The Japanese Translation of The Alpine Path: The Story of My Career

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Book cover of *The Story of My Career before "Anne of Green Gables*," Japanese translation. 2019. Cover illustration by Ave Atsushi. Kashiwa Shobo. All rights reserved.

I published a Japanese translation of *The Alpine Path: The Story of My Career* by L.M. Montgomery with the publishing house Kashiwa Shobo in June 2019. The previous translation by Masako Yamaguchi was out of print. Hanako Muraoka, renowned for her translation of the *Anne* series and other Montgomery novels, did not publish its translation for some reason, although she must have read this essay.[1] I thought it shouldn't be that Montgomery's Japanese fans who cannot read English had no way of reading her only memoir, which along with her journals are the primary way of discovering details about her life.

Anne of Green Gables has always been popular in Japan. There have been television series of animations or musical versions of the novel, and they are rerun occasionally. There were also some programs on NHK Educational TV dealing with *Anne of Green Gables*. Moreover, in 2014, *Hanako to An* [*Hanako and Anne*], a Japanese television drama series, was broadcast on NHK for six months. It describes the life of Muraoka and shows similarities between Hanako and Anne with some scenes reminiscent of the novel.

I finished translating *The Alpine Path* initially in 2010 when I was teaching an English-language class for adults assigned to read *The Alpine Path*. I didn't intend to publish my translation, but the NHK drama series led me to think about publishing it. I wanted to bring it out in 2017, which was the one-hundredth anniversary of this essay's first publication as a serial in the magazine *Everywoman's World*, but it wasn't ready for publication. It took several years to find a publisher, and in 2018, I was successful.

The first translation had a Japanese title meaning "Steep Path: Montgomery's Autobiography." Those who read this book as Montgomery's autobiography might find it somewhat incomplete, even half a life. Especially those who knew her reputation as an excellent storyteller might wonder why Montgomery wrote such an incomplete account of her early life. I was among those who wondered about this when I first read it. However, writing a complete account would go against Montgomery's grain. In her journal, she wrote that "the story of [her] career," as the title goes, is to encourage other toilers struggling to reach the goal by telling how she climbed "the Alpine path, so hard, so steep" to arrive at her destination.[2] The essay describes how Montgomery created *Anne of Green Gables*, her first book, through whose success she was catapulted into fame. I wanted to emphasize her struggle, so I tried to think of a way of translating "Alpine path" into appropriate Japanese, but in vain.

The expression “Alpine path” is familiar with many Montgomery readers because Emily of New Moon also uses it to show her struggle toward success. But this reference would not be familiar with Japanese readers because although the *Anne* series, especially *Anne of Green Gables*, is much loved in Japan, the *Emily* series is not as popular as the former. If “Alpine path” were translated literally into Japanese, most people would not understand what it means. I chose “The Story of My Career” as it is in *katakana* often used for writing loan words and foreign persons’ names and geographical places,3 adding “before ‘Anne of Green Gables’” in Japanese. Although I usually don’t like *katakana* transcription, common nowadays for movies’ or books’ titles, I deferred to the young editor’s suggestion. When I saw the cover of the book hot off the press, with the *katakana* title on it, I was relieved because it didn’t look so bad.

There is a popular column “Watashi no Rirekisho” [“My Resume”] in the daily newspaper *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* [*Japan’s Economics Newspaper*], which has been serialized since 1956, featuring the lives of celebrities, with each serial running for a month. The editor and I hoped my translation would be favourably accepted, as this column has been and continues to be.

I didn't want my rendering to be considered so-called “translatese,” sounding unnatural, but rather like a woman in her forties talking to her readers, especially young women, somewhat casually. Also, I tried to avoid weakening Montgomery's writing style by keeping her long sentences as they are, trying not to cut them into several sentences. A review in *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, appearing within a month after the publication, commented that my rendering was lively, comparing it to Anne’s chatter.

I added extensive notes, including explanations of quotations from English literature and the Bible, with which Montgomery was familiar, and other matters related to Presbyterianism, a religion I share with Montgomery. I developed a chronological table of her novels and books of poetry and non-fiction, grouping them into each genre. I also added background information on her life in the rather long appendix to satisfy the readers’ desire to know more about Montgomery, drawing mainly from Mary Henley Rubio’s biography, *Lucy Maud Montgomery: The Gift of Wings*.

At first, I intended to target Montgomery’s Japanese fans, but later I came to hope that all young Japanese women would read it. Teaching at a college, I often see that female students’ attitude toward studying or their lives lacks purpose. I hope that

Japanese girls will read my translation of *The Alpine Path* and be inspired by Montgomery's strong will and determined attitude toward life and career, realizing how earnestly and sincerely she pursued her path to achieve success.

In 1901, seven years before *Anne of Green Gables* was published, Montgomery wrote, "I never expect to be famous. I merely want to have a recognized place among good workers in my chosen profession. That, I honestly believe, is happiness, and the harder to win the sweeter and more lasting when won."4 My editor chose the first two sentences of this quotation for advertising.

I translated the book for love of Montgomery. I hope it will be successful and am reminded of what Montgomery wrote after finding her manuscript of *Anne of Green Gables* in a hatbox, where she had disposed of it after multiple rejections, sending it out to publishers once again, and rejoicing that a publisher had finally accepted it: "I wrote it for love, not money, but very often such books are the most successful."5

About the Author: Toshimi Mizutani is a part-time instructor at Gakushuin University and Gakushuin Women's College. She belonged to the Shakespeare Drama society when an undergraduate, taking part in several productions performed in English. She received an M.A. in English Literature at Gakushuin University with a thesis on Shakespeare's *All Well That Ends Well*. Completing the doctoral program in 1983, she started teaching English at Gakushuin University and several other post-secondary institutions. She also teaches at Gakushuin Sakura Academy, a lifelong learning centre, and gives lectures on *Anne of Green Gables*. Her publications include English textbooks for college students, the joint translation of *Essential Shakespeare Handbook* written by Lesley Dunton-Downer and Alan Riding, and the translation of *The Alpine Path* (2019). She is a member of Shinanomachi Church (Presbyterian) in Tokyo.

- 1 Muraoka attached a "memorandum on Lucy Montgomery" (noted November 1957), some of which seems to have been based on *The Alpine Path*, before the afterword of the 1961 paperback translation of *Kilmeny of the Orchard*.
- 2 Montgomery, *AP* 9–10.
- 3 *Katakana* is a Japanese syllabary, one component of the Japanese writing system along with *hiragana* and *kanji* (Chinese/Japanese characters). *Katakana*

characters are phonetic symbols, each representing one syllable. They are also used to transcribe foreign-language words without translating them, having them sound somewhat similar to the original words. The *katakana* characters can be seen on the right side of the book cover. The title in the caption for the image is the translation of the Japanese title. To write Japanese words using Roman characters would be too long, something like *Za sutoorii obu mai kyaria—'Akage no An' ga umarerumade*, which makes no sense. The first part of this title is expressed in *katakana*, transcribing "the story of my career" without translating into Japanese, but rather imitating the sounds. However, many Japanese readers would understand this phrase's meaning because both *sutoorii* [story] and *kyaria* [career] are loan words. The second part is written in *kanji* and *hiragana*, except *An*, which is written in *katakana* and literally means "until *Anne of Green Gables* was born."

- 4 Montgomery, *AP* 64.
- 5 Montgomery, *AP* 76.

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Montgomery, L.M. *The Alpine Path: The Story of My Career*. Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1974.