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Differing Demands of 'High' and 'Low' Narratives from the Heian Period for the Translator

Abstract. This essay addresses the different demands of translating texts of high art and works of a lower literary register from Japan's mid-Heian period (10th to 11th century). The author has shifted from translating highly literary texts such as the 'Kagerō nikki' ('The Kagerō Diary') and 'Sarashina nikki' ('The Sarashina Diary') to translating the 'Ochikubo monogatari' ('Tale of the Lady of the Low Chamber'), which may be considered representative of Heian popular fiction and is itself a parody of a Cinderella type romance. A comparison of passages from the diaries and the 'Ochikubo monogatari' shows how stylistic differences between the two types of narrative have required the author to adjust and often reverse previous translation principles and strategies.

1. Introduction

After more than twenty years engaged in the translation of two highly literary texts from the mid-Heian period (10th to 11th century), 'Kagerō nikki' 蜻蛉日記 ('The Kagerō Diary,' ca. 974) by Fujiwara no Michitsuna's Mother 藤原道綱母 (936?–995) (trans. Arntzen 1997) and 'The Sarashina nikki' 更級日記 ('Sarashina Diary,' ca. 1060) by Sugawara no Takasue's Daughter 菅原孝標女 (1008–?) (trans. Arntzen/Itō 2014), I recently shifted to translating the anonymously written 'Ochikubo monogatari' 落窪物語 ('Tale of Lady of the Low Chamber,'[1] late 10th c.) which may be considered representative of Heian popular fiction in its lower literary register. 'High' and 'low' in this essay are not employed as terms of absolute value

but rather as provisional designations to discern forms of art with different purposes and strategies, similar to Northrop Frye's "diagrammatic" use of high and low in the delineation of modes of mimesis (Frye 1967, p. 34). This usage allows that there can be 'high art' of miserably low quality and 'low art' of excellent quality. The 'Ochikubo monogatari' is certainly of this latter category. What I was not prepared for when I turned to the 'Ochikubo monogatari' was the challenge it posed to the principles and strategies of translation that I had developed for the two literary diaries. In many instances, I found myself doing exactly the opposite of what I had done before. This essay is a report from the 'coal face' of translation, for my translation of the 'Ochikubo monogatari' is not yet complete. I will compare excerpts from the diaries and the 'Ochikubo monogatari' to distinguish stylistic, linguistic and structural differences between the two types of narrative that appear to require different translation strategies. The essay will end with reflections on 'The Tale of Genji' ('Genji monogatari' 源氏物語, early 11th c.) as representing the perfect marriage of 'high' and 'low' art in the Heian period and the importance of the 'Ochikubo monogatari' as a rare extant example of 'low' popular fiction in the period.

2. Defining Popular Fiction in a Premodern Period

First, the classification of the 'Ochikubo monogatari' as a piece of popular fiction needs to be defended. One could argue that it is anachronistic to speak of 'popular fiction' in an age long before rudimentary forms of mass media. If we were to reduce the connotations of the term 'popular fiction' to a few attributes, we could perhaps agree that they would include:

– a large body of circulating material
– an avid readership seeking mainly entertainment
– low prestige within society at large

Although the majority of Heian *monogatari* 物語 tales have been lost, we know that the quantity was significant from the citation of titles of lost tales in other works such as diaries and the thirteenth-century 'Fūyō wa-

kashū' 風葉和歌集 ('The Collection of Wind-Blown Leaves'), a poetry anthology assembled entirely from poems appearing in works of fiction.

The circulation of fictional works in the manuscript culture of the Heian period presented challenges. If one wanted to read anything one needed to obtain a manuscript copy, and if one had only borrowed it and wanted to keep a copy, one would have to undertake copying it out oneself or have someone else do it. The time and effort needed to do this for a text as long as 'The Tale of Genji' beggars the imagination. 'The Sarashina Diary' provides rare evidence of how manuscripts of fiction at the time circulated through family and social connections (Arntzen/Itō 2014, pp. 10–11, 36, 108, 112, 120, 126) and how tales could become famous through oral recapitulations ahead of obtaining a manuscript. In a sense, people created their own 'trailers' for narratives they wanted to share:

> [...] つれづれなるひるま、宵居などに、姉、継母などやうの人々の、その物語、かの物語、光源氏のあるやうなど、ところどころ語るを聞くに、いとどゆかしさまされど、わが思ふままに、そらにいかでかおぼえ語らむ。
> ('Sarashina nikki,' SNKBZ 26: 279)
>
> *[...] tsurezure naru hiruma, yoii nado ni, ane, mamahaha nado yō no hitobito no, sono monogatari, kano monogatari, Hikaru Genji no aru yō nado, tokorodokoro kataru o kiku ni, itodo yukashisa masaredo, waga omou mama ni, sora ni ikade ka oboekataramu.*
>
> At leisure times during the day and evening, when I heard my elder sister and stepmother tell bits and pieces of this or that tale or talk about what the Shining Genji was like, my desire to read these tales for myself only increased (for how could they recite the tales to my satisfaction from memory alone?).
> ('The Sarashina Diary,' trans. Arntzen/Itō, p. 90)

The assumption that the content of 'popular fiction' will be entertaining is axiomatic but it is precisely this quality which leads to its low prestige in most societies and lays it open to the criticism of being injurious to serious-mindedness. In the Heian period, tale literature was indeed disparaged for its beguiling bedevilment particularly of the minds of women. The most famous example of criticism is in 'The Three Jewels' ('Sanbōe' 三

宝絵), a work of religious instruction written around 984 by Minamoto no Tamenori 源為憲 (941?–1011) for the sake of a young princess who had recently taken the tonsure:

> 又物ノ語ト云テ女ノ御心ヲヤル物、オホアラキノモリノ草ヨリモシゲク、アリソミノハマノマサゴヨリモ多カレド、[...] イガヲメ、土佐ノオトヾ、イマメキノ中将、ナカキノ侍従ナド云ヘルハ、男女ナドニ寄ツヽ花ヤ蝶ヤトイヘレバ、罪ノ根、事葉ノ林ニ露ノ御心モトヾマラジ。('Sanbōe,' SNKBT 31: 6)
>
> *Mata monogatari to iite omuna no mi-kokoro o yaru mono, Ōaraki no mori no kusa yori mo shigeku, Arisomi no hama no masago yori mo ōkaredo, [...] Iga ome, Tosa no otodo, Imameki no chūjō, Nakai no jijū nado ieru wa, otoko omuna nado ni yosetsutsu hana ya chō ya to iereba, tsumi no ne, koto no ha no hayashi ni tsuyu no mi-kokoro mo todomaraji.*
>
> Then, there are the so-called *monogatari,* which have such an effect upon ladies' hearts. They flourish in numbers greater than the grasses of the Ōaraki Forest, more countless than the sands on the Arisomi beaches. [...] *The Sorceress of Iga*, *The Tosa Lord*, *The Fashionable Captain*, *The Nagai Chamberlain*, and all the rest depict relations between men and women just as if they were so many flowers or butterflies, but do not let your heart get caught up even briefly in these tangled roots of evil, these forests of words. ('The Three Jewels,' trans. Kamens, p. 93)

One notes in passing that the number of *monogatari* is emphasized in this passage and none of the titles mentioned in the citation are extant. The assumption that the readership of popular fiction is exclusively female is also prominent. Even if the reading public for tales was limited to the aristocracy and primarily women within the aristocracy, if nearly all members of that group had access to and were reading the same material with enthusiasm, I consider it fair to call it 'popular' literature. In fact, the only characteristic of modern popular literature that is completely absent in Heian-period tale literature is a commercial foundation. This was popular literature before a money-based economy.

3. General Characteristics of 'High Literary Art' in Texts Used as Examples

'The Kagerō Diary' and 'The Sarashina Diary' bracket the golden period of diary literature in the Heian period. From the point of view of western literary history, it may be surprising to have the diary regarded as a serious literary genre from such an early period (see discussion in Arntzen 2016, pp. 165–166 and also Arntzen/Itō 2014, pp. 3–7). The term *nikki bungaku* 日記文学 ('diary literature') in literary criticism only dates from the early twentieth century but the serious regard for diaries of the Heian period can be dated to the thirteenth century. A primary reason for the acceptance of Heian diaries as high art is the prominence of poetry in them. In the hierarchy of genres in the Heian period itself, poetry in the *waka* 和歌 form (31 syllable form divided into 5 lines with the syllable count 5-7-5-7-7) occupied the top position thanks to the social importance of the *chokusenshū* 勅撰集, 'imperially sponsored anthologies.' The inclusion of even one poem in an imperial anthology was a poet's foot in the door of literary immortality and a source of social prestige not only for the poet but for his or her family. The two diaries under discussion are as much collections of the authors' poetry as they are life stories.

