

## Mary Braddon and the English Heroine in Meiji-Era Japan

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### Abstract

In the 1880s and 1890s, a large number of adaptive translations of European and American mystery novels were published in Japan in book form and as serialized newspaper novels. One of the more prominent of the sources of these works was English sensation fiction author Mary Braddon. Her works are associated with strong-willed heroines and villainesses. She is possibly the first, and certainly one of the earliest, European sensation fiction female authors adapted in this manner in Japan. Braddon's works proved popular among a coterie of translators and publishers who saw in them opportunities to pursue their own agendas. These agendas included: participation in debates over the nature of femininity; theatre reform; and the introduction of new legal codes. Her works were targeted for adaptation by playwrights, professional storytellers (*rakugoka*), and newspaper editors. Two of the more prominent adaptors of Braddon works were editor and translator Kuroiwa Ruikō (1862–1920), and Australian-born professional storyteller Henry Kairakutei Black (1858–1923). By examining such adaptations of Braddon's works, this paper sheds light on how European sensation fiction served the interests of reformists in Meiji-era (1886–1912) Japan.

**Keywords:** *kabuki*, *rakugo*, Meiji era, Mary Braddon, sensation fiction

## Introduction

By the 1880s and 1890s, Japanese readers had access to a growing array of mystery novels from Europe and North America. Such novels were released in quick succession as books and serialized translations in newspapers. In the early years, they took the form of adaptive translations (*hon'an mono*), described by J. Scott Miller as “adapted tales of foreign origin” (2001, p. 3). Adaptors altered plots, settings and names of characters in a process which Miller characterizes as “transmutation”, frequently involving “wholesale appropriation of literature in the service of some other agenda – literary, political, social” (2001, p. 4).

These were not literal translations. Adaptive translations were produced quickly to meet steady demand from newspaper and book editors. Attempts to maintain the faithfulness of the translations were not necessary, but translators nevertheless adhered to the spirit of the originals, while playing an important role in introducing new ideas to Japan in the Meiji era (1868–1912). To this end, adaptor-translators tweaked details and added interpolations to make foreign ideas palatable. A study of the alterations offers insights into the transmission of new ideas, particularly nineteenth-century European and North American notions of modernity, to Japan in the years before mass production, and wide reader reception, of more literal translations of Western novels.

One of the earliest of authors to reach Japan in this manner was English sensation fiction writer Mary Braddon. Sensation fiction examined and reflected new psychological states and ways of relating to others associated with the dislocations of the Industrial Revolution. Its proponents also included Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, and Arthur Conan Doyle. Ian Ousby’s description of the genre as showing “a preference for the striking and unusual situation or series of events and for characters in the grip of strong or extreme emotion” ... “combined with an interest in fact and topicality, creating an air of contemporary verisimilitude” (1976, p. 80) is one of the most comprehensive. Ousby identifies common themes as “a world of missing wills, long-lost heirs, mistaken identities, relatives who disappear to be reunited with their families in the final volume or installment, and illegitimate children who live in ignorance of their true parentage” (1976, pp. 81–82). Braddon was the quintessential sensation fiction writer. Her heroines were often determined, strong and not always conventionally good women. She is perhaps the first female Western novelist whose works were translated or adapted into Japanese. Other novels featuring heroines or female villains had been translated or adapted for Japanese readers before the introduction of Braddon’s works, but they had male authors.

Braddon achieved popularity in the English-speaking world in the 1860s and 1870s. George Bernard Shaw, who reviewed one of her books for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, complained that her work did not befit his intellect.

Why condemn me to read things that I can’t review – that no artistic conscience could long survive the reviewing of! Why don’t you begin notices of boots, hats, dogcarts and so on? They would be fifty times as useful and interesting as reviews of the last novel by Miss Braddon, who is a princess among novel manufacturers. (Holroyd, 1988, p. 214)

Like Shaw, many Japanese proponents of pure literature also turned their noses up at sensation fiction, of which detective novels were a subgenre, but enough people read them to ensure a market. Writers and translators in Japan took to the genre to cater to this demand.

The genre shared features with theatre, which used what Lyn Pykett lists as “stylized dramatic tableaux, heightened emotions and extraordinary incidents of melodrama”, including “spectacular ‘special effects’, involving dioramas, panoramas, elaborate lighting systems and machinery of all kinds” (Pykett, 1994, p. 2). In Braddon’s works, these synergies between theatre and fiction assume added significance, given that she was an actress before taking up writing.

A history of adaptations of Braddon works in Japan shows that they were targeted by editors, storytellers and playwrights engaged in debates over women’s rights, reform of criminal codes, and the theatre. Women’s rights and law reform were planks in the pro-democracy Freedom and People’s Rights Movement (*jiyū minken undō*). Theatre reform was also a topic of debate among storytellers and reformist newspaper editors during the Meiji era. By examining these adaptations, this paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the Meiji reform debate.

