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On Horses and Carts: Further Thoughts on Translation

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Abstract

This essay elaborates on (and takes further) some of the issues raised in the *Prolegomenon on Translation* (published in these pages last summer): that whereas English is an agent-centred language, Japanese blurs agency, that where English is deductive, Japanese is inductive, that while English is outward looking, Japanese looks inwards. The essay considers some of the consequences of these characteristics when we need to translate from Japanese into English, and the problems that need to be solved when we try to do so. It offers a model example of how these consequences may be faced and the problems solved. The essay combines this account with a review of a recent Symposium on the translation of literary works and thus broadens its scope to take in wider and more general ideas about translation, its uses and its importance. No new conclusions are reached, but an attempt is made to present an overview of the reasons why the act of translation raises questions of principle that may be irresolvable while yet offering opportunities for cultural cross-communication that are ultimately of benefit rather than harm.

Keywords: *translation, transliteration, agency*

Introduction

This paper runs in double-harness: it yokes together material from

a talk that I gave to a Group of Sapporo citizens on November the 5th, 1999, and a review of a Symposium on Translation held at Hokkaido University the following day. During my talk I went over part of the ground covered in my last essay on this topic, but expanded my remarks to take in some of Yoshihiko Ikegami's observations about certain basic differences in the behaviour of Japanese and English. Both my essay and my talk focused primarily upon the problems we encounter when we attempt to turn ideas expressed comfortably in Japanese into a form of English that is comprehensible to native speakers of that language. As I explained in my previous essay, most of my work as an editor has dealt with texts of an academic kind, where I have tried to stick faithfully to the matter of the original text while seeking clarity in the target language (English). The speakers at the Symposium, on the other hand, were largely concerned with the translation of literary texts, not only into English from a variety of other languages, but also from English into Japanese, where, in all instances, greater weight is giving to the creation of a new literary work than to an exact or painstakingly faithful reproduction of the details of the original text (should that ever, or even, be possible).

I propose in this essay, first, to offer a commentary on the Symposium, and, second, to look at material taken from my talk to the citizens, material that is supplementary to that which I made use of in my earlier essay. This is the team: it hauls a small cart loaded with suggestions for rewriting a text that had originally been transliterated from Japanese, along with an awkwardly packaged set of conclusions which threatens to fall off the back of the cart and scatter its contents all over the road.

1 "Translation and Inter-Cultural Communication", a Symposium held at the Conference Hall, Hokkaido University, on the 6th of November, 1999: a Review

The Symposium was organised by The Institute of Language and Culture Studies, Hokkaido University, and was chaired by Professor Hisae Hashimoto. There were four speakers, two Japanese, two from Britain. The speakers were welcomed by the Dean of the Institute, and the Deputy Director of The British Council, Tokyo, Mr Brian Austin, who reminded the audience of Robert Frost's well-known words "Poetry is what is lost in translation", a remark which turned out to be a good deal more controversial than he can have anticipated. But he was in no doubt that we do desperately need knowledge of other cultures, and that the best way we can acquire this knowledge, should we be unable to speak or read the languages of those cultures, is by turning to their works of literature, in translation.

The keynote speaker was Professor Susan Bassnett, a pro-Vice Chancellor of Warwick University and Head of the Warwick Centre for British and Comparative Cultural Studies. She began by taking issue with Ortega y Gasset's contention that no translation can in itself be a genuine work of literature since a translator's duty (so said Ortega y Gassett) is to reproduce what is foreign in the original; Professor Bassnett, on the contrary, believes that a translator has to produce a text that is unproblematic: that is, in the first place and as far as possible, reader-friendly.

As an editor of scientific texts translated by their Japanese writers into English, I, too, have to help the writers of those texts to achieve just such a goal, while remaining faithful to the facts, figures, descriptions and opinions which constitute the original text —— but this is

usually not so difficult since there will be nothing foreign about the matter of the texts: the material is of a scientific rather than of a literary or cultural kind and will not be foreign to members of the world's scientific community. Translations of literary works, on the other hand, also make claims — which Professor Bassnett made for them — to stand alone as a works of literature in their own right.

It is here that the two kinds of translation (one academic, the other literary) most obviously part company and set for themselves rather different goals. Even so, the aims that they set themselves are commensurate: fidelity (up to a point, as we shall see, if the text is literary), and readability (above all).

In his Preface to the new (1999) *Oxford Book of English Verse*, Christopher Ricks states that "The twentieth century, thanks in part to the passion of Ezra Pound, has restored the truth that a translation of a poem can be as great a poem as any other. Much of the supreme poetry in our language has always been translation, repaying with generous interest a debt to other languages, other societies and worlds" (p. xxxv). Although Professor Bassnett did not quote these words (she may not yet have had the opportunity to see them), she would I am sure, endorse them warmly.

If I had a question, though, it would be: are we then reading Virgil and Horace or Dryden and Milton, Ovid and Dante or Hughes and Heaney? Professor Bassnett would not have been bothered by this, however, nor would Dryden, Milton and the rest, I imagine. She views translation as a means of acculturation. She favours the notion of translation as a metaphor for cultural exchange, for the space in between cultures, what she called a "liminal space"— a space where the two cultures are able to meet on common ground, where the thoughts and experiences of the original poet are entered into by the

translator who will nonetheless view them, inescapably, from his own cultural perspective and personal experience.

Although neither of the languages in the exchange should be thought of as culturally superior to the other (or to *any* other), and although the number of people who daily use two languages is increasing continually (leaving no room for the view that one language is inherently better than another), nevertheless, many of us (especially if we are native speakers of English, alas) are still only capable of using one language with comfort or skill, and our knowledge of other cultures will only come to us through the translator's art, which, while persuading us that we are reading a text written originally in our own language, will nonetheless make us more aware of "cultural and linguistic difference". All this will help "to make more sense of the world we inhabit, will serve as a bridge across both time and space, and will ensure the continuity" of cultural traditions.

At the same time, a translation may help to preserve the trace of a text should the original language (ancient Greek or Latin, for instance) have fallen into disuse. Walter Benjamin believed that a translation helped to ensure the "afterlife of a text", a notion which Professor Bassnett thought "has been seized on as essentially enabling by contemporary translators". To show how this might be achieved, she looked at the work of three present-day translators: Judith Balmer, who translates from ancient Greek, Peter Stambler, who translates Chinese poetry from the Tang Dynasty, and Ted Hughes, who published, not long before he died, his translations from Ovid.

Judith Balmer has to deal with a dead language whose stylistic features cannot be rendered in modern English, and when the writers whose work she translates were women they may have had to rely on untranslatable word-play to subvert the male-dominated view of the

world (should this be what they are presumed to have been up to). At the same time, Dr. Balmer has had, while offering a text that a contemporary woman can understand, and perhaps identify with, to articulate, through detailed scholarly notes, a rhetoric that may be ultimately inaccessible, in the hope nonetheless that the reader will be able to "engage" with the text and with the cultural contexts in which the texts were originally read and as they may have subsequently been read in translation over the succeeding ages.

Such confidence in one's interpretative powers strikes me, at least, as wonderful, since readers frequently misunderstand the writings of their own contemporaries, living at the same time and in the same culture (as I have learned to my cost), although such a view does presuppose that writers know what they mean and know what they mean to say, which some post-modern critics (if they are reader-biased) do not these days allow.

Peter Stambler has translated the work of the Chinese poet Han Shan, but calls his poems *encounters* rather than translations (much as Robert Lowell, not mentioned on this occasion, called his translations *imitations*). In one poem, where the Chinese poet speaks of sorrow, Stambler turns sorrow into a cat, "curled, purring at my wife's place", that "still brushes between my legs"—— which are lovely images, certainly. Professor Bassnett insisted that these are translations, because without the Chinese poem they could not have been written. Stambler' s version is an example of what she calls the liminal, the in-between space, where two poets can meet. My query would be: if it should turn out that personification is not a rhetorical habit common in Chinese, ancient or modern (I have no idea), might not this be a falsification of the Chinese poet's way of thinking, of looking at the world? Yoshihiko Ikegami quotes the Japanese writer Soseki Natsume, who claimed that

he was nauseated by the habit[1].

Professor Bassnett chose Ted Hughes' verses from Ovid as her third example of a successful recent translation, versions of the original in which Hughes could talk about his own time and his own concerns. When Hughes speaks of "mass electrocution", for example, he would not have been deceiving his readers into supposing that this was the image which Ovid had employed, but that he might have done had he been living today. Here, it seems, one poet is making use of another for his own purposes, and can we be sure that Ovid would have approved? Yet if he had *dis*approved, would that have mattered?