I would summarize the 'high art' characteristics of 'The Kagerō Diary' and 'The Sarashina Diary' as follows:

– a lyrical style that mixes poetry and prose, where often poetry is the focus
– a refined writing style in which each word, each sentence, the composition of each passage and the juxtaposition of passages counts for a lot
– serious purpose, a concern with truth

In 'The Kagerō Diary,' Michitsuna's Mother pioneered a prose style of long sinuous sentences that capture the shifting quality of thought and emotion "in a dance with memory" (Arntzen 1997, p. 48; see pp. 42–49 for a detailed description of the prose style in 'The Kagerō Diary'). The prose often carries as much linguistic and emotive freight as the poetry, resulting in a

style that blurs the distinction between the two. An excerpt from the text that exemplifies these qualities will be presented in the comparative analysis part of this paper.

Michitsuna's Mother opens her diary with a critique of tale literature complaining that the "old tales" (*furu-monogatari* 古物語) are "just so much fantasy" (*yo ni ōkaru soragoto dani ari* 世におほかるそらごとだにあり; 'Kagerō nikki,' NKBZ 9: 125; trans. Arntzen, p. 57). She suggests that by contrast it might be "novel" (*mezurashiki* めづらしき) to record the life of a woman who is 'nobody,' by which she means an undistinguished member of the middle level of aristocracy. Thus, she declares that her diary will be a record of real life, not fantasy. This constitutes her statement of purpose. She composes her life story around her relationship with her husband Fujiwara no Kaneie 藤原兼家 (929–990), one of the scions of the most powerful branch of the Fujiwara 藤原 family, which dominated the politics of the era. The marriage experienced many ups and downs over a twenty-year period and ended in estrangement. The relationship was sustained by and occasionally rescued by the exchange of poetry between the couple. The diary made her reputation as a poet, something more difficult to achieve for a woman in her situation who spent her life within the home and never served at court. The prose style she crafted was adopted and further developed by Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部 in 'The Tale of Genji.'

'The Sarashina Diary' was written in the next generation after 'The Tale of Genji' and bears witness to the enthrallment that work of fiction worked upon its readers. The author, Takasue's Daughter unifies her life story around her infatuation with romantic fiction. On the surface, she laments how the fantasies engendered by reading fiction kept her from devoting herself to religious practices that might have resulted in a more successful life trajectory. On the other hand, many of the diary's most exquisite passages evoke moments of heightened perception often including poems. These passages testify to the underlying message of the diary: it was

through fiction and poetry that she came to appreciate the sadness and poignancy of life, the real starting point for spiritual aspiration. 'The Sarashina Diary' author is concerned with spiritual truth as well as the truth of 'real' life. Of all the Heian diaries, 'The Sarashina Diary' is the most carefully constructed with an eye to creating an overall pattern: juxtaposing images of light with those of dark and passages of prosaic self-reflection with passages of poetic exaltation. Like 'The Kagerō Diary,' it also served as the author's personal collection of poetry.

4. Introduction to the 'Ochikubo monogatari' and Its Characteristics as 'Low' Art

The 'Ochikubo monogatari' is roughly contemporary with 'The Kagerō Diary' and is often suspected of being one of the "old tales" that Michitsuna's Mother criticizes as "just so much fantasy" in the opening of her diary. The author is unknown as is the case for most of the earlier *monogatari*, but it is assumed that the authors were men writing for a largely female readership. As already mentioned, most of the early *monogatari* have been lost but it is evident that there was a lot of recycling of popular plot lines. In the 'Fireflies' ('Hotaru' 蛍) chapter 25 of 'The Tale of Genji,' Genji 源氏 censors his daughter's reading matter by forbidding tales of the persecuted stepdaughter type: 'There being so many of those old tales of the horribly cruel stepmother' (*mamahaha no harakitanaki monogatari mo ōkaru o* 継母の腹きたなき昔物語も多かるを; 'Genji monogatari,' SNKBZ 22: 216).