### Chronology of Braddon’s entry to Japan

**1882–1883:** The first known adaptation of a Braddon novel in Japan dates to 1882 (Meiji 15), when the newspaper *Doyō shimbun* in Kōchi, Shikoku, embarked on a serialization of *Lady Audley’s Secret*, as *Eikoku kidan – dokufu Ōdoroku koden* [“A strange tale from England – The wicked woman, Ōdoroku”] (Yanagida, 1966, p. 33). Publication of the newspaper was suspended before the episodes were completed, but the novel was published in full in the *Kokkai shimbun* in 1883. (Yanagida, 1966, pp. 33–34).

**1886:** In 1886, the Australian-born professional oral storyteller (*rakugoka*) Henry Kairakutei Black adapted Braddon’s *Flower and Weed* as *Kusaba no tsuyu* [“Dew by the Graveside”] (Buradon, 1886).

**1891:** In 1891, Black also adapted Braddon’s *Her Last Appearance* as *Eikoku Rondon – gekijō miyage* [“Tale from a London theatre”] (Eikokujin, 1891).

**1894:** In October 1894, Kuroiwa Ruikō (1862–1920) completed a serialisation of *Hito no un* [“People’s Luck”] in his newspaper *Yorozu chōhō*. Evidence suggests this was an adaptive translation of *Lady Audley’s Secret* (Silver, 2003, p. 853).

**1894–1895:** Kuroiwa followed this with a similar novel, this time Braddon’s *Diavola; or, The Woman’s Battle* as *Sute obune* [“Abandoned small boat”] in 156 episodes in *Yorozu chōhō* between October 1894 and July 1895 (McArthur, 2013; Bryce & McArthur, 2007).

**1898:** Attesting to the popularity of *Sute obune*, it was commissioned as a kabuki play *Sute obune yorozu no ōjime*, at the Kabukiza in Tokyo in January 1898. This version was written by Kawatake Shinshichi III (1842–1901).

**1906:** A further, revised *shingeki* [lit. new theatre] version played at Tokyo’s Hongōza in 1906 (McArthur, 2007).

This list suggests that at least four of Braddon’s works were brought to Japan in the Meiji era between 1882 and 1906.

### *Lady Audley's Secret* (in *Doyō shimbun* and *Kokkai shimbun*) – 1882–1883

The *Doyō shimbun* began in August 1877 as a vehicle for Risshisha,<sup>1</sup> a pro-democracy organ established by Itagaki Taisuke (1837–1919), who was a participant in the Freedom and People's Rights Movement (*jiyūminken undō*). Ueki Emori (1857–92) was the paper's founding editor. In an interview with Nishūbashi Sei, Henry Black confirmed that his father, the newspaper editor John Reddie Black had been “on familiar terms with” Itagaki (Nishūbashi, 1905, p. 294). Black told his interviewer that the friendship had been during his father's editorship of the Japanese language newspaper *Nisshin shinji shi*. John Black was editor of the newspaper between 1872 and 1876 (McArthur, 2013). Itagaki was a former samurai who joined the post-Restoration government, but resigned over the government's refusal to become embroiled in Korea (Jansen, 1995, pp. 243–244). He was a founding member of Aikoku Kōtō (Public Party of Patriots) (*Illustrated*, 1993, p. 635) and an advocate of women's rights. The Freedom and People's Rights Movement was a struggle for power and control over definitions of modernity. Many of its leaders were as much interested in wresting power from the ruling oligarchy as in enlightening the masses about democratic rights (Jansen, 1995, pp. 243–244). From the late 1870s, the movement's adherents were seeking novel ways of reaching a wider audience via the press and oratory. The government frequently struck back by suppressing and closing newspapers and restricting freedom of assembly.

On 24 August, 1882, for example, the government ordered *Doyō shimbun* to stop publication, putting an end to serialization of *Lady Audley's Secret*, but in 1883 the paper resumed publication and merged with *Tosa shimbun*. It remained an organ of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement as *Kōchi shimbun*. Proof of continued links to the movement was the return in 1884 of the “political leader and thinker”,<sup>2</sup> Ueki, who had edited the *Doyō shimbun* (Matsuyama, 2008) for four years, during which it “ran stories every day taking up issues related to matters such as the household, women and education, having a big influence on women in Kochi” (*Nihon Kirisuto*, 2008). This adds to its credentials as a publication with an interest in women's rights and raises the possibility that Ueki had earlier penned the prologue to *Lady Audley's Secret*.

A reading of it will much delight with the ingenuity of the plot and the charm of its language, and incapable as I am of translating it, I will certainly, by conveying through the lines in each episode, merely guide a broad section of fellow aficionados among the general public through all its sensibilities, so that luckily its ideas will not be readily overlooked or lost in the fog because of their difference with the novels of Japan and China. (*Doyō*, Aug 1, 1882)

In keeping with the spirit of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement, the prologue avows to a self-appointed role as a transmitter of different “ideas” and “sensibilities” via the plot of a Western novel.

