

Attempt to Construct New “World Literature”: A Study Focused on Hotta Yoshie’s *Haguruma*

Wang Zhongchen

1. Introduction

At universities in China, Japanese literature is taught mainly in Japanese literature departments and Chinese literature departments separately. In the latter departments, Japanese literature is mostly included in comparative literature courses or “world literature” courses, so it is naturally dealt with as part of “world literature.” In this context, *Haguruma* (齒車; lit. “Gear Wheel”), a novel by Hotta Yoshie (1918–1998), is thought to deserve discussion because this novel not only describes China during the civil war between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party but also is closely related to *Fushi* (腐蝕; lit. “Putrefaction”), a Chinese novel by Mao Dun (1896–1981). In addition, *Haguruma* is an experimental novel that the author wrote with keen awareness of the new structure of “world literature.” In other words, *Haguruma* can be viewed as a text that deserves careful reading in world literature classes.

However, a review of recent studies on *Haguruma* shows that most of those studies have focused only on the “Chinese subjects” dealt with by the novel and the issue of “politics and human beings,” which can be seen as the main theme of this novel. It seems that few studies have been interested in the relationship between *Haguruma* and *Fushi*. Taking into account this context of the previous studies, this study analyzes the significance of the interest of Hotta Yoshie, who recognized himself as a “young Western-oriented literary enthusiast,” in contemporary Chinese literary works, including those by Mao Dun, while confirming the intertextuality between *Haguruma* and *Fushi*. After that, this study shows that Hotta not only incorporated Mao Dun’s “concept of the novel” in his work but also tried to create a new structure by reconstructing the concept. Finally, the study interprets *Haguruma* as a sequel to *Fushi* or its parody against the background of the history of postwar Chinese literature and explores possibilities for, and difficulties in, constructing new “world literature” separate from the structure of Eurocentric “world literature.”

2. Significance of Hotta’s Encounter with Contemporary Chinese Literature Represented by Mao Dun

The relationship between Hotta Yoshie’s *Haguruma* and Mao Dun’s *Fushi* is known to some extent. *Haguruma* first appeared in the first issue of *Bungaku 51*, published in May 1951, and its revised version with some additions was published in a book together with Hotta’s *Hiroba no Kodoku* (広場の孤独; lit. “Solitude in a Plaza”) by Chuo Koron in November of the same year. In the afterword of the book titled *Hiroba no Kodoku*, Hotta wrote about *Haguruma*:

I got my first inspiration for *Haguruma* from my life in Shanghai, which was amid tensions and convulsions due to the civil war between the Nationalist Party and the

Communist Party in the fall of 1946, and somewhat of a Mao Dun theory that a Chinese student told me about. The inspiration swelled in my mind and began to make me sick even after I returned home in 1947, so in the spring of 1949, I wrote the novel feeling as if I was vomiting blood. Two years later, the novel was first published in *Bungaku 51* in May 1951.¹

It is uncertain whether the “Mao Dun theory” here indicates a “theory advocated by Mao Dun” or a “theory about Mao Dun,” but it is certain that Hotta dared to compare what “a Chinese student [had] told [him] about” to “a Mao Dun theory” to mention a source of inspiration for *Haguruma* because he intended to give readers suggestions about a certain form of relationship between his writing of this novel and the Chinese novelist.

It is Takeuchi Yoshimi (1910–1977), a scholar in Chinese literature, who first mentioned the relationship between Hotta’s *Haguruma* and Mao Dun’s *Fushi*. In his review titled “Hiroba no Kodoku by Hotta Yoshie” published in the January 1, 1952 issue of the newspaper *Nihon Dokusho Shinbun*, Takeuchi says, “A comparison between this work (*Haguruma* [note by the quoter]) and Mao Dun’s *Fushi*, which is a source of inspiration for the former, would be interesting in various senses.” However, Takeuchi believed “that it might have little appeal for readers today due to their subjects,” so he avoided discussing the comparison in more depth.

