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## Vanishing Boundaries: Translation in a Multilingual World

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# VANISHING BOUNDARIES

## TRANSLATION IN A MULTILINGUAL WORLD

*Sumie Jones*

Tetsuji and I spoke English to each other while we were on vacation, something we had never done in Tokyo. Suddenly I realized that Tetsuji seemed like a different person to me, here on the South China Sea and speaking the fluent English he had mastered through a succession of foreign lovers. I had not realized how important language was to the way we had always related. Now it was clearer, as we translated our affection for each other into a language so much a part of me, and so finally remote a thing for him.

Treat 159

In our age of multimedia-ism and multilingualism, in the flood of available forms and possible interpretations, language has become more fluid and dependent on other forms of communication. The written word, particularly, is hobbled by the current market's inclination toward dialogism, visibility, and performance. This trend has come to challenge certain assumptions about translation. Traditionally, translation transformed written classics, whether religious or literary, allowing domestic readers access to them in a modern, presumably more practical if cruder language. With geographical discoveries came the age of Orientalism, which extracted noble texts out of savage cultures for the enlightenment and pleasure of Europeans who jointly invented a semiological superiority to others. In modern times, a broader educational base and an interest in foreign cultures joined capitalist incentives, popularizing the translation of contemporary texts from a culture that is neither superior, as in the case of texts deemed 'classics,' nor inferior, such as the Orientalist translations of literatures from the 'Orient.' In short, a more democratic relationship is forming between the source text and translation, or between the original author and the translator.

There is no denying that the ideology of globalization prioritizes the English

language in politics, business, and education. A number of governments seem to have instituted a policy of multilingual education that encloses, rather than liberates, speakers of non-English languages within their own immigrant circles. And yet, private individuals have steadily moved toward multilingualism and multiculturalism. The wider access to language education afforded to citizens in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, and their greater participation in various forms of experience abroad have established a market for foreign cultures, including a broadened readership for foreign literatures in translation. This market for the ‘foreign’—its culture and its literature—has continued to flourish with the evolution of the internet: transnational information and communication have globalized the market within which a specific culture and its literature are commodified and deemed appropriate for translation. In this market, the power of readership exceeds the authority of the text: it has become clear that literature must respond to the desire of readers. The translator is expected to answer to his or her readers rather than to the imagined intension of the original author. A translation thus acquires a value independent from that of the source text as it assumes a separate market from that which inspired the original. The modern custom of retranslating texts for which translations already exist bespeaks a belief in the independent value of translations as well as the loss of a faith in the absolute stability of the source text. In translations of contemporary literature, the distance between the source and its translation is particularly narrow. Communication with the original author is possible, the translator’s interpretation may be influenced by the author’s own, and, in some cases, the ‘source’ text may respond to the translator’s interpretation. In our postmodern multicultural life, boundaries are vanishing rapidly, erasing the vertical relations between the source and the target, equalizing the original creation and the translation. We translate ourselves in order to establish our identity in places that are not our own native environment. At the same time, our multilingual capacities allow us to take others’ perspectives with increasing ease. This paper, based on a notion that political and cultural crises resulting from encounters with the other affect concepts of language, examines how translation figures in our multicultural, multilingual, and multimedia age.

## **SELF AS TRANSLATION:**

### **THE CASE OF JOHN AND ‘TETSUJI’**

John Whittier Treat, in his *Great Mirrors Shattered: Homosexuality, Orientalism, and Japan*, a critically autobiographical history of the West’s encounters with Japan, is puzzled by his own behavior toward his chief lover in Japan, Tetsuji. The narrator, who will be called John here to separate him from the author, characterizes himself as domineering, insulting, and even downright violent toward Tetsuji in a way he never is to others. The author repeatedly reminds the reader that this is a “personal memoir” but the book invites a broadly political interpretation as it equates and juxtaposes the bombing of Hiroshima at the end of World War II and the AIDS shock of the 80s. This divided proposition (personal vs. historical) makes the author’s perspective ambiguous. His reviewer Timon Screech is not the only one who wonders whether there is any irony in the portrayal of John the protagonist. (Screech 761) Taken as a personal memoir,