The Japanese version spreads Braddon's first chapter over three days between August 1 and August 3 in 1882. The first episode of the Japanese version adheres to Braddon's scene-setting, duplicating her description of the grounds of Audley Court and introducing Lucy Graham, the

<sup>1</sup> The Risshisha also set up the *Kainan shimbun* in August, 1877 (Meiji 10). Both papers merged as the *Doyō shimbun* in January, 1878 (*Kōchi*, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Kodansha's *Japan – An illustrated encyclopedia* (p. 1642) describes Ueki as “a political leader and thinker associated with the Freedom and People's Rights movement” and as influenced by Itagaki Taisuke, “helping him to organize the political group, Risshisha”.

governess, who by the end of the chapter becomes Lady Audley after marrying the widower Sir Michael Audley. A reference to wildflowers and the absence of oversight by the lord of the estate attests to the unkempt condition of Audley Court. We also learn that the beautiful “willow-waisted” (*Doyō*, Aug 1, 1882) Lucy appears to be extremely pious and attends church three times every Sunday and that she has been urged by her employer to consider a match with Sir Michael. By the third episode, Sir Michael has proposed marriage, with a kiss to the forehead of an apparently shy and reserved Lucy.

As mentioned above, publication of the *Doyō shimbun* was suspended after this episode, but the full version of the novel was published in the *Kokkai shimbun* in 1883 (Yanagida, 1966, pp. 33–34).

### ***Lady Audley’s Secret (in Yorozu chōhō) – 1894***

There is evidence that in 1894, *Lady Audley’s Secret* was serialized as an adaptive translation in a leading Tokyo newspaper. According to Mark Silver, this may have been *Hito no un* [*People’s luck*] by Kuroiwa Ruikō in his newspaper *Yorozu chōhō*. Silver notes that the novel may have been chosen for participation in the contemporary debate over law reform and as a means by which Kuroiwa could criticize what many considered a miscarriage of justice (2003, p. 853).

Publication coincided with Kuroiwa’s campaign against a court ruling in the Sōma Affair, an inheritance scandal which had entertained the public for a decade. Silver documents how *Hito no un* was “nearly made to order” for Kuroiwa “as a match for the plot of the most sensational and closely-followed murder trial of the mid-Meiji period”. *Hito no un* and the Sōma Affair featured “murder, money, bastardry, insanity, forensic medicine, and the reputation of an aristocratic family, all focused into the drama of a courtroom confrontation” (Silver, 2003, p. 853). While the court exonerated those accused of poisoning Viscount Sōma Tomotane, Kuroiwa maintained that the court had been bought and justice had not been done. The timing also fitted with Kuroiwa’s campaign against capital punishment. Kuroiwa was keen to show that in spite of Japan’s recent borrowing of the Western, and in particular, French, legal code, it was still possible to have a miscarriage of justice.<sup>3</sup> The serialization of *Hito no un* was completed in October 1894.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Diavola (Yorozu chōhō) – 1894-1895***

Kuroiwa followed this serialization with another Braddon mystery novel, *Diavola*, under the title, *Sute obune* [*Abandoned small boat*]. *Diavola* had been published in *The London Journal* between October 27, 1866, and July 20, 1867.<sup>5</sup> The *Yorozu chōhō* version just over three decades later spanned 156 episodes between October 1894 and July 1895. Featuring an attempt

<sup>3</sup> Silver claims that Kuroiwa’s use of *Hito no un* indicates a degree of creative “resistance” within Japanese popular culture sufficient to question the notion that Western versions of modernity were all-encompassing and dominant.

<sup>4</sup> According to Silver (2003, p.853), Kuroiwa wrote in the inaugural edition of *Yorozu chōhō* that his aim was to give “the mass of ordinary citizens” a “convenient way of knowing at a glance what is going on in the world”. To achieve this, he would “do everything possible to keep the price low, the page size small, and the writing simple”.

<sup>5</sup> *Diavola* was published in the *London Journal*, Vol. 44, No. 1133 (Oct. 27, 1866) to Vol. 46, No. 1171 (July 20, 1867). Wolff (1979, pp. 122–126) notes that it was shortly afterwards published in the *New York Sunday Mercury* under the title *Nobody’s Daughter; or, the Ballad-Singer of Wapping*, and reissued in three volumes under the title *Run to Earth* in 1868. Wolff claims that this work dates from the years when Braddon wrote for “penny-dreadfuls” and that its subsequent appearance as a novel was a violation by Braddon and her publisher and lover Maxwell of “contemporary publishing practices”.

to poison a baron and a wrongly accused lead character, *Sute obune* duplicated themes in *Hito no un*. *Sute obune* was published two years after Kuroiwa established his paper, indicating that he considered such stories as a means of attracting readers to what was to become Tokyo's then largest-selling newspaper.<sup>6</sup>

In *Diavola*, the heroine is Jenny Milson, a pub singer who metamorphoses into the opera singer, Honoria Milford. Of Jenny/Honoria, Braddon wrote that “from her childhood she had been gifted with a power of intellect – a strength of will – that lifted her high above the common ranks of womanhood”. In *Sute obune*, she becomes Sonoe, a wandering *samisen* minstrel, inspired by the contemporary fad for female ballad singers (*naniwabushi*). As *Diavola*, Honoria marries the baronet, Sir Oswald Eversleigh. After his nephew and an accomplice scheme to turn Sir Oswald against her, the baronet dies from poisoning. Wrongly accused of the killing, Honoria flees, until with the aid of a detective, she brings the nephew and his accomplice to justice. In substance, *Sute obune* duplicates this plot, making it Kuroiwa's second attempt to show that even under Britain's laws there could be a miscarriage of justice. As was the practice with many adaptive translations, Kuroiwa naturalized the story by creating a liminal world in which characters live in England, but have Japanese names. Sonoe's surname is Furumatsu but after her marriage she becomes Baroness Tokiwa.