In the text of her paper (but shorn from her talk), Professor Bassnett cited Fitzgerald's *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* as an example of a thoroughly inaccurate translation which had nonetheless become a classic in its own right, and mentioned the importance of translations into Scots and Irish as a means of helping Scots and Irish readers to assess their own sense of themselves and their history. She ended by welcoming the plurality of experience which translation offers readers, especially English speakers who are in danger of becoming monolingual (and who are sadly proud of it).

At one point, Professor Bassnett, in a withering impromptu aside, suddenly dismissed as stupid Frost's remark that poetry is what is lost in translation. I quaked in my boots, since I have always thought that Frost was speaking no more than the obvious truth. I could not help feeling that she was perhaps anxious to have her cake (that nothing essentially is lost) and eat it, too (that translations of poems are poems in their own right). There seemed something paradoxical about this. If, as all her examples showed, languages with their own grammatical idiosyncracies embody their own histories of experience and their own unique ways of perceiving (factors that may be opaque to speakers of

a different language who are members of a different culture), and if these have to be rendered transparent for the translation to be understood in the "target language", no translation, however magnificent in its own right, can ever successfully, or unequivocally, reproduce in one language what has been said in a different one. I put this to her as a question after her talk, and she did not, in principle, disagree.

Both Professor Nobukatsu Takahashi, who spoke next, and Professor Noriyuki Yanada, who spoke after the tea break, gave accounts of the practice of translation which did, I felt, rather support the point that I have just attempted to make. Professor Takahashi is one of Japan's leading folklorists, and his theme was the manner in which folk tales *migrate* when they move from one culture and one language into another. They change their shape to fit the manners, mores, traditions and cultural references of the new language. And, as Professor Takahashi insisted, the changes which these factors force upon the translator "bring into relief the fundamental aspects of translation".

Since the audience for folk tales will, typically, be conservative, the foreign culture of the migrating tale will inevitably have to be adapted to fit the expectations which the home culture will have of what they assume the nature of a folk tale to be. For instance, not only do Japanese and English belong to different language groups, even references to something as universal and omnipresent as the sea will be understood differently thanks to differences in our local experience of it, and in our ways of speaking about it.

When, once at the beginning and once at the end of the nineteenth century, two English translations (the second by the grandfather of the Mitford Sisters) were made of the Japanese story *The Peach Boy*, the story was given a European ending: this involved quite substantial changes. A happy marriage is arranged for the boy (an example of

what Professor Takahashi called the Perseus/Andromache syndrome), which is not part of the Japanese version, let alone the vision.

Conversely, when the English story *The Pedlar of Swaffham* was translated into Japanese, similar alterations were made to render it familiar, and comfortable, to the Japanese readers. The pedlar was transformed into a charcoal burner (a popular Japanese type of the man who is poor but honest), London Bridge becomes a bridge in the mountains with a stall at one end that sells **tofu**, while the tree under which the treasure is buried is no longer that quintessential English tree, the oak, but the more suitable Japanese tree, a cedar, like those that weather-fend a Shinto Shrine. In the English story, the pedlar, in gratitude, builds a church; since this detail is omitted from the Japanese version as uncharacteristic, the moral as well as the setting of the story is changed.

When concepts which are culturally specific are translated directly, they are usually not understood, just as no one could comprehend the significance of the term 'individual'(**kojin**) when it was introduced into the Japanese vocabulary during the Meiji Restoration: they could not do so because everybody belonged to a group and thought as the group thought. So, when a tale migrated, it had to adapt itself to the customs of the country into which it was to settle.

I could not help wondering but did not ask: if everything that is specifically foreign is removed from the story, how much of the foreign culture shall be getting, and would not this knock out one of the planks upon which Professor Bassnett's claims rest? I suppose that it could be argued that there is bound to be a difference between translating a folk tale for a naive readership and translating a work that is part of a sophisticated literary canon, a novel by D. H. Lawrence, say. Yet Professor Yanada's talk seemed to call that into question, too.

When the first translation into Japanese of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was published in 1950, it was prosecuted as obscene, and both publisher and translator were found guilty of an offence against the state. In 1957, the Supreme Court upheld the obscenity verdict, while nonetheless agreeing that the book was a work of art. The judge argued that not everyone might be able to recognise the novel's artistic merits, and that it might have a bad effect on juveniles, who, as a result of reading it, might not be able to control themselves. Although the judge's decision became the centre of debate and a source of conflict, and the language in which it is couched is now unreadable, the verdict remains the standard definition of obscenity[2].

Yet when, four years ago, the original translator's son published a new, uncensored translation, no action was taken to ban it, which, said Professor Yanada, is an example of double standards and typical of Japanese attitudes. Professor Yanada's main concern, however, was with the difficulties faced by the translator in attempting to turn Mellors' Derbyshire dialect into anything comparable in Japanese. Apart from such howlers as turning a 'snowdrop' into 'a flake of snow' and a 'John Thomas' into 'Tom Jones', he rendered Mellors' colloquial speech in standard Japanese, and made no distinction between the language Mellors uses while a soldier and the dialect which he employs as a gamekeeper speaking to Constance and that he intends as a barrier against his class 'superiors'. Since there is no class language in Japan (although hundreds of honorifics to mark status), a local dialect, such as that of the Tohoku region (**tohoku ben**), would have been suitable, but since the translator had no knowledge of the relationship between language and class, he was quite unable to convey the vital nature of the cultural environment in which Connie and Mellors moved and associated.

Nor were the taboo words which the first translator needed in the dictionaries of his time (although they are now, since common in films), and it was extremely hard for him to decide from which level of Japanese culture to take them. Lawrence himself had used them to restore respect for the human body that had been demonised by the western, christian tradition, with its emphasis on intelligence and mind as opposed to the passional nature of the body. Since the translator took his terms from both medical and children's registers — for 'cunt' he used the vague word 'container'— his readers were simply confused. Fourteen more translations have subsequently been published, but since the evils of mind-body dualism, which was Lawrence's main target, are not an issue nor a problem in Japanese culture, the novel's popularity rests on its appeal as a sexually explicit love story. What are we to make of this misunderstanding?

During the Edo Era, sexual activity was not a taboo topic. It was a recreation and a pleasure, and it was hard for Japanese readers to comprehend what was meant by the ego, the self, the place of the 'I', either in everyday life, or in such a story. The old attitudes linger on (if often hidden), and translations of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* can therefore still raise questions about the ways in which one culture views another.

The final contributor, Dr Anne Stevenson, also of Warwick University and a classicist, spoke about the translating into English of Latin texts, in particular Vergil's *Aeneid*, although first of all she had to explain why the *Aeneid* was and still is so important, why it has needed to be translated, and retranslated. She reminded us that although it is the nature of languages to evolve while individual works of literature stand still (are "time-bound"), a number of languages — not only Latin and Greek, but also Sanskrit, Manadarin Chinese and Arabic —"have

been released from the constraints of time", have become, in fact, classical languages. In the case of Latin, this transformation happened "some time between the third and fourth centuries", although when Vergil and Cicero wrote, they were not composing classical Latin: they were simply writing the Latin of their own time, and the Latin language went on evolving after their deaths. By the 4th Century, however, St Jerome had taken Ciceronian prose as the standard by which Latin prose was to be judged, and as it was to remain, while, upon the establishment of the Christian Church, the *Aeneid* became, for a number of interlocking political and religious reasons, "the central defining myth of Europe", to be reinterpreted by each generation right up to our own, and so took its place as the standard model of classical Latin verse[3].

When we turn Vergil into English, however, there is no fixed standard, classical model of the English language into which his poem can be translated, and so it needs to be retranslated, which also means reinterpreted, for each generation[4]. Although Ezra Pound observed that translations require fidelity to a writer's meaning and atmosphere as well as the transfer into the "real speech" of the target language (and no one would in principle disgree), yet when it comes to classical texts, the original meaning "may be irrecoverable; it may also be irrelevant". Canonical works become "dehistoricised", and must be "interpreted anew for each generation". For instance, in both the *Aeneid* and the *Eclogues* Vergil celebrates the birth of the nephew of Augustus who was nominated as his heir, but the young man's unfortunate early death was forgotten by mediaeval christian Europe, which interpreted these passages "as a prophecy of the birth of Christ, a misreading of incalculably great effect".