the book is shamelessly chauvinistic toward the Japanese. Read as a fictionalized “confession of a mask,” the narrator John becomes a metonymical persona for Orientalism toward Japan, and the book itself a critical history of Western homosexuality vis à vis Japan. What matters here is that the book presents a clear classical model for the linguistic relationship between the Orientalist West and Japan, that is, the aggressive translator and the passive source text. While speaking his accented Japanese to his native lover, John is the white Orientalist in pursuit of exotic fantasy. Tetsuji, the owner of a frame shop who is by no means dependent on John emotionally or financially, is deliberately mistaken in John’s fantasy for one who prostitutes his physical beauty to the pleasure of the white patron. The name ‘Tetsuji’ is the closest one can get in Japanese to ‘Tadzio’ and the suggestive similarity seems to be intentional on the part of the author, Treat. Even if this Japanese ‘Tadzio’ is as beautiful as his namesake and comes from a culture marked inferior by the protagonist, however, his linguistic accessibility disqualifies him as the object of an obsessive gaze from Aschenbach’s American version. The relationship, thus misinterpreted, represents the classical pattern in interpreting and translating Japan. The author places the narrator John at the end of a long line of Orientalists beginning with Marco Polo, who imagined Japan as a country of gold, an object of longing. What is peculiar about the sexual dynamics of this list of Western encounters with Japan that ends with the narrator John is that the Orientalists (scholars, writers, and artists who interpreted Japan) are all male and gay. The 34-year old John is a successor to Orientalists from Arthur Waley to Roland Barthes. The story’s two strands, personal and cultural, show modern Japan as a history of the West’s objectification and victimization, Hiroshima and Nagasaki constituting the most significant point and the AIDS epidemic the last and current twist to the scheme. Like all Orientalists, John is on a self-imposed exile: Japan is imagined as an innocent and primitive island where his stay is presumably an escape from the oppressively supermodern system that is the West. In reality Treat was in Japan for a year with the support of the Japan Foundation to prepare the book in question. The historical signification of the story of John the Orientalist, at once a passionate admirer and colonialist aggressor, works as long as John and Tetsuji speak Japanese with each other, John performing his role by translating himself into Japanese.

The importance of language within John and Tetsuji’s relationship mirrors the narrator’s Orientalist proclivities as well as the precariousness of the status of an Orientalist’s self vis à vis his linguistic environment. The quote used to open this paper comes from a passage which finds the two men vacationing in Hong Kong. A switch of language compels John to revise/recreate his identity. To shift back into speaking his native tongue becomes equal to being brought back into the system that is America, a system from which he has temporarily exiled himself. Although he is in a foreign country, speaking English forces him to submit not only to the semantics of that language but also to the semiology of America as a culture. For Tetsuji, speaking in English, the language of Hong Kong and the language of his love life, frees him from the confines of the Japanese language and Japan. Here, “in the south of China,” the two are finally lovers on an equal standing: Tetsuji joins the whites’ Orientalism by speaking their language. As they

are in China, the implication is that both John, a white man, and Tetsuji, a Japanese man, represent the history of colonialist aggression so that the two, in speaking English, are equally guilty. This colonialist aggression through language is also a form of contamination: as gay men who speak English, they are implicated in potentially bringing AIDS into China. At the same time, both are equally victimized by the rhetoric of Japanese media against HIV carriers.