Following Takeuchi Yoshimi, Ono Shinobu (1906–1980), a member of the Chinese Literature Research Group of which Takeuchi was also a member, commented about *Haguruma* at the celebration party for Hotta Yoshie’s winning of the Akutagawa Prize (for the second half of 1951), which was held on February 25, 1952, jointly by the literary magazine *Kindai Bungaku*, the Chinese Literature Research Group and the literary magazine *Arechi*. Ono said, “The novel *Fushi* by Mao Dun was used as material for Mr. Hotta to write *Haguruma*.”² In addition, in the commentary appended to the first edition (published on April 13, 1954) of *Fushi*’s Japanese translation, Ono as the translator clearly wrote, “This novel has a strong appeal to Japanese people too,” and “For example, Hotta Yoshie, who read this novel in postwar Shanghai, incorporated the novel’s idea in his *Haguruma*.”³

These materials suggest that, when *Haguruma* was published, its relationship with Mao Dun’s *Fushi* was already known. However, such questions as why Hotta Yoshie paid attention to Chinese writer Mao Dun and when Hotta first encountered Mao Dun’s literary works had not been answered until Hotta’s memoir was published over 10 years later. Hotta Yoshie wrote in his “Recollection on Novelist Mao Dun” appended as a commentary to Mao Dun’s *Ziye* (子夜, lit: “Midnight,” translated in Japanese by Takeuchi Yoshimi) included in the “Contemporary Chinese Literature” series published by Kawade Shobo Shinsha Publishers in 1970:

¹ Hotta Yoshie 堀田善衛, “Atogaki” あとがき in *Hiroba no Kodoku* 広場の孤独, Chuo Koron, November 1951.

² See “Hotta Yoshie, Akutagawa-shō Jushō Shukugakai no Ki” 堀田善衛芥川賞受賞祝賀会の記 in the May 1952 issue of *Kindai Bungaku* 近代文学.

³ “Kaisetsu 解説” in *Fushoku* 腐蝕 authored by Mao Dun 茅盾 and translated by Ono Shinobu 小野忍, Chikuma Shobo, June 1954, p. 310.

I remember that I first encountered contemporary Chinese literature around 1941 or 1942, when I read a novel titled *Daikatoki* (大過渡期, lit. “Major Transition Period”), an abridged Japanese translation by Oda Takeo of *Huanmie* (幻滅, lit. “Disillusion”) and *Yaodong* (動搖, or *Waverings*) in the trilogy *Shi* 蝕 by Mao Dun.

Mao Dun’s *Daikatoki* was accepted by readers at that time together with or among Western literary works in new styles, such as André Malreaux’s *La Voie royale*, Jacques Chardonne’s *L’Épithalame*, Pierre Mac Orlan’s 女たちに蔽われた男 (lit. “Man Covered with Women”), and André Gide’s works, including *L’école des femmes*.

Contemporary Chinese literature or Chinese classics have not yet been discussed or recognized as related to contemporary Japanese literature and as part of world literature. That was the case in the worse way at that time. Chinese literature was probably disfavored as somewhat idiosyncratic.

However, it was lucky for young Western-oriented literary enthusiasts like me to encounter Mao Dun’s *Daikatoki*, introduced together with the new wave of Western literature. [. . .] Furthermore, *Daikatoki* was somewhat of a social novel, or an early example of the “roman total” in today’s words, filled with consistent intention to represent society in total. This was a distinct feature of the novel, different from the new wave of Western literary works, most of which were strongly oriented toward psychological aspects. My attention was attracted first to this feature of the novel and its contemporary Chinese background.⁴

This overly long quotation can be summarized into the following three points that deserve attention from the perspective of this study. Firstly, Hotta Yoshie read *Daikatoki*, an abridged Japanese translation of Mao Dun’s long novel *Shi* around 1941 or 1942. This was not only the first work by Mao Dun that Hotta had read but also the first contemporary Chinese literary work he had encountered. Secondly, since Mao Dun’s *Daikatoki* was introduced “among works of new-wave Western literature,” the work caught the eye of Hotta as one of the “young Western-oriented literary enthusiasts.” While reading this novel, Hotta was deeply impressed by a feature of this novel “different from the new wave of Western literary works, most of which were strongly oriented toward psychological aspects,” that is, the way the novel was written with “consistent intention to represent society totally.” Thirdly, in the atmosphere of the time when contemporary Chinese literature was not viewed as “part of world literature,” Hotta Yoshie’s encounter with Mao Dun’s works changed the former’s recognition of “world literature.”