One result of this misinterpretation was Dante's choice of Vergil as

his guide to lead him through Hell and Purgatory, since for Dante, Vergil was "the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit", one who carried the light behind him to show others the way. Yet, since an antiquarian reading of classical poetry is "deadening", it was not wrong of Dante to use Vergil in this way, for Dante, not being a Roman, had quite different reasons from Vergil's contemporaries for being interested in Vergil, whose fellow Romans were searching in his poem for their own cultural identity. Vergil's poem lives on as a metaphor. For instance, it offered the English Augustans of the eighteenth century stylistic grounds for viewing the development of their own verse form — the heroic couplet — as a similarly classical metrical mode, and helped to validate their own belief in themselves as *neo*-Augustans.

The *Aeneid* has been frequently translated, and has been read in translation for a number of reasons. One of these is that people with no (or small) Latin (such as intelligent women down the ages and Shakespeare along with them) have been anxious to read it, and translations have therefore been required, while the translators have themselves wished to translate the old texts for their own, equally varied, reasons: to imitate "the grand style", to enjoy its "courtly" atmosphere, to revel in its physical details, to offer it as a model of "decorum"— all very different and often contradictory aims.

I might have asked: Since Dante is not actually translating Vergil, there cannot be much objection to his using Vergil as he chooses: but when it comes to translations which offer their own glosses or historicised reinterpretations, would it be unreasonable to wonder — where does that leave Vergil?

Shakespeare's younger contemporary Richard Stanyhurst translated the *Aeneid* into English hexameters, and while the attempt may seem "ridiculous" in our eyes, it was, in its own context, "wholly serious

and intellectually interesting". I myself thought that the excerpt which Dr Stevenson offered us was rather better than she suggested, the hexameters reading not altogether unlike alliterative verse. I wondered what she might have said if they had been the work of Seamus Heaney[5].

Dr Stevenson then offered several examples of the same short passage in different translations: the moment when Dido's nurse wipes away the blood from her mistress's dying body. As well as the version by Stanyhurst, she asked us to read versions composed by Gawain Douglas (published 1553), John Dryden (published 1697), and Robert Fitzgerald (published from 1981 onwards). Douglas actually died in 1522, but the line "And with her wympill wipit the blude away" seemed much the most vivid, the most modern, oddly, in rhythm and stress, while, metrically, it is a perfect iambic pentameter if "wipit" is pronounced as one syllable, as it would be today. C. S. Lewis was apparently an enthusiast for the Douglas version because it did not distort the original by applying false notions of "the decorum which avoids every contact with the senses and the soil".

Dr Stevenson's final comments drew attention to the time-bound nature of her examples, and she wished us to note that while it may be easy to recognise that earlier translators were all producing versions for their own times, it is much more difficult to realise that the same is also true of Fitzgerald's much praised modern version, to whose "unevaluated, ideological paradigms" we are blind since we unconsciously share them. We need to remember that the newest version will always be of its own time, too, and that it will inevitably be superseded by later versions. We have no way of knowing how, "if we refrain from blowing up the planet", Vergil will be read two hundred years from now. Certainly, any translation made at that time will be

very different from any translation that we at present possess.

This led Mr. Makoto Watanabe to wonder if a translation might sometimes be distorted for the purposes of political propaganda: might translations be used to establish some sort of hegemony of ideas and beliefs, even of language? Since the answers did not seem to address this worry, the question may have been misunderstood, but as all the speakers had in some way touched on the possibility that this might happen, it is a question which remains to be posed. And should translators take this kind of liberty with their texts (as they seem regularly to do for poetic or cultural reasons), then, again, one is surely entitled to wonder how much of the original has been retained, how much, and not only of the original language, has been lost.

So I risked asking why Professor Bassnett had dismissed Frost's remark so scornfully. If, by "poetry", Frost meant the rhythms, the melodies, the harmonies, the cultural and personal associations that words carry in their original tongues and which cannot be recreated in different tongues — and this is what I have always supposed that he did mean — then surely this is precisely what cannot be translated.

I did dismiss it, she replied, and I do dismiss it. In any case, Frost was being ironic. To re-state her case, she reminded us of the three terms which Ezra Pound took from Greek theory to signify the special qualities of poetry: **melopoeia**, **logopoeia** and **phanopoeia**. She agreed that it would hardly be possible to reproduce the original poem's **melopoeia** (the metrical measures and the melodies), that it is downright impossible to recapture the **logopoeia** (the associative echoes that the diction of a poem will have had for its original readers), but what a translation can offer (and that makes the whole operation worthwhile) is a glimpse of the **phanopoeia** (the throwing of an image of an object on to the visual imagination), and that it is through such images

that we might have a sight of that other country which in time and place could be anywhere and everywhere that is not our own here and now, and where "they do things differently"[6].

Since Professor Bassnett had no time, however, to explain in what respects Frost was being ironic, I have had to try to follow up this comment for myself. Was Frost paraphrasing the Italian *traduttore traditore*, which means (an Italian friend assures me) that to translate is to betray? And why did he follow up this remark with the far less familiar "It is also what is lost in interpretation"? This suggests that anything other than the poet's own performance will be a betrayal of the poet's working out of his own vision. Since every reading, every performance, of a poem is certainly a new interpretation, it may therefore be a falsification of what the poet supposed that he had made. Certainly, my performance of Shakespeare's sonnets would be very different from Helen Vendler's[7]. So, where does that leave us?

With nowhere to go by the look of it. Perhaps it is this which makes Professor Bassnett so impatient. It is clearly a counsel of despair and, if followed, it would leave translators with nothing to do. Professor Bassnett is anxious to build bridges, not to widen gulfs, and imperfect though all translations must inevitably be when judged by ideal criteria, they are better than nothing if they help us to have some idea of another culture, to appreciate and learn to respect what is not of our own place, or time. And although something will always be lost in the "liminal space", even between two speakers of the same language living at the same time and in the same place, it will make us aware of what Isaiah Berlin considered to be the plurality of Goods that we may find distributed amongst human cultures and the knowledge of which will help us to treat what is different with tolerance and sympathy[8]. As the forces of fascism (with their hatred of all kinds of difference)

appear to be growing stronger in many countries where the horrors of the second World War are being forgotten, we perhaps need translations more than ever to keep us awake to other people's Goods, and the good in other people. This may be what Professor Bassnett had in mind.

2 "The Horse and the Cart": an adapted version of a talk given on Friday, the 5th of November, to a group of Sapporo Citizens, organised by Hokkai Gakuen University

In the Preface to his novel *The Portrait of a Lady*, Henry James speaks, metaphorically, of the house of fiction. It is a house with many windows and at every window stands "the posted presence of the watcher", the individual novelist. All the novelists look out upon the same scene, but they all look at it from a different angle, from slightly different points of view, while the windows are of different sizes and the window glass may be coloured as well as plain. All these watchers, in more modern terminology, have a different slant upon the world upon which they look out.

So it is, I would suggest, with languages. Each language offers a more or less recognisably similar view onto the same prospect, the objective world (which I take it does exist)[9], but every language frames that view differently, and, as a prism, its glass refracts the objective world through a variety of shapes, colours and relationships. That is to say, no two languages offer identical pictures of the world and our human place in it. It is also to say, or strongly to imply, that an exact translation from one language to another is not strictly possible: all translations are bound to be approximations.

When Robert Frost said that poetry is what is lost in translation,

he was referring, I believe, to a poem's rhythms and sound effects, its figurative and idiomatic expressions, all of which are likely to have intense personal associations for the native speaker, and, if this is true, then it will be just as difficult to convey the flavour of creative prose as it will be to convey the musical and figurative qualities of verse. A language expresses for someone who uses it not only the meanings of the propositions which the words convey, but the web of the user's memories, relationships and beliefs, that person's sense of who he or she is.

Although John Locke believed that language is "the dress of thought", and that the thoughts which we think in one language (Japanese, say) can easily be expressed in the medium of another language (English, for example), since language at its purest does not use metaphor or other kinds of figurative expression: it is a transparent medium. Yet his own prose is full of metaphors and other devices of rhetoric which are not necessarily going to fit easily into a language which makes use of different metaphors and different idioms. This is true for even such a basic and universal word as 'hand'. Although Japanese and English share a certain number of idiomatic (and metaphorical) uses of the word 'hand', many of the uses of the term are not at all the same, and a simple transliteration from one tongue to the other would lead to incomprehension and misunderstanding.

At the same time, though, Locke thought that at birth the human brain (or mind?) is a *tabula rasa*, a blank sheet upon which experience records its findings. That would support the view which I have been proposing: our languages give us a sense of who we are and where we stand in the world. Our understanding of the world (and our individual place in it) is not inborn: it comes to us (and we grow into it) through the culture which we inhabit. Without a language to guide us through

the intricacies of life, we should be lost souls wandering in darkness, with only our animal instincts to guide us. This is not to say that the world is not as it is, as it appears to us: only that we see it from our own language-mediated point of view: there is an objective world, however subjectively we look at it[10].