AIDS is what complicates John's position as the last Orientalist in his narrative. The news of the epidemic threw the Japanese public into a panic, and AIDS quickly replaced leprosy as the dreaded and unspeakable disease whose victims were to be isolated and hidden. The media pointed to foreign sources of the disease and to gay men as likely carriers of HIV: men of John's race, language, and sexual orientation became the target of general suspicion. Stories circulated about the so-called 'Turkish baths' in all cities declining the entry of any foreign customer. In the book, John the romantic admirer and conqueror of Japan is now harassed by the prejudice of the Japanese. While he fears being HIV positive, John's pain is doubly acute because he submits to Japan's semiology by speaking Japanese fluently. Japan the victim has turned into Japan the aggressor. While John is thus harassed, Treat the author is silent on the matter: instead of verbalizing his disappointment and anger with Japan, he mechanically records newspaper reports on new developments of the AIDS epidemic. His silence seems to reenact Japan's national silence on its suffering from the atomic bombing at the end of the World War II, equating John the victim with Japan the atomic victim. The author Treat, who defines Orientalism simply as "the Western study of everywhere else," concludes that AIDS "changed everywhere else." (Treat ix) Treat insinuates that it took the shock of AIDS to finally break down not only his Orientalist perspective but also the West's general conceit of its distant and superior self. And he rightly foregrounds language as a means by which the discourse surrounding the disease multiplies and spreads, knocking down established assumptions.

The history of gay Orientalism vis à vis Japan, however, is not a straight line that was disturbed only by the arrival of AIDS. Changes in the linguistic relationship between the Orientalist and Japan were already taking place earlier. Treat himself is aware of the key role languages play in a sexual and cultural relationship as he quotes Roland Barthes' letter to his lover: "[Sexuality] is in the way I flirt in the Japanese language with handsome strangers, using both my fluency and my lack of same to both attract the men in whom I am interested and to mark my difference from them. In the United States, sex for me can never be an effect of my language. There, sexuality is not a thing for which I have words." (Treat 165) John uses Japanese in the same way. His accented Japanese is a way to attract the object of his desire and, at the same time, to situate himself above the Japanese and Japan. The linguistic strategy shared by Barthes and John is already very different from the classical Arthur Waley model of longing for the distant and exotic other and seeking to comprehend the object through translation.

To speak a foreign language is to translate oneself, a process which produces an identity that is expected to be accessible for the speaker of that language. When we speak in our native tongue, we are ruled by our knowledge of its semiological context. We are vulnerable to embarrassment if we misread the subtle textures that

interweave to form the fabric of possible meaning. In contrast, when we begin to speak in a foreign language, our blissful ignorance gives us power. The world becomes simplified—all nuance in texture visible to native speakers are irrelevant to us. We are under the impression that we understand the totality of things even as we fail to comprehend un verbalized specificities and ambiguous implications. This, of course, is the source of an Orientalist's happiness. The more adept we become with a foreign language, the more complex our relationship becomes with its culture. We find it harder to construct a cohesive meta-identity because the borders between that and our native identity become obscured in a maze of subtleties and ambiguities that are gradually made clear to us.

What I call the Orientalist's happiness seems to be the impetus for translation in the most traditional sense and the base upon which concepts of translation have been constructed. Paul Auster's experience illustrates the standard pattern. As an undergraduate, he was excited by Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Verlaine without exactly understanding their writing. He says, "The foreignness was daunting to me—as though a work written in a foreign language was somehow not real—and it was only by trying to put them into English that I began to penetrate them." (Auster 271) Here is a classic case: the source text is wonderful and distant, spatially and temporally, so that the reader approaches it by turning himself into a translator. He believes that he can "penetrate" the original text only by putting it into his native tongue. A professional literary translator would follow this same pattern, except that the translator would share her/his comprehension with his domestic readership. Distance is the key. Baudelaire and company were as exotic and superior to Auster as Asian poetry would have been to Arthur Waley. The translator's proficiency, not anywhere near a native's, was put to maximum use to convey a sense of exotic superiority to the domestic audience. The relationship between the original and a translation is akin to that of a classic and its pastiche: the latter's quality is judged by its proximity to the former and, no matter how great it is, it can never be equal to the source text. In addition, the source text is a classic, i.e., written, so that the translator signifies his comprehension through writing in his own language of his contemporary domestic audience. In short, writtenness is the sign of cultural, temporal, and spatial distance that dictates the vertical relationship between, say, *The Tale of Genji* and Waley or between Baudelaire and Auster.