For reference, let’s review Japanese readers’ reaction to *Daikatoki* and Mao Dun’s literary works in general. *Daikatoki*, a translation by Oda Takeo (1900–1979), was published by Daiichi

⁴ Hotta Yoshie 堀田善衛, “Kaisō: Sakka Mao Dun” 回想・作家茅盾 in *Gendai Chūgoku Bungaku 2: Mao Dun 現代中国文学 2 茅盾*, translated by Takeuchi Yoshimi 竹内好, Kawade Shobo Shinsha, October 1970, pp. 381–382.

Shobo. Its imprint shows that the translation was published three times. A first print of 2,500 copies was published on August 20, 1936. Its rebound version was published on March 1, 1937, but Ota Susumu examined it and commented, “The book design of the rebound version seems the same as the first print.” On May 20, 1939, Daiichi Shobo published a “second print of 1,000 copies” with a new title of *Nayameru Shina* (悩める支那; lit. “China in Distress”). However, Ota Susumu points out, “The publisher may be likely to have published a retitled patchwork under the name of the ‘second print’ with the hidden intention to sell out leftovers.”⁵ Mao Dun’s works were seldom introduced or reviewed in Japan at that time. In a writing titled “Argument on Mao Dun,” Takeuchi Yoshimi as a central member of the Chinese Literature Research Group formed by promising scholars in contemporary Chinese literature commented, “The popularity of Mao Dun or similar types of writers only proves the poverty of literature,” expressing his bitter, negative view of Mao Dun’s “roman total.” Takeuchi even added, “If I excessively praised him, that would be because I am a member of a race of people who like to eat shit, together with young people in the neighboring country.”⁶ Given such a reaction to Mao Dun in Japan, the response of Hotta Yoshie, who called himself a “young Western-oriented literary enthusiast,” to Mao Dun’s works can be viewed as very unique.

Needless to say, when we use the memoir about the 1940s written by Hotta in the early 1970s as material for studies on Hotta, we have to verify the material by comparing it with other materials, especially primary materials written in the 1940s. As widely known, Hotta began to compose poems in 1940 while studying in the Faculty of Letters, Keio University. After being forced to graduate ahead of his originally scheduled graduation year in September 1942, Hotta became a writer for the magazine *Hihyō* published by Yoshida Ken’ichi (1912–1977) and Nakamura Mitsuo (1911–1988), and he began to write literary criticisms while continuing to write poems. A survey of Hotta’s criticisms published before his departure for Shanghai in March 1945 shows that most of his critical works deal with Western literature and music, except for a serial of five articles on *Saigyō* published in *Hihyō*, and that he never mentioned contemporary Chinese literature. Even if he had been impressed by the works of Mao Dun and Lu Xun (1881–1936), it seems that the impression was still hidden in the depths of his mind. After experiencing the end of WWII in Shanghai, Hotta was assigned to work for the Anti-Japan Operation Committee, Central Publicity Board, Chinese Nationalist Party, but he did not stop composing poems. He quoted words of Lu Xun in his essay titled “Hansei to Kibō” (反省と希望; lit. “Reflection and Hope”) that appeared in the magazine *Kaizō Nippō* published in Shanghai in June 1946. After returning home, he ended his novel “Hikakumeisha” (被革命者; lit. “A Subject of the Revolution”) (January 1950 issue of *Kaizō Bungei*) with a scene where

⁵ Ota Susumu 太田進, “Dōyō, Tsuikyū no Nihongo-yaku ni tsuite” 『動揺』『追求』の日本語訳について in *Mao Dun Kenkyūkai Kaibō* 茅盾研究会会報 (Osaka) Issue 6, February 1988, p. 10.