I am arguing that while translation between languages is possible since we are human beings with much shared experience of what it means to be human, and of what "the world out there" is like, no translation can reproduce (with all its linguistic and cultural nuances) the particular orientation, the particular slant on the world, which every individual language offers its users, and which they, their users, have grown into[11].

As I explained in my previous piece, I first took this notion from the work of Benjamin Lee Whorf, since I am convinced of the truth of the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis: "people who use languages with very different grammars are led by these grammars to typically different observations and different values for outwardly similar observations"[12]. We do see the same things, but we view them through different linguistic spectacles.

I hold this position because, intuitively, it has always struck me as bound to be right, but also because my twenty years' experience of editing Japanese texts translated into English has seemed to bear it out, even when those texts are of a scientific or academic nature, when one might suppose that objective truths about the nature of cancer research or economic theory really were transparent between one language and another. I said this in my earlier piece, and used the work of Professor Senko Maynard of Rutgers University to back up my claim.

Since then, my friend and colleague Professor Keisuke Kurata has spent many hours kindly going through that earlier essay with me,

offering further examples, refinements and additional material, all of which has confirmed my original thesis, with which Professor Kurata does not disagree. Professor Kurata also introduced me to the work of Professor Yoshihiko Ikegami, and it is what I have learned from Professor Ikegami which really inspires most of what is to follow. Another colleague, Professor Kasuko Nakagawa, also pointed out a feature of the Japanese language that has helped me to sort out my ideas and come to a better understanding of what often makes it so difficult to turn Japanese sentences into English ones.

I ended my previous piece by suggesting that Japanese has a marked propensity for putting the cart before the horse, or so it seemed to me, and that was why I chose the phrase "The Horse and the Cart" as the title of my talk. That is not quite true, said Professor Nakagawa: in Japanese the horse is frequently left out altogether. Professor Ikegami provided an example which is almost uncanny in its appropriateness.

Yasunari Kawabata's Novel ***Yukiguni*** (*Snow Country*) opens with the sentence (a sentence which almost every Japanese person can recite) **Kunizakai no nagai tonneru to, yukiguni de atta**, which being again transliterated reads "border of long tunnel when snow country was", which makes no grammatical sense (in English), although it may mean something. Significantly, of course, there is neither horse nor cart, and this is what gives the Japanese reader pleasure, since their omission produces a feeling of mystery, something unmentioned, which the reader's imgination must supply, and that is what makes the utterance pleasurable.

The Japanese sentence leaves it up to the reader to decide if it is the train or an 'I' (or both at one and at the same time) which, or who, emerges into the snow country, and this deliberate ambiguity is a

typically Japanese stylistic device. When Edward Seidensticker, the great Japanologist, translated the sentence, however, he felt that he had to introduce and name an agent and that he had to use the Active Voice: "The train came out of the long tunnel into the snow country".

The English version needs some sort of agent, a horse, as it were, or, in this case, a train, to pull the cart (what is being predicated), and it is fairly obviously less rich, because less mysterious, than the original Japanese sentence. Seidensticker makes no reference to the border, however, perhaps because the preposition "into" implies a change of state from whatever it is that we have moved out of.

Seidensticker's version, though, does seem unnaturally plain, and as a translation it does not convey any of the cultural nuances that are clearly carried by the original sentence, and render it so densely evocative for Japanese readers (nuances of which Seidensticker himself will have been perfectly well aware). In Professor Bassnett's terms, Seidensticker's sentence is 'unproblematic', but it has surely lost something of the original's suggestibility. Yet anything designed to spell out, or make explicit the mystery, would also be untrue to the original: "After my train had passed through the long tunnel on the borderland, it emerged at length into the mysterious world of the snow country".

Such an example serves, I believe, to indicate some of the problems which attempts to translate from Japanese into English are likely to encounter — especially anything that we might think of as literature: poems, plays, novels. Yet — or so it has seemed to me — we meet the same problems when we wish to translate a piece of academic expository prose.

I have cribbed the Kawabata example from Yoshihiko Ikegami's essay "Two Contrasting Types of Linguistic Representation"(in *The Empire of Signs*, ed. Ikegami Yoshihiko, Amsterdam, 1991).

Ikegami's main contention in his essay is that whereas Japanese is a BECOME language, English is a DO language. English, unlike Japanese, is a language which expects agents to do things. We find this pattern everywhere: John opened the door, I ate an apple, the rain dashed the leaves from the trees. In Japanese these sentences would take a passive form and the agents would not be mentioned or would be implied.

Both Professors Maynard and Ikegami say that the Japanese language has a strong urge to blur agency, while it prefers phrases like "sort of" to such direct unambiguous pointing words as "this" or "that", which are too strong, too direct. Professor Kurata gave me an example of this habit. When transliterated, **Yatto heya ga kirei ni natta** reads "At last the room has become clean." In English, however, we are much more likely to say, "At last, I have finally managed to clean my room".

At this point I should like to elaborate on something which I alluded to in my previous paper (p 55). I referred there to Professor Maynard's comment that "The self-centred description of the event is prevalent in Japanese discourse". This seemed to me very strange since the self is what always seems to be left out of the Japanese sentence, and this suggests a degree of self-effacement and non-agency, whereas the term "self-centred" is, in English, almost always used pejoratively, to suggest that someone thinks only of himself, is egoistic, proud, selfish, is indifferent to the feelings or the needs of other people.

Although extreme shyness (which may appear as the manifestation of modest self-effacement) and intense pride (extreme egoism) can often, indeed, be two sides of the same coin, this is not, I am supposing, what Professor Maynard means to imply. Yet her comment may, nevertheless, unintentionally point to that paradoxical trait which

seems to run deeply through Japanese culture: of the inner and outer man being somewhat out of step with each other: surface conformity on the one hand (**tatamae**, **omote**, **soto**), inner self-determination and self-assertion (**honne**, **ura**, **uchi**) on the other.

I have gone on puzzling over this, aided and abetted by Professor Kurata, and I feel that I now have something to add to what I wrote before. Since, as I have already argued, languages are the expressions of cultures (and vice versa), I have begun to wonder if there is a link here with the idea that I put forward in my book *Down to Earth* many years ago[13]: the idea that whereas European cultures are centri-fugal, Japanese culture is centri-petal. One small (but perhaps indicative) example is the way we address envelopes: in English we move from the name of the recipient outwards; in Japanese we write and read an address from the largest unit (the country, the town) inwards, until finally we reach the name of the addressee. The addressee is at the heart of things, is what we are seeking out, the goal of our search.

So it is, perhaps, that the Passive Voice, and the absence of an agent, forces the reader to work towards that heart, that often unspoken core of the matter, to locate the speaker. The Passive Voice, which effaces the agent, always requires the reader to induce the presence of an agent. And since such usage is far from being reader-friendly, it may be argued that the writer hopes to involve the reader in his own thought processes: to draw the reader inwards into the heart of the matter.

This may also reflect Professor Maynard's observation that whereas English works deductively, Japanese works inductively. I would seek to explain the difference like this. The deductive approach works on the principle that IF this is so, then certain things will follow from it; if 'a' is true, 'b' will follow naturally ('a', if true, entails 'b'); this

method, I think we could say, is forward moving, forward looking: 'a' will lead to 'b', and 'b' will lead to 'c', and so on: we deduce new information from what we have already established; and this would perhaps help to explain the pattern of an English sentence (theme/rheme: old/new: topic/focus) which I discussed in detail in my previous paper. The inductive approach, on the other hand, may be thought of as backward moving, or backward looking: if the facts which we have observed appear to spring from a common source, then we can suppose that they must be the consequences that point back to, that presuppose, a common cause.

The important point seems to be that the deductive method moves in a series of steps from what is known to what is unknown or is hypothesised, and these steps have to be clearly mapped out, and signposted, so that the reader will be able to follow them easily. The Japanese language, however, often omits any reference to the arguments or causes that have led to the suppositions that we induce may have brought them about: the Japanese language apparently sees no (or little) need to explain how conclusions are arrived at in a logical or systematic way.

[Sherlock Holmes, of course, works both inductively and deductively: he first gathers clues and seeks out, inductively, their common cause; he then forms hypotheses and uses these to deduce what would have happened if his hypotheses are correct: this is the hypothetico-deductive method. In Ernst Mayr's terms, Holmes asks the What, the How, and the Why questions which it is the business of science to ask[14].]