Treat's experience indicates that such a classic hierarchy has collapsed when 'written-ness' is not involved. As they converse face to face with each other, their communication is not mediated by writing, erasing the hierarchy between the source and target. John's position is further compromised by his ability to speak the other's language. John's fluency disqualifies Japanese as the language of his romantic longing and he, rather than translating Tetsuji into English in order to comprehend him, translates himself into the other's language in order to be understood by him. John is a non-native translator into Japanese of English, a language that is too familiar to be an object of desire. The same goes for Tetsuji, for whom English is not particularly foreign. In short, the equality John finds between them while they both speak English in Hong Kong derives from the contemporaneity of the two languages and the shifting balance of power that

takes place between them.

## ACTING OUT A SPOKEN ORIGINAL:

### THE CASE OF OGYŪ SORAI AND CONFUCIUS

Contemporaneity and spokenness are the required elements for perfect comprehension of a foreign text, argued Ogyū Sorai<sup>1</sup> (1666–1728), Confucian hermeneutist and Japan's first translation theorist. Instead of attempting to 'penetrate' the original text by putting it into one's own mother tongue, as in the case of Auster and the Orientalists, Sorai advises us to throw ourselves into the language of the original—rather like the Berlitz School's "total immersion" method. His conceptualization came from his reaction to the Japanese tradition of reading Chinese texts. Classical Chinese [*kanbun*] in Japan was the equivalent of Latin in Europe during the Middle Ages. Not only were official records made in Chinese but the poetry and prose genres that flourished among the educated classes were also written in that language. A convenient method called *wakun* ['Japanese recitation'] was developed for reading classical Chinese—adding syntactical and phonetic notations as well as Japanese morphological accessories to one side of each line, while numbers on the other side indicated Japanese word order. From ancient times, Chinese classics were read this way, aloud or in silence, as though they had been written in Japanese. Being able to pronounce Chinese words and to recite a text according to the *wakun* system meant perfect comprehension.

Sorai raised objections to this comfortable method, which had numbed any sense of alterity in the Japanese reading of the foreign language. By naming this method "translation," Sorai defamiliarized the Chinese language as well as the original Confucian texts. He called for a self-conscious approach to the texts, recalling the fact that the reader, like Sorai himself, was in a great geographical and temporal distance from the original Confucian utterances. As far as he was concerned, all the exegeses that had preceded him, whether in Chinese or Japanese, were merely interpretations expressed through a degenerate "branched out" Chinese and similarly contaminated Japanese. His ideal was to wash himself of all Chinese and Japanese interpretations as well as early modern intertextuality and plunge into the purity of Zhou Dynasty Chinese. In order to approach this ideal state, the reader must imagine the original Confucian utterances by both speaking Chinese and composing her/his own poetry in Chinese. The point is to achieve a status equal to the original Chinese speaker and to carry on a dialogue in a spoken style, which Sorai believed Confucius employed:

Our philology of the classics requires us not merely to read but also to produce words out of our own fingers so that the classical text will seem to be coming out of our own mouths. Only then can we meet with the ancients in the same room and exchange greetings with them without the formality of introduction. We will no longer need to wander about outside the gate fearfully watching the pleasure of the guards. How delightful it will be!