This formula enabled Kuroiwa to become one of the foremost users of the sensation fiction genre for ideological purposes in Japan. Kuroiwa's use of these two Braddon works is consistent with his editorial policy of combining serialized Western novels with “sensational reportage on social issues” (*Japan*, 1993, p. 847) to boost circulation. Other well-known European works which he adapted include Alexandre Dumas' *Le Comte de Monte Cristo* (1901–1902) and Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1902–1903) (*Japan*, 1993, p. 847).

### ***Diavola* (Kabuki Theatre) – 1898**

*Sute obune* was later commissioned as a kabuki play written by Kawatake Shinshichi III.<sup>7</sup> It premiered in New Year performances at the Kabukiza in Tokyo in 1898. Kawatake took greater liberties with plot and scenes. An early scene set in a run-down pub in Wapping, London, becomes a pub in Kobe, with waitresses in kimono. Gatherings depict characters drinking sake or Japanese tea. Whereas Braddon has the scheming nephew incarcerate Honoria in Yarborough Tower, Kawatake puts Sonoe in Nison-In Temple in Kyoto. These days, Nison-In is part of the tourist trail in Kyoto's north-western outer fringe, but at the time of the play it was relatively isolated and well beyond the city's limits, although it had a degree of fame as it had been patronised by the imperial family prior to the emperor's post-Meiji Restoration relocation to Tokyo. Kawatake further heightens the pathos surrounding the injustices meted out to Sonoe by setting her age at “15 or 16 years” compared to Honoria's 18 at the start of the story.

<sup>6</sup> The success of these initial attempts at serialized adaptive translations encouraged Kuroiwa to translate 75 Western novels throughout his publishing career, including works by Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas and Fortune du Boisgobey. Many appeared as serialized works in his newspaper.

<sup>7</sup> According to Leiter (1997, p. 308), Kawatake Shinshichi III was “the foremost Meiji dramatist” and a leading pupil of Kawatake Mokuami. He wrote about 80 dramas throughout his career. That the majority of his plays were based on *kōdan* (a style of traditional oral storytelling) testifies to the appeal at this time of the material in the storytelling repertoire. Kawatake Shinshichi III adapted Henry Black's mentor, San'yūtei Enchō's story, *The peony lantern*, for the kabuki stage.

The critics' negative reaction to the Kabukiza version of *Sute obune* suggests that contemporary debate over theatre reform was by no means resolved. Critic Tamura Shigeyoshi wrote that the actors Ichizō as the naval captain Kobuishi, and Hidechō as the woman Konami had turned in “quite excellent” performances, but that the drawcard, Kikugorō, in dual roles as Baron Tokiwa and scheming scientist Kawabayashi Ikudō, were lacklustre and failed to provoke interest, with the play “ending in failure” (*shippai ni owaritari*) (Tamura, 1922, p. 73). The *Waseda bungaku* critic said it did not epitomize kabuki. The unnamed critic said a major factor in the play's lack of success was Kikugorō's lack of sensitivity and technique required for “this sort of realistic play”. Another critic, probably Nomura Mumyōan,<sup>8</sup> claimed complications in the original story had been so simplified that it was “prosaic” (*bosshumi*) and “devoid of high points” (*miseba naku*).

*Sute obune* was one of many attempts at intertextual transmutation of Western material via the kabuki stage at this time. The criticisms illustrate problems which playwrights had in adapting Western templates to kabuki.

### **Diavola (Hongō Theatre) – 1906**

Eight years later, in 1906, a *shingeki* version of *Sute obune* was staged at Tokyo's Hongōza (McArthur, 2007). It used seven scenes instead of Kawatake's nine and endorsed Kawatake's attempts at setting the action in Japan, although it altered some of the venues. The bar in Kobe becomes Sonoe's father's home on the Kashiwazaki coast and the incarceration scene is shifted from a Kyoto temple to an isolated boar hunter's hide. Contemporary illustrations and *banzuke* (program notes/listing) for the stage versions indicate major stylistic differences. Stylized kabuki *mie* (poses) are not apparent in the *shingeki* version and male and female costumes are almost entirely Western.

The Hongōza *banzuke* states that the earlier kabuki version was not sufficiently researched and that the passing of almost a decade had enabled a new version to suit the demands of “advanced society”, with a revised plot and actors “wholeheartedly adapted to their various roles”. According to the *Yomiuri shimbun*, the verisimilitude of the sets ensured that “it will be a full house with good takings”. *Yorozu chōhō*, which had published the adaptive translation in 1894, praised the “excellent” sets, including the boar hunter's hide, a rooftop platform for drying clothing, Reikichi's living room, and the tea room. “All were so close to reality, especially in the final scene with the grandness of the Western style drawing room (*ōsetsuma*)”. An illustration of this final scene shows an elaborately coiffed Sonoe in an expensive kimono, amid a large group of men in formal, black morning coats, attending to an ailing Baron Tokiwa. The set is ornately lit and features a grand central staircase.