One linguistic result of this cultural habit of looking at oneself as the passive sufferer, as the one to whom things happen rather than as the actor who makes things happen and who thus takes responsibility

for his own actions, is the common reliance upon the Passive Voice — although, of course, we cannot say which came first, the cultural habit or the linguistic expression. Whichever it may be, it seems likely that the linguistic refusal to define agency which runs right through the Japanese language is a reflection of an ingrained cultural set of mind. Which would also explain why it is so difficult for Japanese politicians to take a lead, or to take final responsibility for their actions[15].

This is not irrelevant to the issue at hand, the business of translation, since it makes clear that the issue of translation is not the simple and transparent one of turning the ideas expressed in one language into the same ideas expressed in another language, since the two languages do not exactly mirror the same thoughts. This was made very clear by the talks given by Professors Takahashi and Yanada that I discussed in Part I. And though it is true, as one of my English friends has reminded me, that words like **amae** and **wagamama** can be translated into English as *dependence* and *self-will*, the English words do not carry the same cultural weight of daily usage and subtlety of reference that the Japanese words trail after them.

I should like now to think a little more carefully about the kinds of distinction that we might draw between a language which favours the Active Voice (what Ikegami calls a DO language) and one which favours the Passive Voice (in Ikegami's terms a BECOME language). Ikegami sees the difference between Japanese and English as involving a change of focus: that whereas English focuses on an agent (which can be a natural phenomenon no less that a human being or any other kind of animal) doing things, Japanese focuses on an event during which things change, or become what they had not been before (where the agent, whether animal or phenomenal, is suppressed).

Ikegami refines his basic distinction by noting that English is a

Have-language, whereas Japanese is a Be-language. A Have-language relates possession to a possessor, while a Be-language relates possession to a spatial relationship. Where, in English, we might say "The room has two windows", Japanese would prefer to say "In the room are two windows"(**heya ni wa mado ga futatsu aru**). And where in English we would say "I have a temperature", in Japanese you would focus on location rather than possession and say "With me is a temperature"[16].

Both Professors Takahashi and Yanada (as I report in Part 1 of this essay) remarked on the difficulty which the Japanese people had when the concept of individuality was first introduced into the Japanese language, while Ikegami discusses a further way in which the unwillingness of the Japanese language to place emphasis on individuality (and thus on agency) manifests itself. The English word "thing" is used to translate the Japanese words **mono** and **koto**: **mono** is a thing in its materiality, whereas **koto** is a thing in the abstract. **Koto** is the preferred term, regularly turning concrete objects into the more general class or category of the thing to which the object belongs. The language thereby reveals a desire to "frame events" rather than to individuate them, says Ikegami. The Japanese language has a predilection for turning things from material constructs into mental perceptions, whereas English tends to do the opposite, preferring to personify abstractions and turn them into agents[17].

I was especially intrigued when Ikegami makes the comment that a Japanese walking down an English High Street would find it odd to see notices saying *We are closed today* or *We are sold out*. These two notices strike me as typical metonymic transfers: where the owner of a shop or the goods on sale in a shop represents his shop or those goods, a replacement based on causal contiguity: the owner for the thing

owned. I find these examples interesting, of course, because this is a feature of language (metonymic shift) in which I have been especially interested for many years[18]. We can find examples of metonymy in Japanese, of course, but such agent-dominated transfers (cause for consequence) as these must be less common in Japanese than in English (or so I presume).

Professor Ikegami notices the related tendency of English and Japanese verbs to work in opposite directions. Whereas the English modal auxiliaries derive from verbs indicating possession (*to have*, for instance) and their employment foregrounds the human subject, Japanese verbs signal spatial relationships. Where the English language places the individual in the foreground, the Japanese language obscures the actor or agent and disclaims individuality. Where English prefers transitive verbs (thus treating the subject as the agent), Japanese favours intranstive verbs (thus allowing things to happen as if by their own agency). As Ikegami says, "The difference in linguistic consciousness is very suggestive": it suggests to me a difference in consciousness itself: of how things are perceived and understood.

An example of how in English we treat the idea of falling has occured to me. Even though the verb "to fall" is intransitive, and we would say "The apple fell from the tree", this sentence seems almost to suggest that the apple was in some way the agent of its own descent since we make it the subject of the sentence. The verb "to drop", in the other hand, is both transitive and intransitive: "The apple dropped from the tree", which, to my sense, feels less agentive, perhaps because we can also say "I dropped the apple". At the same time, however, there is a transitive verb "to fell", which offers the opportunity for indicating agency, and it is used in such sentences as "The woodman felled the tree"(with an axe) or "The boxer felled his opponent"(with a

blow to the chin). I am supposing that if these sentences were translated into Japanese, the activity of an agent would be hidden.

At any rate, where English emphasises the role of the agent, Japanese attempts to disarm it. And it seems to be here, paradoxically, that the Japanese language becomes self-centred — the speaker pulls things towards himself, yet as the experiencer, the sufferer, rather than as the acting agent. Things happen without an agent, at least in individual sentences. Even when there is an agent, his agency is denied. Ikegami expresses it like this: "The agent is not represented as a person who acts, but as a location in which the act takes place".

I take another of Ikegami's examples: **Tennoheika ni wa, mizukara no nae o oue (ni) nari mashita**. A transliteration would read: "In the Emperor, the planting out of rice seedlings came to pass". The simplest English version would be "The Emperor planted out rice seedlings", yet this seems too unexplained, too unexamined, and we might need to offer a context: "Once a year [Every spring], the Emperor — as the titular/spiritual/symbolic head of the Japanese people — plants out rice seedlings". If we wished to treat the Emperor as a rôle rather than a person, to emphasise his impersonality, we might just say something like "The ritual planting of rice seedlings is carried out [is performed] each spring in the person of the Emperor". I touch on below (both in an Editor at Work and in Conclusion) the translator's need to add information to a text that is self-evident in its native tongue yet ceases to be so when converted into another tongue (especially into one whose culture really is foreign).

3 An Editor at Work

I take, as an example of the Japanese tendency to blur agency (and

those tendencies related to it), the translation of a Japanese text that acts as the preface to a book of photographs of Hokkaido, a remarkably photogenic island. Since the text is designed to render in words the space of Hokkaido, and its spaciousness, it is perhaps an appropriate example. I attempt to show how, as an editor, one might rework this text so that it reads like an English text rather than a text transliterated from Japanese. For the original Japanese text, please see the Appendix.

The original translation (printed in the text):

> Hokkaido situates in the northermost part of Japan. It's shape looks as though a swimming ray. It is located at 41'30"--45'-30" N. Lat., which is almost the same as in the north east parts of U. S. A. and the central south parts of Europe. Those places are high cultural areas, but since cultivation of Hokkaido started from the Meiji era, primitive great natural surroundings still exists here.
>
> The airscape of Hokkaido shows Daisetsuzan National Park called the roof of Hokkaido in the center. To the east is the Akan National park, famous for its volcanoes with its beautiful caldera lakes such as Lake Akan, Kussaharo and Mashu. Further extends the Shiretoko National Park including Mt Shari and Rausu with their unexplored regions. Magnificent views starting with Konsen Plateau and many more plateau can be seen around the boarders of the ground and the Sea of Ohotsuka and the Pacific Ocean.
>
> The backbone of Hokkaido stretched from the north at Cape Soya to Cape Erimo on the south for approximately 420 km in the central part. In between are the Nayoro, Kamikawa and Furano Basins. The rivers, Ishikari, Teshio and Tokachi from Mt Daisetu irrigating their basins flows into the sea. On the western part are Mt Usu, Yotei, Tarumae etc. belonging to the Shiribeshi Volcanos and the mysterious caldera lakes, Toya and Shikotsu. Graceful figure of Mt Komagatake across the Uchiura Bay is so splendid. Hokkaido surely has many mountains, rivers, plateaus, coast lines,

that shows the charming expressions of its great nature.

The magnificent, yet delicate expressions by the colours of Nature throughout the four seasons gives you enchantments which can only be enjoyed here in the north. Comparing the four season of Nature in Hokkaido to colors, first comes "white". On the white canvas, strong people and other living creatures appear and then the light green of the buds turning into green, later turns into red. The beautiful changing goes by very quickly. Because the colorful seasons are so short, the Nature seems so much beautiful. The four seasons dramatically played on the stage of Nature so severe but graceful has an original taste.