"Letters to Kutsu Keizan," quoted in Jones 230

It is not merely a linguistic purism he promotes here. As far as he is concerned, when Confucius' words were taken down by his disciples for posterity, the problem

of contamination had already begun. The true source needed to be restored by going to the physical utterance before writing, that is, before Confucian studies. He went so far as to compel his students to speak in ‘Chinese pronunciation’ in their daily lives in order to help them approach the text at its origin. Obviously this was not a practicable method as true pronunciations of words in Confucius’ time were no longer traceable. In the situation imagined by Sorai, not only are Confucius, the source text, and Sorai, the reader/translator, equal to each other, but they also engage in a dialogue, suggesting that the reader/translator can respond to the source text and affect its content. This relationship between the ideal reader/translator and the urtext was not a possible reality in Confucian studies or in translation in its traditional sense. It can be a reality in a postmodern relationship between text and reading/translating. The case of John and Tetsuji, because of their contemporaneity and direct, spoken communication, resembles Sorai’s dream.

## FOREIGNNESS WITHIN:

### THE CASE OF YOSHIYUKI NAKAI AND JACK KEROUAC

Sorai’s complaint about the “branched out” nature of the Japanese language of his time actually applies to Japanese during nearly any period. Japanese had never been any ‘purer’ in the past than it was at Sorai’s time: the influence of Chinese and Korean, for example, had for centuries shaped the Japanese language. Latin, Spanish, and Portuguese, brought in by Christian missionaries during the 16th century, further contributed to the vocabulary. Under the shogunate’s isolation policies held in place until the 19th century, Dutch traders introduced their language as they exclusively engaged with Japanese-speakers in the single port approved for their activities. During the later 19th century, when Japan’s ports were more broadly opened to Western countries, Japanese efforts to ‘catch up’ with the world sought a model in Europe, resulting in loanwords from various European languages. The need to catch up was so intense that certain members of the newly-democratic government even considered abandoning the Japanese language in favor of English. Each encounter brought on, along with major economic and political stress, a crisis of identity and of language. The history of Japan could be described as a history of linguistic crises, each of which inspired its own translations and reinterpretations in response to the drastic changes taking place.

The U.S. was the first to succeed in compelling Japan to open its doors to foreign trade, and American models did influence the government and economy of the time. Japan’s first widespread encounter with America, however, did not occur until the end of World War II, when Americans reentered with an identifiably American culture. Hemmingway and Faulkner attracted Japanese attention along with Hollywood movies and ‘made in America’ commodities. However, the Japanese did not take to the ‘hippie’ culture of the 1960s and were slow in recognizing Beat literature. When Yoshiyuki Nakai translated Jack Kerouac’s *The Dharma Bums* (1958) into Japanese during the period 1977–79, the star Beats were not yet familiar figures to the mass readership in Japan. However, for the educated and ambitious, America had replaced Europe as the place for superior education and new experience. Thanks to Fulbright fellowships and other sources of aid, the number of people educated in the US was quite large by the late 1970s



with the result that Beat poetry had an audience among the educated. Kerouac's representation of American culture would have evoked a nostalgia for what they had experienced during their studies in the United States. Nakai's challenge was to convey to the general Japanese public the dissenting spirit of American culture that was not adequately represented by Hollywood movies or Ford automobiles and, at the same time, to bring home, convincingly in the Japanese language, the essence of America that was familiar to the former Fulbrighters and others with first-hand experience of American life. As the translator points out, there is something traditionally American about the Beats' beliefs and lifestyle—based on the values of youth, innocence, and love of nature that recalls Henry David Thoreau with whom they identified. (Nakai 423–424) The novel's Christian implications also make it traditionally American. Japhy Ryder, the Gary Snyder character, is strikingly similar to Jesus: followed by disciples such as Ray Smith (Kerouac) and Alvah Goldbook (Allen Ginsburg), he embraces other followers who would come to the group's frequent parties. Furthering a Western Christian trope, Ray the narrator plays the role of Mark, recording the sayings and actions of the great prophet.