⁶ Takeuchi Yoshimi, “Mao Dun Ron” 茅盾論 in *Chūgoku Bungaku Geppō* 中国文学月報, Issue 14, May 1936. I have to add here that Takeuchi Yoshimi worked in the 1960s to translate Mao Dun’s representative work 子夜 *Ziye* and said in the translator’s commentary, “I liked novelists featuring emotional descriptions such as Yu Dafu 郁達夫 and paid no attention to Mao Dun’s enthusiasm for prose,” reviewing his own view on Mao Dun. Takeuchi Yoshimi 竹内好, “Kaisetsu” 解説 in *Yoakemae: Ziye* 夜明け前: 子夜 (*Chūgoku Gendai Bungaku Senshū 4: Chōhen Shōsetsu 1* 中国現代文学選集 4 長編小説 1, Heibonsha, September 1963, p. 399)

a character visits Lu Xun’s grave in Shanghai and states, “If Lu Xun lived now, would he be a cultured member of the Communist Party of China?” It is certain that *Haguruma* is an extension of this line. After restarting his writing career in the postwar era, Hotta thus adopted a new way of bringing back to life contemporary Chinese writers and their works hidden deep in his mind.

Tracing Hotta’s writing career in this way, we now may say that his proposal in 1970 on discussions about contemporary Chinese literature as a relative to contemporary Japanese literature as part of world literature was based on the new way of literary creation that he began to try in the postwar era and represented his intention to attach meaning to this way of literary creation of his within the new framework of world literature that he was aiming for.

3. Intertwined Narratives and Perspectives, and Multi-Track Narrative Structure

When we read *Haguruma* with the above recognition in mind, the first thing we should do is probably examine Mao Dun’s *Fushi*, which is viewed as the prior text for *Haguruma*. Set in China during the Sino-Japanese War, *Fushi* is a diary-style novel written in the form of the diary of a young woman who is forced to carry out operations by order of the special service agency under the Nationalist Party administration based in Chongqing. Chiu Waiming, the woman who writes the diary, has the experience of leading a student movement at a university in Nanjing, falling in love with a young leftist called Xiaozhao, living with him, and leaving him due to an ideological disagreement. She is now forced by the special service agency to watch and oppress intellectuals and young students. Written from Chiu Waiming’s viewpoint, the novel not only reveals the inside fact of the secret police and the dark side of the Nationalist Party’s rule but also describes her sufferings, concerns and personality dissociation against a background of this “putrefied” world, and her struggle to escape from the “putrefied” world. Briefly, *Fushi* is a text based on a combination of a novel of social and political criticism and a psychological novel featuring internal confessions.

While *Haguruma* shares many features with *Fushi*, including backgrounds for characters and narrative development, Hotta Yoshie cited and retold Mao Dun’s text in an original way. This attempt by Hotta is thoroughly analyzed by Chen Tongjun, an emergent young scholar. Chen pays attention to Hotta’s adaptation of *Fushi*, which is written in the form of a first-person diary, into a third-person story, and especially values Hotta’s use of “a Japanese man named Inō who is assigned to work for the Chinese government and who is an alter ego [of Hotta]” as the protagonist. Chen argues, “The viewpoint of a Japanese person who is ‘assigned to work for China,’ which is newly adopted in the process of transition from *Fushi* to *Haguruma*, causes major changes in the narrative structure and deepens the theme of *Fushi*.”⁷

As shown by the title of Chen Tongjun’s paper, Chen’s interest lies mainly in the viewpoint of the Japanese person who is ‘assigned to work for China.’ However, there is another major

⁷ Chen Tongjun 陳童君, “Ryūyō Nihonjin no Manazashi: Hotta Yoshie *Haguruma* no Seisei to Sono Mondai-ishiiki” 「留用」日本人のまなざし—堀田善衛『歯車』の生成とその問題意識 in *Kokugo to Kokubungaku* 国語と国文学 (University of Tokyo Japanese Language and Literature Research Group, June Issue in 2013, pp. 60–61)