### **Flower and Weed (Henry Black) – 1886**

Australian-born Henry Black (1858–1923) was also associated with the Freedom and People's Rights Movement. Black was British, by virtue of birth in Adelaide in December 1858, in the British colony of South Australia to a Scottish father and English mother. In the 1880s, he and his newspaper editor father, John Reddie Black, made speeches to gatherings organized by prominent adherents of the movement. In 1890, Henry Black leveraged his ability to speak fluent Japanese by joining San'yūha, a major guild of *rakugoka*, taking the stage name of

<sup>8</sup> The name in *Zokuzoku nendaiki* is given only as Mumyōan, but Nomura Mumyōan is known to have been a contemporary theatre critic (Tamura, 1922, p. 74).

Kairakutei Burakku. In 1893 he gained Japanese citizenship. After becoming a storyteller, Black incorporated themes associated with women's rights and law reform in his adaptations of Western novels. The earliest known case of Black using a Braddon work is her novella, *Flower and Weed*, as *Kusaba no tsuyu* ["Dew by the Graveside"]. A printed version of *Kusaba no tsuyu* was published in 1886.

In the 1880s, editors developed an interest in stenographically recorded stories for publication or serialization. The first newspaper with a serialized story from a *rakugoka* was *Yamato shimbun*, with *Matsu no misao bijin no ikiume* ["A Chaste Beauty Buried Alive"] by Henry's mentor, San'yūtei Enchō, to mark the paper's 1886 founding edition (Yoshizawa, 1981, p. 315). Unlike Enchō, Black had the advantage of being able to adapt directly from foreign sources. *Kusaba no tsuyu* followed an invitation to affiliate with the San'yūha to modernize the repertoire, a move which resulted in Black becoming the pre-eminent adaptor of foreign material for the *yose* stage.<sup>9</sup> By 1901, Black claimed to have "translated no fewer than 14 English novels into Japanese" (Kobe, 1901, p. 63). *Kusaba no tsuyu* was published "as a Braddon work". The stenographer was Shitō Kenkichi, while "the Briton, Black", was credited in the preface for "dictation" (*kōjutsu*).

Having lived a long time in Japan, and being fluent in Japanese and familiar with the customs of Japan, [Mr Black] has for many years now wanted to venture into the field of novels, but till now has not had the chance to do so.<sup>10</sup>

The preface noted that the adaptation contained parenthetical commentary from Black.

By way of explanation or wherever the writer feared it might be difficult to comprehend differences in customs and sentiment (*ninjō*) between Japan and Britain, which are thousands of miles apart, he [Shitō] has each time queried Mr. Black and had him clarify the situation in his own country.<sup>11</sup>

*Kusaba no tsuyu* adheres to Braddon's *Pygmalion*-like tale about Bess, who escapes London's slums and displays a talent for acquiring the ways of the upper class. The 1886 publication of the *sokkibon* (stenographic book) came only four years after Braddon's story was published in 1882 in the Christmas magazine *Mistletoe Bough* which she founded in 1878. With its didactic digressions and exotic setting, *Kusaba no tsuyu* was an early response to audience demand. Unlike Black's subsequent adaptations, where characters bear Japanese names, Black retained the original names. Digressions from the original plot are few compared to the liberties Black took in later adaptations of Western novels. But the tale was a prototype for a formula which in coming years satisfied what Black perceived as a demand for enlightenment and entertainment.

A feature which sets the *sokkibon* version of *Kusaba no tsuyu* apart from later adaptations is its lack of vernacular. It has much in common with the experimental *wa-kan-yō-setchū* (mixed Japanese, Chinese and Western) and *gabun* (decorous elegant) styles commonly found in early Meiji literature (Morioka & Sasaki, 1984, p. 155). By contrast, Black's subsequent works demonstrate a transition toward more colloquial speech in the lines delivered by the characters portrayed and in Black's narrative.

<sup>9</sup> *Yose* are theatres where *rakugoka* perform.

<sup>10</sup> Braddon, (Burakku, dictation) (1886). The comment is on the unpaginated seventh and eighth pages of the preface.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

*Dew by the Graveside* is notable for its arcadian setting – the manor house and estate of Lord Ingleshaw. The nostalgia for the countryside portrayed in the story had parallels in the many expressions of regret from foreign visitors and diary writers in the 1860s and 1870s over the passing of what was often referred to as “Old Japan” thanks to an influx of modern technology and reformist ideas imported from the North America and Western Europe. This contrasts with later adaptations by Black, which actively engage in the discourse on modernity by illustrating the problems of urban life in the industrializing city with its slums and income inequalities, and portraying faster modes of transport, such as trains, and the use of more efficient, scientific methods of detecting crime.