It is not at all my purpose to castigate (or even to criticise) the composer of this translation (far from it); I merely wish to emphasize what will be obvious: how difficult it is going to be to make a version of the original Japanese text that will be true to the information carried by that text and at the same time readable as unproblematic English. It will immediately be clear that however much we manage to retain the text's factual material, the particular emotive and rhetorical effects of the original are going to be lost (since they are not going to work in English), and so with their loss we shall lose the particular emotions that a Japanese reader will experience while reading it.

The factors that I have had to bear in mind while making my version are many, but among them, in addition to the issue of agency, we may note two others. The first is the question of collocation and co-occurence: certain words can combine only with a limited set of other words, where words with apparently the same meaning would not fit at all. Dictionaries are often no help: when you look in your dictionary, you may find a dozen apparent synonyms for the word you wish to translate, but it is often very difficult to decide which is likely to be the most suitable partner for the other words that you have

chosen. Translators, through no fault of their own, often make the wrong choices[19]. We may also note that Japanese metaphors, idioms, or other figurative expressions cannot be translated as they stand since they often sound odd, even comical, in English.

A more thorough analysis than I have space for here would have attempted to show in what ways the translation printed above is very difficult for a native-speaking reader of English to follow, particularly someone who has had no experience of reading such translated (or transliterated) material.

Although the verbs may be correctly selected, they often lack an appropriate sense of agency and are sometimes (for this reason) related to their subjects ungrammtically, some nouns are simply wrong (e. g., 'airscape'), new information rarely falls in the focus position at the end of the sentence, the parts of the sentences are oddly placed in relation to each other and are insecurely linked, facts necessary for full comprehension (especially in the passage about the rivers and the river basins) are lacking, certain expressions, which may be perfectly idiomatic in Japanese, sound a bit sentimental when translated directly into English.

My edited version of the translation attempts to correct these deficiences, although, of course, other native-speaking writers of English might feel that they could make a much better version than mine (though I would advise them that it is an extremely hard task). I have added information where it seemed necessary for full comprehension (or where the writer had treated his facts rather impressionistically); I have re-arranged the parts of the sentences to make it easier for the reader to follow the "story" chronologically; I have added agentive subjects where I thought that this would help the reader to visualise the map; I have tried to find suitable English expressions to replace the Japanese idioms or metaphors. In other words, I have tried to turn a

Become passage into a Do one.

My version is significantly longer than the original; translations from my own writing into Japanese often seem much longer, too — for reasons that I have hinted at and shall return to later. I add (in brackets) information that we might substitute for the information supplied, where that original information is either ambiguous or perhaps incorrect:

> Hokkaido is the northernmost island of the Japanese archipelago (barring, of course, the Kuril Islands, held by Russia and claimed by Japan). In shape, it resembles a swimming ray. It is located [It lies] between the 41st and 45th parallels, and is roughly on a line with the New England States and the southern parts of Central Europe (actually, it is on the same line of latitude as Rome and the mediterranean coast of France). Such places have enjoyed a long established cultural life, whereas the (modern) cultivation of Hokkaido did not begin until the era of the Meiji Restoration. As a result, much of the island is still covered with large tracts of primeval forest (but, then, isn't New England, whose cultural life is also rather short?).
>
> An aerial view of Hokkaido shows the Daisetsuzan National Park, often called the roof of Hokkaido, in the centre of the island. To the east (of this central massif), we can see the Akan National Park, famous for its beautiful caldera lakes, Akan, Kussharo and Mashu. To the north-east, the Shiretoko Peninsula, another National Park, points out to sea, the densely wooded slopes of Mounts Shari and Rausu still mostly unexplored. South of Shiretoko, just inland of the eastern seaboard, the Konsen Plain and other plateaux offer splendid panoramic views, both of the mountains around Lake Akan, and out towards the Sea of Ohotsuka and the Pacific Ocean.
>
> The mountainous backbone of Hokkaido stretches for 420 km from Cape Soya in the north to Cape Erimo in the south. From springs in the Daisetzusan Massif mid-way down the spine, the

rivers Ishikari, Teshio and Tokachi flow west and east, and, as they make their way towards the sea, they water/irrigate the now well-farmed river basins of Nayoro, Kamikawa and Furano.

Far to the west, almost cut off by the Chitose Plain, a separate, detached group of mountains known as the Shiribeshi volcanoes rise in the shape of Mt Yotei (also known as the Hokkaido Fuji), Usu and Tamurae, and encircle the mysterious caldera lakes of Toya and Shikotsu. The view of the graceful Mt Komagatake from across the the Uchiura Bay is another splendid sight. There can be no doubt that the many mountains, lakes, plains, as well as the rocky coastlines of Hokkaido all testify to the attractiveness of the island's impressive (and largely untouched) natural beauties.

The four seasons charm us in succession with the magnificence and delicacy of the changing colours, colours which we can see only here in the north. If we were to compare each season to a different colour, we would begin with white, the colour of winter, against whose pure white background both human beings and the wild animals of the island have a chance to demonstrate and prove their strength and courage. After the light green buds of spring have turned to the dark of summer foliage, the leaves finally turn deep crimson, scarlet and gold. Each change, so beautiful in itself, is over very quickly, and because the beauty of the natural world is so transient, it strikes us plangently as even more beautiful. The dramatic interplay of the four seasons, severe yet graceful, has the power to charm us with its unique and original character.

I take only a sentence or two from the final paragraph to demonstrate in more detail what I have tried to do. Here, I have rewritten the sentences beginning "Comparing the four seasons of nature to colours" in order to correct the grammar, to make the people and the animals active, and to preserve, if possible, the appeal of the beauty of the island. The reference to the people and the animals seems to exemplify Ikegami's point rather well: in the Japanese version, they are simply framed against the background; I try to put them to work in it.

I could have made them work even harder, more actively: "The human and animal inhabitants of the island take advantage of the severity of the winters to wrestle with the cold and the snow, and to enjoy the chances that the harshness of the cold white world gives them to demonstrate their hardiness, their courage and their strength".

This, of course, would be to go too far if the simplest translation was all that I had been commissioned to do; but if I wished to use the original Japanese text to show off what was possible in English if one sought to create an effect having the same emotive force as we are supposing the original to possess, then it might just be excusable.

It would also go to show that when we translate rather than transliterate, we are changing more than the words: we are changing how we look at the world and how we see our place in it, how we see ourselves in relation to it. The Japanese version sees men and animals framed against a background which controls how they respond; the English version sees men (and animals) doing something with the world they find themselves in.

But if we supposed that this was how the men of Hokkaido saw, or see, themselves in relation to their environment, we might not be able to generalise quite so easily. Since the men and women who create the Sapporo Snow Festival are obviously imposing their wills upon the snow, the snow masons may not see themselves playing quite so passive a role. Nor, I am fairly sure, would the doctors or scientists whose work I edit think of themselves as sufferers rather than actors. Nothing is as simple, nor as back and white, as it may seem. It does, however, seem true that the apparent denial of agency in language may help to confirm an unwillingness to admit agency, to accept responsibility, for actions that western observers might think it reasonable to hold a person accountable.

Conclusion

My faltering attempts to produce a passable English version of a Japanese-into-English translation that failed to sound like an English text (while it preserved something of the original's mood and feelings) will indicate some of the difficulties that any translator faces, and, as Professor Takahashi said of his folktales, "brings into relief the fundamental aspects of translation": that is (I take it), it indicates how problematic it is to make of a text in one language a version in another language that is unproblematic. My English version, in seeking readability, has obviously lost much of the sensibility (and suggestibility) of the original text. It also took me a lot of time as I played with a number of possible sentence patterns. How anyone has managed to translate *A la recherche du temps perdu*, I cannot conceive.

I am not a translator, only an editor, but I see myself in fact as a translator: translating a poor English text into what I trust will be a better one. And these days, I have given up all attempts to tinker piecemeal with any text that I am asked to edit, to change words here and there, to cover the page with red arrows as I transfer phrases from one part of a sentence to another. This is what I used to do. Now, I sit down in front of my computer (without whose aid the task might be impossible) and simply work from scratch, rewriting the whole thing from start to finish, totally, as if it were my own composition.

The result reads, I hope, like a piece of English prose, not like a translation. And I am conscious that where I have sensed the writer grappling with a logical problem or seeking to reach some conclusion for which he has not the words or sometimes even the concepts, I have put words into his mouth that make him sound like an Englishman talking, not like a Japanese. I have even added points to strengthen or

clarify what I take it the writer is wishing to say, if only he could (so I suppose). As my writers wish to publish in English-speaking journals they seem to be grateful for this, but I am inevitably giving their work a twist, a point of view, that it does not have in Japanese.