character who deserves our attention: a young Chinese woman named Chen Qiu jin, who is engaged in operations of a “secret-police-like cultural organization,” modeled after Chiu Waiming in *Fushi*. As Honda Shūgo (1908–2001) mentioned, *Haguruma* has “three scenes where Chen Qiu jin tells long stories,” and her dialogue accounts for about a half of all the pages of the book *Haguruma*. Therefore, the novel is structured based on intertwinement between Inō’s viewpoint and Chen Qiu jin’s narrative, rather than being consistently Inō’s perspective. Concerning Chen Qiu jin’s “long stories,” Honda Shūgo says suspiciously, “Why does the female nationalist spy confess all things in the hidden depths of her mind to the Japanese man Inō? If this relationship were retold as a relationship between two Japanese persons, it would be quite an incomprehensible phenomenon.”⁸ However, I believe that Hotta Yoshie should have intentionally attempted to enable a dialogue between Inō and Chen Qiu jin separately from a “relationship between two Japanese persons,” that is, from the environment of a national language. If Mao Dun tried to become free from Western-style introversive and exclusive psychological novels by adding the perspective of the author to the first-person perspective of the diary writer,⁹ Hotta Yoshie dared to give up the diary style used by Mao Dun in *Fushi* while referring to *Fushi* as a prior text because Hotta wished to combine a “relationship novel” and an “ideological novel” to represent complex human relationships in a different style from that of socially oriented psychological novels such as *Fushi*. In this sense, the novel *Haguruma* can be seen as a unique commentary on Mao Dun.

4. Conclusion

Haguruma begins with the phrase “In the year after the end of the war” from Inō’s viewpoint, and time in the text begins at that point. Therefore, despite many features in the backgrounds of characters and narrative development shared with *Fushi*, *Haguruma* is somewhat of a sequel to *Fushi* in terms of both the time it was written and the time of the story.

I do not believe that it is a coincidence that *Fushi*, written during the war, also won a wide range of readers after the war, especially at the peak of the intensified Chinese Civil War. While many readers who were unsatisfied with the postwar nationalist administration naturally felt empathy with *Fushi*, the novel was also an ideal weapon for the Communist Party to attack the Nationalist Party, so the liberated zones of Suzhong, Taiyue, Huabei and Dongbei competed in printing a huge number of copies of this novel.¹⁰ The novel was also adapted into a movie by Huang Zuolin, a famous Chinese moviemaker, in 1950. The movie met with a favorable reaction soon after its release, but both the novel and movie were later criticized on the basis

⁸ Honda Shūgo 本多秋五, *Monogatari Sengo Bungakushi* 物語 戦後文学史, Second volume, Iwanami Shoten, May 1992, p. 18.

⁹ Korenaga Shun 是永駿, “*Fushoku ni okeru Buntai to Kōzō*” 『腐蝕』における文体と構造, first published in *Ijichi Yoshitsugu, Tsujimoto Haruhiko Ryōkyōju Taikan Kinen Chūgokugogaku Bungaku Ronshū* 伊地智善繼・辻本春彦両教授退官記念 中国語学文学論集, December 1983; See *Mao Dun Shōsetsuron* 茅盾小説論 by the same author, Kyūko Shoin, January 2013, pp. 87–88.

¹⁰ See Zhong Guisong 鐘桂松, “*Fushi: Cong Xiaoshuo dao Dianying*” 『腐蝕』: 從小說到電影, *Shucheng* 書城, Seventh term, 2011, pp. 63–64.

that they were overly empathetic to the “female special agent” and went against the spirit of the then “counterrevolutionary element purge.”

If *Haguruma* as a sequel to *Fushi* had been read in the context of contemporary trends in Chinese literature at that time, what reaction would the Japanese novel have met with? Answering this question based on a supposition against a historical fact would be beyond our ability, but considering the question would not be meaningless. Serving as a leader of the activities of the Afro-Asian Writers’ Association from the late 1950s, Hotta Yoshie visited China many times and built friendships with Chinese writers, including Mao Dun. However, it seems that no representative works by Hotta, including *Haguruma*, had been translated into Chinese. In this sense, I believe that it is more necessary for us today to read Hotta Yoshie’s works dealing with Chinese themes, including *Haguruma*, within the framework of “world literature” because those works still continue asking us what the ideal state of world literature is.