently contributed to the introduction of Japanese literature in Spain are not major publishers, but independent ones. Among them, three publishers can call Japanese literature their specialty. These companies have expanded the shape of the Japanese literature that can be read in Spanish by actively introducing new young authors.

First, there is Satori, a publisher that started in 2007. They publish both literature and non-fiction, always connected to Japan, but their focus is especially on the classics and modern literature. The breadth of their catalogue is very wide, from Heian-period diaries and Edo-period haiku to modern Japanese science fiction short story collections. Writers introduced by Satori for the first time in Spain include Izumi Kyōka, Kōda Rohan, and Hayashi Fumiko.

Next, there is Quaterni, founded in 2009. This publisher specializes in literature, particularly mystery, horror and historical novels. It is the first publisher to translate into Spanish the works of Okamoto Kidō, Yokomizo Seishi, Yamada Fūtarō, Fujisawa Shūhei, and Kyōgoku Natsuhiko.

Lastly, Chidori Books has been active as an e-book publisher since 2014. In addition to modern literature, it has mainly been introducing works for children.

Unlike the major publishing companies, these publishers are actively trying to introduce new authors and works to the Spanish market. For example, Quaterni published *La hija de los piratas Murakami* (tr. Isami Romero Hoshino) in 2015. This is the Spanish version of Wada Ryō's *Murakami kaizoku no musume* (Shinchōsha, 2013), a Japan Booksellers' Award winner. It is surprising that this translation came out less than two years after the publication of the original, when the author had been completely unknown in Spain until then. In addition, Wada's work has not yet been translated into English or French. That is, instead of waiting for other translations to see how successful the book was overseas, Quaterni decided to directly introduce Wada's work in Spain. In this manner, independent publishers have been trying to shorten the distance between Japanese literature and the Spanish public by looking for works worthy of translation more proactively than the major publishers.

An important factor that enables independent publishers to play this active role is Japanese copyright law. In Spain, the copyright protection period is over 80 years, but in Japan it is a relatively short 50 years after the death of the author. Because of this, many works from the Taishō era (1912-1926), a particularly rich period in Japanese literature, have had their copyrights expire in Japan, making it easier for independent publishers to get their translation rights.

In the following table, the translations of the past three years are divided by the original work's copyright.

CHART:

Year	Copyright Expired	Copyright Active	Total
2015	19	16	35
2016	28	17	45
2017	21	13	34
Three-year total	68	46	114

As you can see, works whose copyright had expired accounted for 60% of all translations of literary works. I do not have the data for translations from other languages, but I think that this is a particular characteristic of Japanese literature.

In fact, the increase in translations in 2016 is undoubtedly related to issues of copyright. Because the copyrights of works by writers who died in 1965 expired in that year, the works of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō and Edogawa Rampo became public domain in Japan. Thanks to that, both authors had a mini-boom in Spain. In the case of Tanizaki,

seven books were published. The list is as follows:

1. *Cuentos de amor* (short story collection, Alfaguara, tr. Akihiro Yano and Twiggy Hirota)
2. *El club de los gourmets* (*Bishoku kurabu* [*The Gourmet Club*], Gallo nero, tr. Yoko Ogihara and Fernando Cordobés)
3. *La sociedad gastronómica y otros cuentos* (short story collection, Quaterni, tr. Isami Romero Hoshino)
4. *La historia de un ciego* (*Mōmoku monogatari* [*A Blind Man's Tale*], Satori, tr. Aiga Sakamoto)
5. *Sobre Shunkin* (*Shunkinshō*, Satori, tr. Aiga Sakamoto)
6. *La vida enmascarada del señor de Musashi* (*Bushukō hiwa* [*The Secret History of the Lord of Musashi*], Satori, tr. Fernando Rodríguez-Izquierdo y Gavala)
7. *El elogio de la sombra* (*In'ei raisan* [*In Praise of Shadows*], Satori, tr. Francisco Javier de Esteban Baquedano)

In the case of Rampo the following four books appeared:

1. *Los crímenes del jorobado* (*Kotō no oni* [*The Demon of the Lonely Isle*], Quaterni, tr. Ismael Funes Aguilera)
2. *El lagarto negro* (*Kurotokage* [*The Black Lizard*], Salamandra, tr. Lourdes Porta Fuentes)
3. *La mirada perversa* (short story collection, Satori, tr. Daniel Aguilar)
4. *El extraño caso de la isla Panorama* (*Panorama-tō kitan* [*The Strange Tale of Panorama Island*], Satori, tr. Yoko Ogihara and Fernando Cordobés)

As one can see from the list of publishers, the only major name is Alfaguara, a label of the Penguin Random House group. In other words, it was independent publishers who jumped at this opportunity. It has been said for several years that Japan will extend its copyright protection period to match that of the United States in relation to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade agreement negotiations, but there has not yet been a concrete decision. Such changes could have a significant impact on the activity of independent publishers, who are responsible for the work of introducing Japanese literature in Spain. Whether the works of Shiga Naoya, as yet an unknown author in Spain, will finally appear in Spanish translation by 2022, will depend no doubt on issues like this.

In the past decade, the position of Japanese literature in Spain has changed much. The selection of works and the method of introduction have become more proactive, with translation activity going from “secondary” translations favoring exoticism to “primary” translations. In the future, I hope more and more Spanish readers will be able to encounter the richness and diversity of Japanese literature.