Despite the setting in an idealized countryside, Black manages to use *Dew by the Graveside* as a vehicle to highlight the new and different. There is, for example, reference to Lucille’s cousin Bruno, who has entered parliament and has already toured Europe and Africa, both exotic destinations for any Japanese in those days. European notions of love are also dealt with. On p40, Lucille’s lady-in-waiting, Miss Marjoram, confesses to Lucille that she had agreed to delay marriage to give her prospective husband time for his studies, only to find that he decided to become a missionary and marry a woman of “lower birth” (*iyashii fujin*). And in a clear indication that Black had not abandoned the aims of the Freedom and People’s Rights Movement, his adaptation retains a scene where Braddon has Lucille admonish Miss Marjoram over her disdain toward Bess and her clumsy, but conscientious attempts to acquire decorum in her speech. “People are people,” Black’s Lucille says, “irrespective of whether they are rich or poor or of high or low rank”. Black’s message is that even a woman who is born in the slums should be able to aspire to greater things. In the end, however, Bess is killed by her estranged husband. In *Kusaba no tsuyu*, the malevolent impact of the slum has extended into the countryside.

### ***Her Last Appearance* (Henry Black) – 1891**

Black’s other Braddon adaptation was her short story, *Her Last Appearance*, as *Eikoku Rondon – gekijō miyage* [“Story from a London Theatre”].<sup>12</sup> It demonstrates how Braddon’s melodramatic works lent themselves to adaptation by an adept storyteller keen to impress with cliff-hanger endings. Black also used the adaptation to include many informative and amusing digressions. Among these, Black uses Braddon’s references to her actress heroine as an excuse to include descriptions of the theatre and the lifestyle of actors in Britain as well as comparisons between acting styles in Britain and Japan. These references reflect Black’s active participation in debate over theatre reform. Black’s broader motivation for using his tales to enlighten as well as entertain is also apparent in the preamble, in which he told audiences that compared to when he had arrived in Japan at least 24 years before, “things had so completely changed that you wouldn’t think it was the same place” (Eikokujin 1981, p. 1).

The frequency and number of the diversions make it one of Black’s more culturally instructive narrations and ensured that it was considerably longer than Braddon’s original. Braddon had published the story in *Belgravia Annual* in 1876. It was reprinted in *Weavers and Weft and Other Tales* in 1877 (Edwards 1988, p. 327). In its brevity and overly melodramatic plot, it is not one of her better works. In Black’s hands, however, the material becomes a 15-part work copiously interspersed with references to topical social reform issues, such as the movement to end prostitution, and cultural comparisons such as references to British and Japanese

<sup>12</sup> I have chosen the English-language version of the title used by Sasaki Miyoko and Morioka Heinz in their pioneering *Monumenta Nipponica* work on Black (Sasaki & Morioka, 1983, pp. 133–162). A more literal translation of the title is “London, England: Story from the Theatre”.

marriage customs and descriptions of theatre performances in London compared to Japan's kabuki. The story's setting in the world of the theatre also assumes importance in the light of Black's appearances in kabuki extracts in 1892.

In the Braddon original, the actress Barbara Stowell is ill-treated by her actor husband Jack Stowell. Upon learning that she is married, Sir Philip Hazlemere urges her to divorce and remarry. When the actress refuses his entreaties, Sir Philip murders her husband. The actress rebuffs Sir Philip and later dies backstage of an unexplained malady. Braddon takes one sentence to deal with Barbara's marriage, stating merely that she was a "country parson's daughter leading the peacefullest, happiest, obscurest life in a Hertfordshire village" who married in a ceremony "solemnized before she had time to repent that weak moment of concession" (Braddon 1876, p. 326). Black, however, invents considerable detail about her origins as Gātsurudo (Gertrude), the naïve daughter of a farmer named Beniyūeru, taking four episodes to get to the marriage. Elsewhere, he adds detail regarding the treatment of criminals in Britain and laws pertaining to gambling and prostitution. Whereas the Braddon work ends with the death of the actress, Black's version has Gātsurudo and her admirer Jon Buraun marrying and leaving for Paris to avoid the police in episode 13. The resolution does not occur until episode 16 in a gory scene in which Buraun blows his brains out with a revolver at an exclusive Paris men's club when confronted by a detective.

The issue of abolition of prostitution was a preoccupation of reformers and Christian activists throughout the Meiji years. As early as July 1879, Black spoke about it at a meeting sponsored by a pro-democracy organization in Tokyo. Later, in *Eikoku Rondon – gekijō miyage*, he used the opportunity provided by Jon Buraun luring Gātsurudo's husband into a gambling den to join the contemporary discourse over prostitution and other vices.

In Japan there is a debate about eliminating prostitution (*haishō ron*). Many take the view that if prostitutes harm society, they ought to be immediately banned. In fact if one listens to their opinions, they would say that not a day should be left, rather that without waiting an hour or even a minute, they should be banned and brothels should be burned. But if you listen to opinion on the other side, you cannot deny there is reason in it. (Eikokujin, 1891, p. 132)

Black noted that in Japan, when police investigate prostitution, they usually withdraw without fining offenders.

There is the argument that if people openly trade [in women] it will harm society, so it cannot be tolerated. However, in London, there are many who secretly operate gambling dens or brothels. If any are reported, the police enter the premise and it is immediately closed down. (Eikokujin 1891, p. 133)

He then addressed the issue of red light districts in Japan.