What does seem to be clear (at least to me) is that when we translate we do lose something, and that something will be the particular slant with which a particular language looks at the world. I feel that Ortega y Gassett had a point, or was in sight of a perfectly valid one: if our translation seeks to preserve the original text's foreignness then we shall have to give up any desire to write a version that is elegant, lucid, and, if we are dealing with a literary text, we must abandon any hope that our version will be itself a worthy work of literature. If on the other hand, we seek to compose a text that is, as far as we can make it, the best we can manage in our language, our own masterwork, we may have to give up any pretensions of capturing what in the original is foreign to our own way of thinking. I say 'may' rather than 'shall' since I suppose that Dryden and Pope, Milton and Cowper, Hughes and Heaney must have believed that they were conveying something of the original's texture and moods, even if the linguistic means were very different. And though the texts that I edit are not works of literature (however that is defined), I do attempt to produce the most lucid pieces of prose that I can manage, prose that I would not be ashamed of.

If the translator is also a poet, he will share with the original poet an interest in the linguistic means used to express these experiences, and of course, as Christopher Ricks implies, his language may be influenced, often markedly, by the language of the original, as English is influenced by Latin, though only in vocabulary, not syntax: even Milton's syntax is not so Latinate as to be difficult for a native speaker

of English to read with ease and immediate comprehension. If we take up Ricks's image, the poet will be paying a debt to his ancestors, who may well have written in tongues other than his own.

At the Symposium, we were told that when the original text is an historic one, its meanings may be inaccessible, which perhaps may make it easier to concentrate on our own version at the expense of any attempt to render its meanings accessible to a contemporary reader. This troubled me, and still troubles me. If this is true, why should we be bothered to try to seek for them, if we shall never find them. What shall we be doing when we are reading, if we are not looking for meanings? Or are we here subscribing to the post-modernist belief that all meanings are to be found in the reader, not in the author (who is dead)? I still hold to the old-fashioned belief that a writer writes because he (or she, of course) has something he wishes to say, something that it is important to say, and that if he dies without communicating it, then he will die unsatisfied, unfulfilled.

When we were also told that its meanings may be irrelevant, I was as bothered as my friend Makoto Watanabe by the implications of this. I accept that Christian Europe interpreted Vergil's prophecies as referring to Christ not to Augustus's nephew, but I never understood that this is what the translations actually said; I had supposed that this was only the gloss that the commentators put on them. Today our gloss will be different. But I hope, as Mr Watanabe hoped, that this does not imply that we are free to use the original text just as we please, deliberately mistranslating where it suits our purposes, perhaps using it for propaganda (if this is what Dante did with Vergil). Robert Lowell was at least honest when he admitted that his translations were imitations, which is obviously what Hughes' versions are as well. In which case, it seems somewhat misleading to call them translations. I have

not yet read Heaney's *Beowulf*.

The examples we were offered of the way in which folktales are manipulated was apparently harmless, but if translations are used to make points that the original writer might find abhorent, how are the readers of the translation ever to find this out? I have admitted that I do this myself, even in my small way, but always with the writer's permission. Should the author be physically as well as metaphorically dead, we may may feel free to alter the emphases as we please.

This may be tempting as well as easy, since we often need to add a lot as well. In my previous piece, I referred to Edward Hall's opinion that while Japanese is a high-context culture where the members do not need to mention (even obliquely) what is common knowledge, American culture is a low context culture: a mixture of cultures whose members cannot assume that they share common knowledge, and so may have to spell out what needs to be known for a reference to be understood.

In the present instance, we are thinking about translating texts from one culture's language into another's, which is to go a step further. And this may lead us to propose that while within the borders of a traditional culture we may not need to be specific, we may, when we translate, have to spell out those assumptions that are common knowledge to members of the original culture but are not necessarily well-known within the culture of the target language — or, of course, we may simply substitute, as Hughes appears to have done, what he must have seen as comparable features of his own culture for features of Ovid's culture that it would take too long to explicate, even if he had wished to.

In Hall's terms, we can perhaps say that global culture, diachronic as well as synchronic, is low-context, which means that translations may always need to be much more explanatory than original texts if

the reader of the translation is to understand what is going on, certainly if we wish to be as true to the original as we should like to be, even though we may be blind to our presuppositions or preconceptions. We certainly have to attempt this when we are translating any text that is meant to be informative, even when texts that are informative wish also to shape opinion or stimulate emotions or feelings. This is something that my little exercise will have demonstrated, I hope. It is a balancing act that I find myself having to perform with all the papers in economics, law and medicine that I am these days asked to tidy up, and that I say something about in note 15.

It may be true as well that there are certain things that you can say in one language that you cannot say in another, and several of the scientists for whom I have worked have admitted to me that they actually cannot say in Japanese what they wish to express since the Japanese language does not possess the concepts, let alone the words, that they need to use in order to make their points: Japanese is not a language in which it is easy to write modern science, science of which they will have become aware through the English (as once the German) language. So, conversely, when they do write in Japanese, they will presumably have to adapt their scientific thoughts to suit a language that their readers will be able to understand — and so they will be unable to convey ideas or concepts for which there are no equivalent Japanese terms or expressions.

I had hoped to come to more positive conclusions than I have managed. Ever since the Symposium, I have brooded over these questions, but do not see my way any more clearly to whatever answers there may be which would satisfy anyone. I suspect, of course, that we are here dealing with a situation where there are no clear-cut answers. The situation may be pluralistic as well as paradoxical. Readers may

wish for as transparent a translation as possible, so that they might have a view into Vergil's or Dante's soul; translators may realise that this is unachievable, and settle for the best they can manage, aware or not that it will coloured by their own preconceptions, or they may consciously use the original for their own purposes, which if they are poets may be, as Christopher Ricks implied, linguistic, or, as Makoto Watanabe feared, propagandist, if their desires are hegemonic.

Even on the level of the kinds of scientific text that I have to deal with the issues are the same although on a smaller, simpler scale, and I am not as likely to wish or have the opportunity to use the texts for my own purposes, although, when polishing the piece about Hokkaido, I was certainly trying to write the best English prose I could produce in circumstances that were not of my own choosing or making. Whether or not I have succeeded is neither here or there: I wished to do a good job in my own language, with my own language as my means. Editors no less than translators are craftsmen, and if they are serious craftsmen, they will not be satisfied until they have produced the best they can manage — which will often mean that they will have to distort the original text in some way, either by modifying here or amplifying there, by trimming this and by rearranging that.

At the last moment, I have just remembered that in his book *Errata*, George Steiner has some moving pages on translation and so I turn to him as a polyglot who has devoted his life to language, to remind myself of his observations. We are translators at every moment of our lives, he says, translating what people around us have to say to us, translating the millions of signs by which we are surrounded. Since this is something that I always teach my semiotics class, I ought to have remembered.

All translations are inevitably interpretations; they are also

answers, attempts to reciprocate — not only in direct acts of translation but in various forms of imitative homage or in reworkings of older material in creative works of our own, which would include a good deal of the world's literature. In this sense, all Shakespeare's plays are translations, as are all subsequent performances of them (as I said in my essay about Shakespearean verse), while interlingual translations of Shakespeare have "redrawn ... the means of imagination and diction in German and in Russian", as translations of the Bible by Tyndale and Luther "recreated" the English and German languages.

As a polyglot, Steiner is interested in the polylingual — and in the man, like Conrad or Beckett, who moves seamlessly between languages. He quotes Goethe who once said "that no monoglot truly knows his own language". Perhaps Kipling had come across this comment, too: "And what should they know of England who only England know?"

Nabokov condemned translation and many people have taught themselves a foreign language in order to read the great works written in that other language. But since each of us speaks his own idiolect, we are obliged to be translators all the time, however imperfectly, and if we didn't (or couldn't), we should die. We need a Babel of tongues (about which Steiner has also written a book, *After Babel*), and he is passionate in his defence of the whole range of human languages. Just as we can never recover a flower or animal species once it has died out, so a language (unless it is one of the classical tongues) is equally irrecoverable. We need plurality of languages, all kinds of linguistic variety, and translations between languages have kept "the blood stream of history circulating. Without translation we should inhabit parishes bordering on silence"[20].

That would seem the moment at which to stop. However unsatis-

factory, however hesitant, however fraught our efforts, we need to enter Susan Bassnett's liminal space where one language speaks to and is answered by another language. If not, we should be as ships that pass in the night and speak not to each other in passing.

Notes:

1 The members of my Shakespeare Seminar in Bungakubu find Soseki's reaction strange: they do not share his dislike of personification (nor do they think it unJapanese).