The novel's language, in contrast, is neither singularly American nor purely Christian. The Beats labeled themselves as descendents and disciples of Buddhism and other Eastern religions. The Beats' world is not unlike the Confucian room dreamt by Sorai in the sense that it sought the origin, a non-conformist and even rebellious one, of the primordial Christian faith and the American tradition before or outside institutionalization. The fact that they embraced the East as their ancestral origin does not contradict their affiliation with Christianity and America since, for them, all resembled one another at the original roots. The tricky factor for Nakai the translator is that the East in the Beat's souls was a personal and idiosyncratic translation of Eastern culture by Japhy, or Snyder. Putting something that purports to be a translation of Eastern culture back into an Eastern language without losing the text's Americanness or without making it appear to be familiarly Japanese is not an easy task. It is a game of defamiliarizing for the Japanese something that awkwardly desires to be genuinely familiar to them. The novel's title, *The Dharma Bums*, is already problematic. For the Japanese, *dharma*, the Sanskrit word for Buddha's teachings, is associated more readily with the name Dharma, the Indian monk known as the founder of Zen Buddhism in Japan. In modern social life and popular culture, the name more widely refers to bright red and limbless dolls representing the monk Dharma, which, based on the belief that they bring good luck, are prominently displayed during election campaigns. The mundane image of dharma dolls are in conflict with Kerouac's representation of the Beatniks as 'bums' seriously dedicated to Buddha. Nakai's translation is thus entitled, *The Tale of Japhy Ryder*, emphasizing the element of religious folk tale in the original novel. To further identify the topic of the book for the benefit of a broad range of readers, he adds a subtitle, "The Beatniks of Youth." In the novel, Japhy occasionally utters so-called haiku, brief poems in English, which by no means follow the conventions of the Japanese genre. Nakai translates them into a 5-7-5 syllable haiku format without injecting 'season words' or following other requirements of the genre. It is hard to determine which is the original and which

is a translation as these so-called 'haiku' are already English 'translations' of an imagined original while the Japanese versions act as loose translations back into Japanese, announcing something of a new genre of translated poetry. For the Japanese reader each 'haiku' put in Japanese this way is a haiku-inspired American expression rather than a piece of poetry in either language.

While the original readers in English would have enjoyed identifying the characters with the living Beatniks they knew, the intention of author Kerouac, or Snyder's first disciple, seems to have been to convey the teachings of Gary Snyder, the modern American prophet, as well as to portray the group life of his poet followers. In Ray's conversations with Japhy, Snyder's knowledge of Eastern religions, customs, and literature are copiously described as though to enlighten and convert the readers. The book teaches the poetry of Han Shan, Snyder's ideal source text, citing lines of Han Shan in Japhy's voice. Nakai puts these translations neither back into the original classical Chinese nor its traditional *wakun*-style reading, but into folk songs in Japanese thus more in keeping with Japhy's colloquial English and with the guitar accompaniment depicted as part of his recitation. Nakai occasionally plays with existing popular forms: some of the short verses uttered by Japhy are put into a rhythm resembling that of *dodoitsu* and other comic songs. The character Ray Smith, the seeker of enlightenment, has a habit of citing fragmentary or fake Buddhist sutras, which are translated by Nakai into lines that sound generally religious and rhythmical to the Japanese ear. Here again, those religious lines are English translations of imagined or partially learned Eastern originals, which are transferred by Nakai back into Japanese as a kind of Asianized American expression. Such a translation is possible and effective only when the two (or more) languages and cultures are merged in exchanges dissolving borders.

## TRANSLATION AS AN ORIGINAL:

### THE CASE OF JAY RUBIN AND HARUKI MURAKAMI

During the mid-twentieth century, the protest culture of the Beatles and the Beats opened the dominant American cultural, racial, and religious paradigms to other cultures in the name of peace and humanity. The afterglow may not be unrelated to the openness that became visible in the economic aspect of world culture during the 1970s and 1980s. That was a period when political relations among nations became ambiguous: the Cold War grew increasingly less well defined in terms of ideological differences, and ideas of East/West became harder to define as international relations between ideological enemies seemed to give way to trade and global markets. Communism and democracy no longer stood as the great pillars around which the rest of the world hung in the periphery, indistinguishable from one another.