Take the case in Tokyo. You'll see what I mean. Yoshiwara and Susaki are famous. Their streets are wide and the buildings are fine and beautifully decorated. If someone from the country comes to see the sights of Tokyo and doesn't go there to take a look, then he hasn't seen Tokyo and will get laughed at when he returns to his hometown. (Eikokujin 1891, p. 133)

Black ends by warning his audience that such places are full of smooth-talking pimps who fleece customers (Eikokujin 1891, pp. 131–134).

Black also discussed marriage customs. In episode three, when Gātsurudo marries, he describes a Christian wedding ceremony and explains that Britain has laws mandating the registration of a marriage to ensure that legitimate offspring can inherit. He compares such ceremonies in “my Britain” with what he claims is the ease with which Japanese men take concubines and mistresses, adding that the Christian ceremony represents a stronger commitment than that implied in the Japanese ritual of exchanging cups of sake.

Even if citizens (*jinmin*) are upper, middle or lower class, no distinction is made, and when one takes a wife, one has to do so through this ceremony. So if people don't do it, for example if they live together and even call each other husband and wife, they are not a married couple in the eyes of the law. And a child born between them is illegitimate (*shisei no ko*) and has no right to inheritance. Even with people who have, or have not, a belief in religion, generally, when they take a wife, they go to the church and solemnly exchange vows in the presence of a minister. (Eikokujin, 1891, p. 57)

Later, in episode five, after Gātsurudo and her first husband, Sumerurii, marry and experience marital problems, Black cites the British saying, “Marry in haste, regret it for the rest of your life”. He explains that whereas in Japan divorce is relatively easy, in Britain the marriage vow implies that the union is for life. (Eikokujin, 1891, pp. 60–61)<sup>13</sup>

*Eikoku Rondon – gekijō miyage* was also a vehicle for participation in the debate over theatre reform. In an unprecedented development in the history of Japanese theatre, Black had already performed in extracts from kabuki plays, a practice designed to boost the popularity of *rakugoka*. Such performances also capitalized on the long-established tradition of plagiarizing story material between kabuki and *rakugo*. Black appeared in 1890 in the female roles of Omiwa in *Imoseyama* (Mt. Imo and Mt. Se)<sup>14</sup> and Osato in *Senbon zakura* (The thousand cherry trees) (Morioka & Sasaki 1984, p. 142).<sup>15</sup> Both involve thwarted love and mistaken identity. In 1891, he played Kumagai in *Heike Monogatari*, Roshishin in *Suikoden*, and Omura in *Ibaraki dōji, Sōzaburo no imōto Omura*.<sup>16</sup> Then in September 1892, at the Haruki Theatre in Tokyo, Black took on the challenging role of the blustering hero, Banzuiin Chōbee, after receiving tuition from the great kabuki actor Ichikawa Danjūrō IX, who had made it his signature role. This cooperation was a meeting of two reformist minds. From as early as the second decade of the Meiji period, Danjūrō had begun exploring more realistic acting techniques to reflect the psychological states portrayed on stage with greater verisimilitude. He was inspired by the formation in 1886 of the Society for the Reform of Drama, at the urging of

<sup>13</sup> Black also cites a Japanese morality tale, *Shitakiri suzume*, about a grateful sparrow and a spiteful wife to illustrate the theme of marital fidelity.

<sup>14</sup> *Imoseyama* dates from 1771. The tale relates to Fujiwara Kamatari's defeat of Soga no Iruka in the seventh century. The character of Omiwa is a daughter of a *sake* shop proprietress. Omiwa is in love with her neighbor Motome, whom she believes is a maker of ceremonial headgear. Motome is really Tankai, the brother of the emperor's concubine. In one of the play, a love triangle leads to a confrontation between Omiwa and Princess Tachibana. The scene is “superficially comic”, but “drenched in pathos” (Leiter, 1997, pp. 217–219).

<sup>15</sup> Also called *Yoshitsune senbon zakura* (Yoshitsune and the thousand cherry trees). *Senbon zakura* relates to the legendary general Yoshitsune. Osato appears in a scene set in a *sushi* shop. Osato is in love with Yasuke, whom she believes is the shop's apprentice, but Yasuke is really Koremori, a married novice priest on the run. (Leiter, 1997, pp. 708–711).

<sup>16</sup> Listed in Shogei Konwakai (ed.), p. 4, and attributed to *Asahi shimbun*, March 24, 1891.

the oligarchs Itō Hirobumi and Foreign Minister Inoue Kaoru. The society's leadership considered that kabuki had become decadent and were determined to refashion it as an art form deserving of presentation to international audiences. Itō and Inoue saw this as a key factor in the creation of a modern institutional infrastructure. As part of the society's attempt to raise the status of kabuki, Danjūrō had been one of three major actors who in 1887 performed in the first presentation of kabuki to the emperor (Leiter 1997, p. 187). Newspaper reports of Danjūrō's tuition of Black for the role of Banzuiin Chōbei demonstrate the significance of the performances by the foreign-born Black and his role in the debate over reform in the theatre.