2 *The Japan Times* of Thursday, February the 10th, 2000, reported that the juvenile affairs office of the Kanagawa Prefectural Government had requested convenience stores "to refrain from selling magazines deemed harmful to youths", since one 12 year boy had been unable to "control himself" after reading some of them and had harrassed a number of schoolgirls.

3 Dr Stevenson added: Those of Shakespeare's contemporaries who wrote Latin were able to read Cicero as if his letters had been written to them personally, and, while Shakespeare's language carries his context around with it, this is not so with writers of classical Latin: we may note little difference between the Latin of Erasmus and that of Walter Savage Landor, who would have understood each other perfectly. At the same time, classical Latin was flexible enough, and rich enough in vocabularly, to deal with new concepts, as Sir Isaac Newton demonstrates in *Principia Mathematica*.

4 Dr Stevenson made the point that although Shakespeare may speak for all time, he still speaks in the language of Elizabethan England, and his voice is an urgently personal one; the Latin of his contemporaries, though no less personal, is, nonetheless, "divorced from its local and immediate context in time", and all we need in order to be able to communicate with those writers directly is the ability to read Latin. Knowledge of Latin gave its users "a collective playground of language", and sponsored the development of the pastoral tradition in European poetry, a tradition of immense importance in the education and consequently the practice of

English poets like Sir Philip Sidney and John Milton.

5 As I write this, Seamus Heaney has just been awarded a major literary prize for his translation of *Beowulf*. Dr Stevenson also remarked, incidentally (and as it seems obligatory to do), that "there is no period in the history of English prosody which makes use of long and short syllables in the Classical mode", since English prosody relies on accent not quantity. While this may in theory be true, my twenty years' experience of teaching English prosody to Japanese students has convinced me that syllables in English which are stressed (which come on the isochronic beat) are appreciably longer than those which come off the beat (often not even heard by the Japanese listener), and that this is as true of spoken English as of English which is sung. It is impossible to sing Cecil Sharpe's folk arrangement of *Blow Away the Morning Dew* as written, where most notes (when alinged to syllables) are written as crochets. In my own performance some will be dotted crochets, some quavers, some semiquavers. This is the only way to sing them, or, for that matter, to speak them (I would argue).

6 I am alluding to the first sentence of L. P. Hartley's *The Go-Between* (Hamish Hamilton, 1953, and many subsequent Penguin reprintings), a novel that I have referred to before: "The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there".

7 Helen Vendler's *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* was published by The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press in 1997, an extraordinarily close and detailed study of Shakepeare's verbal techniques. Professor Vendler is highly critical of performances of the sonnets given (and recorded) by professional actors, and offers a hostage to fortune in the form of a CD of her own performance, which is quite astonishingly flat, and makes with the voice none of the points that she makes on the page: to a British ear, it is remarkably under-performed.

8 Sir Isaiah Berlin's central doctrine was that it is a mistake to think that there is one perfect, single answer to the questions that men ask about the world and themselves. There is a plurality of answers, all valid, and these may often be incommensurate; they may indeed clash. This was what he called pluralism, which for Berlin entailed freedom, since it

imposed on us the consequent need to be accommodating and tolerant. This is not the same thing, however, as relativism, since we should not therefore tolerate what is clearly evil, such as fascism or any form of totalitarianism, which deny freedom and plurality. Berlin's opposition to Nazism and Soviet communism was implacable.

9 Nor would Berlin have denied that there is an objective world which can be described by science. Some people take the view that our languages actually construct our world, rather than that they simply view it from different angles; some even take the view that individuals create their own worlds (the doctrine of solipsism). This is not what Whorf and Sapir believed, I am sure. Such opinions are dismissed with robust common-sense by John Searle in his newest book, *Mind, Language and Society*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999.

10 I am again leaning for support on Searle's rebuttal of the extreme forms of solipsistic belief.

11 This is a phrase that I used in my previous paper, based on ideas taken from *The Symbolic Species* by Terrence Deacon, Allen Lane, 1997.

12 I discussed the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis in my previous paper. It seems perfectly reasonable to accept this thesis without believing that though English-speakers and speakers of Hopi apparently interpret the behaviour of nature rather differently, we must therefore assume that our perceptions are relative: that there is nothing objectively real, if you like.

13 *Down to Earth*, The Shinozaki Shorin Press, 1983.

14 *This is Biology: The Science of the Living World*, by Ernst Mayr, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997, a very lucid book, and an easy read for those of us who are not natural scientists. I recommend it.

15 The two major pieces that I have recently edited (by professors at The Faculty of Economics, Hokkaido University) have both focused on instances where the Japanese authorities have simply not faced up to their responsibilities (or thought themselves accountable for their mismanagement or criminality): in one case, for causing enormous hardship to the Japanese people by heating up the bubble economy through the stimulation of projects which benefitted speculators but impoverished farmers,

and, in another, by producing dishonest audits for local government financial dealings (and then thinking nothing wrong of it).

16 We may even permit rooms, which are inanimate things, to become possessors: "This room contains/possesses two windows".

17 Ikegami also makes the point that I myself touch on in my "An Article on the Article"(Jimbunronshu, no 8, March, 1997): since Japanese lacks countability or definiteness, nouns in Japanese tend to blur the difference between collective and individual entities: they are therefore ambiguous; and Japanese speakers prefer it this way. Where an English speaker would specify a 'this' or a 'that', Japanese leaves it as "something of that sort", "things like that", as we have already noted.

18 I have written many articles on this topic, some of them published in this journal. A comparable metonymic transfer would be to speak, as we do, of the author for his works (Shakespeare, Beethoven), or the name of an inventor for his invention (Sandwich, Cardigan, Hoover, Macintosh).

19 See my article "The Sources of Collocational Choice", the Jimbunronshu of Hokkai Gakuen University, No 5, 1995.

20 *Errata: An Examined Life*, George Steiner, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997, a most moving book. The quotation can be found on page 96.

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I am most grateful to Professor Keisuke Kurata for his warm encouragement and patient instruction. And when I gave my talk, he acted as my interpreter. Without him, either as guide or as translator, I should not have been able either to give my talk or write this piece. Since this is the last essay that I shall be contributing to the Jimbunronshu, I should also like to say how grateful I am to the Jimbun Office of Hokkai Gakuen Daigaku, in particular to Ms Tachi, for encouraging me over the last five years to produce so many pieces of writing and for offering me a forum in which to publish them.

Appendix

北海道概要

日本の最北端に位置し，エイの泳ぐ姿にも似た，北海道。北緯41度半～45度半というその緯度は，アメリカ北東部，ヨーロッパ中南部といった世界的文化地帯に当るが，本格的な開発が明治以降ということもあって，いまだに原始的な大自然の息吹きを残している。

北海道全体の地勢を鳥瞰すると，北海道の屋根として仰がれる大雪連峰を中心に，東に阿寒，屈斜路，摩周など美しいカルデラ湖をもつ阿寒火山群，さらに斜里岳，羅臼岳などをもつ知床火山群が延び，秘境の趣を漂わせている。また大地がオホーツク海，太平洋と接する一帯には根釧台地をはじめ数々の平野が広がり，勇壮な表情を見せている。

中部の地勢を見ると，北の宗谷岬から南の襟裳岬に至るまで南北に約420キロの山系群が北海道の背骨を成し，その間に名寄，上川，富良野の各盆地が連なる。また，この中央山系の中心大雪連峰からは，石狩，天塩，十勝などの川が流れ出し，広大な流域を潤しながら海へと注ぐ。

一方，西部の半島部には，有珠，羊蹄，樽前などの後志火山群と，洞爺，支笏の神秘的なカルデラ湖。また内浦湾を隔てて聳える駒ヶ岳の秀麗も鮮やかだ。北海道はまさに数々の山岳，湖沼，河川，平原，海岸線などがその魅力的な素顔を覗かせる大地。ダイナミックでデリケートな大自然の四季の表情が，訪れる者を北ならではの風景の虜とする。

こうした北海道の大自然の季(とき)の色を旅するとすれば，それは白から始まる旅となろう。北の自然は，まずその白いキャンバスに逞しい人びとや動植物の生きざまをスケッチし，さらに緑へ，紅葉へと美しく表情を変えながら足早に通り過ぎていく。カラフルな季節が短いだけに，その先は限りなくピュアに澄んでいる。そして，こうした厳しくも鮮やかな大自然を舞台に織り成されていく四季の行事にも，また余韻がある。

綿引幸造著『北海道—季(とき)の色(いろ)』P 187 より