This rapid change in international relations among nation-states has a parallel in language. In recent decades we have become much less bound to our mother tongues. Many of us have been trained in foreign languages through study-abroad programs which have provided access to living spoken languages. Many of us reside in a foreign country and write in its language, making us bilingual or trilingual. We are far more adept at reading and conversing in a foreign language

than earlier translators who often worked with books and dictionaries, or native speakers who might have been inadequately prepared in the target language. If these changes result in an original author and translator who are equally fluent in each other's language, what will happen to the presumably vertical relationship between the original and the target language or between the original author and the translator? How, indeed, are we to define the function and value of translation?

Haruki Murakami (1949–) and his translator Jay Rubin are models for considering the use of translation and the role of the translator in an age of multilingualism. Murakami is not only fluent in English but is also a prolific translator in his own right, with Japanese translations of F. Scott Fitzgerald, J. D. Salinger, Raymond Carver, Ursula K. Le Guin, and others to his credit. He says that, as a novelist, he chooses to translate works by authors from whom he can learn the most about writing (Murakami and Shibata 40), and the influence of Fitzgerald and Carver on his writing, for example, is recognizable. He seems to write in Japanese in response to those American writers so that his imagined readership is American or at least Anglophone. To make his works accessible, many of his characters go by nicknames taken from English words or names. He keeps to a minimum place names and other references to actual Japan and avoids describing specific landscapes that belong to certain recognizable parts of the country. A typical Murakami hero has no family, no job, and is generally isolated from society, which allows him to be imagined in any cultural context. The hero's gestures and actions, like those of the other characters who populate Murakami's texts, are free from particularly Japanese semiology making his works easy to read for readers outside Japan.

Like the 'everyman everywhere' sensibility of his characters, Murakami's writing style encourages translation into foreign languages. Generally free of any complex linguistic play or specifically Japanese idioms, his texts play on words in a multilingual and readily understandable manner for the benefit of non-Japanese. In short, Murakami, more self-consciously than other Japanese authors, fabricates a Japanese language that is not the real language used by living Japanese. It is not necessarily created with translation in mind, but the language is a product of his own personal linguistic system that includes American English and American literature. Those Japanese with first-hand knowledge of English and probably jazz, certainly comprise a body of readers who share the base for Murakami's meta-Japanese, but his works are meant for, and appeal to, a much broader readership as indirect references to American culture and use of English idioms are either made unnecessary for uninformed readers or accompanied by subtle explanations. In his *IQ84*, a publisher character is made to say that the first book by a 17-year-old prizewinner is "selling like hot cakes," using a word-to-word translation of the English idiom. For the benefit of Japanese readers, the expression is explained by the addition of "that go as soon as you make them." (Murakami 2009, 501) The novel's title *IQ84* plays on the Japanese pronunciation of the number '9' as 'kyū' and recalls, even in the mind of a non-Japanese reader, the title of George Orwell's book, *1984*, but for the uninformed, the amusing confusion of number and letter in the title alone is enough for the appreciation of the work. One of the sections in his novel *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* is called "Counting Sheep."

(Murakami 1995, vol. 3, 276) In English, the expression refers to a struggle to fall asleep, which is understood by the Japanese, if at all, as a cute foreign image for children. Both the metaphorical function of the expression and the effect of the alliteration of ‘sheep’ and ‘sleep’ are lost in Japanese but it makes up an attractive title for the section, which describes the efforts of a research team ordered to look into resources for clothing Japanese soldiers in a hypothetical battle with warmly-dressed Russians in Manchuria. The section’s title is explained when the author points out that it is a joke: “the joke making the rounds of the team then being that they were too busy counting sheep to sleep.” (ibid 282; Rubin’s translation 499)

According to Rubin, Murakami, in spite of his knowledge of English and his skills as a translator in his own right, never comments on the translation of his work beyond pointing out obvious errors. Murakami is a postmodern novelist who believes that a work becomes an independent text once it leaves the pen of the author. (Murakami and Shibata 29) Because his works become independent from their creator, Murakami enjoys discovering translations of his works as new and independent works, allowing him to rediscover his own books through translations of them. (Murakami in Haga 112–114) He reserves the right to make changes in his already published books and encourages retranslations of his works. (Rubin 274–5) For him, there is no stable ‘original’ that the translator is obliged to follow faithfully. This means that he is open to suggestion and influence from the translator.