Black continued the focus on theatre reform in *Eikoku Rondon – gekijō miyage* when he praised former Finance Ministry bureaucrat-turned newspaper proprietor Fukuchi Gen'ichirō for his promotion of the subject via his newspaper editorials. In this context, Black noted that “one of the issues is whether it is better to reform by adopting the Western style, or whether the Japanese theatre is better reformed while retaining its unique aspects entirely” (Eikokujin, 1891, p. 12). He then offered an amusing aside to explain a major difference between Western theatre and kabuki.

In the old days in Japan, since the curtain rose as soon as the day dawned, the housemaid would be in a flap from the previous evening. What with having to put on *oshiroi* (white face powder), do up the hair, choose the kimono, and tighten the *obi*, dressing up took so much effort that there was no sleep the night before and you stayed up the entire time. People had to leave for the theatre at first light, so when they relaxed in their spectator's cubicle the fatigue of the previous night got to them and they often ended up nodding off, just when they'd been looking forward to it, and not even seeing the actors' faces. These days, we have become fairly well civilized (*kaika*), and the Shintomi Theatre and Kabuki Theatre don't raise their curtains until 12 o'clock tolls, but from the point of view of English theatre, the timing is still dreadfully early. (Eikokujin, 1891, p. 12)

Black also explained that whereas in Japan audiences show their appreciation by shouting an actor's *yagō* (shop name) (Leiter 1997, p. 692), Western audiences clap or throw flowers (Eikokujin, 1891, p. 18). Elsewhere in *Eikoku Rondon – gekijō miyage*, he lamented the discrimination Japanese actors suffered as “river bed beggars” (*kawara kojiki*), and noted that even though Danjūrō had achieved recognition for his talents (Eikokujin, 1891, p. 98), “the old barriers have not been withdrawn” (Eikokujin, 1891, p. 87). Black illustrated the respect in which British actors were held with an anecdote about a famous British actor at a banquet hosted by Prime Minister William Gladstone. When Gladstone suggested the actor deliver some lines from his latest play, the actor placed a coin on his plate and left, telling Gladstone that he had come to enjoy a meal and not to perform. “If you wish to see me perform, buy a ticket and come to the theatre. Here is the cost of my meal” (Eikokujin, 1891, p. 94).

### **Braddon and Japan**

What gave Braddon's works wide appeal in Japan? Throughout her life, she produced more than 80 novels and nine plays. By the 1880s when *Doyō shimbun* and others in Japan were adapting her works, Braddon was at the peak of her 55-year career. Braddon's plots featured headstrong women and mistaken identity. Of her works, Haycroft and Kunitz have written that

Virtue always triumphs, and her heroes and villains are pure white and unredeemed black. Her work was ephemeral, but at its weakest was never contemptible. (1964, p. 69)

In spite of these failings in the eyes of her critics, scholarship on the nature of adaptive translations suggests that Braddon's works formed part of a respected tradition of adaptation of original works in Japan predating the Meiji era. Japanese lists of Meiji-era books which were adapted or translated from foreign sources into Japanese show that Braddon's entry to Japan coincided with a time of great interest in women's roles, as well as debate over reform in the theatre and reform of the country's legal codes. The adaptability of Braddon's works as practical, "cultural objects in their own right",<sup>17</sup> enabled them to serve as vehicles for the introduction of new ideas which were at the heart of the struggle of adherents of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement as well as reformist members of the government.

Those who used Braddon's works consciously applied them as blueprints for a redefinition of identity for readers and theatre audiences, as well as to participate in the reform debate. The introduction of her works as serialized adaptive translations via newspapers, or as *sokkibon* and theatre performances, shows that despite government restrictions on the press and assembly in the early 1880s, Braddon's tales continued to provide inspiration to reformists throughout the 1880s and well into the 1890s. Many adherents and sympathizers of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement, including Black and Itagaki, found outlets for their reformist ideas via *rakugo* and the stage or through editorship or ownership of newspapers. It would be difficult to establish clear causal links between the publication or staging of the adaptations of Braddon works between the 1880s and the early twentieth century and specific examples of social action. Nevertheless, aside from their entertainment value, the selectively adaptive nature of the translations suggests that they were seen by their adaptors as elements in the ongoing reform debate, enabling others to carry on the campaign, as exemplified by the publication in 1899 of Yokoyama Gennosuke's *Nihon no Kasō Shakai* [The Lower Strata of Japan]. Yokoyama's revelations about the hardships endured by factory workers contributed to the 1903 publication by the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce of *Shokkō Jijō* [Conditions of factory workers] and ultimately to an overhaul of labor and health laws.

A study of the adaptive translation of Braddon's works, therefore, affords a more nuanced understanding of Japan's literary history, its quest to define a path to modernity through cultural borrowing, and the epistemology and hermeneutics of ideas during the Meiji era. Such adaptations need not be marginalized as mere imitation or inadequate interpretations of the original texts. Rather, they should be privileged as useful tools in furthering our understanding of the social history of Meiji Japan.

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<sup>17</sup> Lawrence Venuti uses this phrase (2007).

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