Rubin, the translator, also believes in the fluidity of the original work as a text for the translator’s own interpretation. His first literary translation published in 1977 was Natsume Sōseki’s *Sanshirō* (1908). The liberty Rubin took in supplying extra-textual information in his translation to help readers’ comprehension shocked Japanese-speaking readers. His recent (2010) translations of short stories by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892–1927) prove that he has not changed his stance. The familiar opening sentence in Akutagawa’s “The Spider Thread” (1918), “On a certain day in Nirvana, Buddha...” is prefaced by Rubin with “And now, children, let me tell you a story about Lord Buddha Shakyamuni...” (Akutagawa, translated by Rubin 38) Rubin takes greater liberties with Murakami’s writings. His 2000 translation of Murakami’s *Norwegian Wood* (1987) is accused of an “expansive use of such words as *hell*, *shit*, *asshole*, *jerk*, and *blow job* for more innocuous-sounding Japanese terms,” giving the translation “a far racier and slangier tone overall than that of the original.” (Iwamoto 322) Generally, Rubin’s translation added a jazzy and trendy tone to the novel. Going back to Murakami’s original after reading the translation, one might have felt something got lost in the original. Because of the flexibility and individuality of both, this particular pair have an extraordinary relationship in working with something close to a developing novel. On the formation of versions of Murakami’s *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, Rubin says:

There are many versions of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*. The serialized version of Book One; the published hardback editions of Books One, Two, and Three; my unpublished complete translation of that edition (with likely inconsistencies since I may have missed something in revising the version based on the serialized chapters); the American version; the British version

from Harvill; and finally the paperback [*bunkobon*] version in Japanese, which incorporates some—but not all—of the cuts Murakami recommended for the American translation and possibly others he decided upon afterwards.

Rubin 2002, 276

As far as this lengthy novel is concerned, Murakami and Rubin, close friends, worked in parallel with each other in the process of original writing and translating. Although neither claims to have directly contributed to the other's writing, given that they exchanged manuscripts piece by piece, some indirect influence is expected both on the translation and on the original.

Murakami's production is in keeping with our contemporary mass culture characterized by copying, repetition, and rereading. When multiple versions of an original work coexist and are not closed to the possibilities of further changes, no definitive authority can be assigned to the original version of the work. The translator is therefore given license to be original and flexible, opening up the possibility of multiple translations. This factor probably attracts to Murakami talented English translators such as Jay Rubin and Alfred Birnbaum, each of whom has invented a contemporary and youthful Murakami language in English. Thanks to them, Murakami's books sell in the millions worldwide. Translations are now artifacts with a value of their own and they stand on the same level with the source text: the comparative merit between Rubin and Birnbaum can constitute a critical argument similar to debates about two great literary authors, and the preference between the original author's works and their English translations can be an issue for bilingual readers. The relationship between Murakami and Rubin seems to point not only to the semiology of our postmodern media-oriented world but also to certain basic issues of translation. It challenges the traditional dichotomies between the original and the translation as well as between the source culture and the receiving culture. The relationship illustrates not only the independent value of each text or language but the workings of the interrelated and mutually affective nature of translation.

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**ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, Japanese names are transcribed in roman letters but follow the traditional Japanese order of placing the family name first. Ogyū Sorai, however, is called by the given-name Sorai according to the traditional appellation of scholars and artists of pre-modern and early-modern times. The names Yoshiyuki Nakai and Haruki Murakami place the family name last as they are known by these names through their works in Western languages.

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