This remark shows how well-worn the plot line of the 'persecuted stepdaughter' had become by the time of 'The Tale of Genji.' The 'Sumiyoshi monogatari' 住吉物語 ('Tale of Sumiyoshi') is a surviving example of this 'Cinderella' plot archetype. Even though the extant manuscript of this tale is a much later redaction, dating from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, the mention of its title in other earlier works indicates that it was circulating in the tenth century. In fact, Mitani Kuniaki has proposed that

the 'Ochikubo monogatari' is in fact a parody of the 'Sumiyoshi monogatari' and other tales of the persecuted stepdaughter type (SNKBZ 17: 355). This interpretation accounts convincingly for the exaggerated character of the 'Ochikubo monogatari' and its inclusion of even scatological humor, not usually associated with the *monogatari* genre.

The first third of the 'Ochikubo monogatari' follows a typical Cinderella type story line. A beautiful, virtuous young woman is persecuted mercilessly by her stepmother until she comes to the notice of a handsome young lord who, after many trials, rescues her and they live happily ever after. What makes the 'Ochikubo monogatari' different from the usual Cinderella story is that the tale does not end with the couple's happy union. The story goes on to deal with the revenge the hero takes on the wicked stepmother by subjecting her and her family to many episodes of social humiliation. After the members of the family are utterly demoralized and finally blaming the stepmother for all their misfortune, the hero reverses all the wrongs allowing his wife to fulfill her desire to be filial toward her father. All the action of the story takes placed firmly in this world; there is no supernatural intervention. In this respect, the 'Ochikubo monogatari' fits Northrop Frye's category of the 'low mimetic mode' quite well. Frye describes the hero of this mode thus:

> If superior neither to other men nor to his environment, the hero is one of us: we respond to a sense of his common humanity, and demand from the poet the same canons of probability that we find in our own experience. This gives us the hero of the *low mimetic mode*, of most comedy and of realistic fiction. (Frye 1967, p. 34)

To be sure, the hero and heroine of the 'Ochikubo monogatari' are portrayed as slightly superior to other characters but not to any extent that takes them out of the realm of ordinary reality.

I summarize the characteristics of the 'Ochikubo monogatari' as 'low' art as follows.

– the plot is everything, nothing gets in the way of the rapid development of the story
– a relatively simple writing style (including the composition of poetry) with less evidence of careful revision
– the goal is entertainment

The 'Ochikubo monogatari' has a rapid-fire plot. The reader is constantly in suspense wanting to know what is going to happen next and engaged by the twists and turns in the plot. This brilliant plot is complemented by lively, witty dialogue. In fact, the story is predominantly told through dialogue. The 'Ochikubo monogatari' reads like a stage script that is very sparse in setting descriptions and stage directions. The absence of such information is not merely a case of the inattention on the part of the author. I think it was part of the expectations of the genre, since the situations and characters were recycled and the intended audience was so familiar with the social and physical settings for the action, there was no need for detailed description. The purely narrative sections of the text are written in a rather simple style with repetitive sentence patterns. Poetry is included in the tale because it was an integral part of social interaction between men and women in the Heian period, but the poems are written in a conventional manner. Fujii Sadakazu remarks in his introduction to the text that there are few poems likely to attract the attention of specialists in *monogatari* literature (SNKBT 18: 432).

Even the briefest summary of the 'Ochikubo monogatari' suggests how entertaining it is as a tale. For one thing, it fulfills what seems to be a universal romantic desire to see a young couple survive tribulations and achieve happiness. One of the trials to which the heroine is subjected is an attempted forced marriage to a lecherous elderly member of the household, the Medicine Bureau Clerk (Ten'yaku no Suke 典薬助). The foiling of this plan entails a lot of humor at the old clerk's expense, especially in the climactic scene when he is finally defeated by the feebleness of his own aged bowels. The revenge conspiracies devised by the hero all have an

amusing side to them as well as providing a satisfying repayment of wrongs. Moreover, the parodic aspect of the text adds another level of humor to the tale. It is not that humor may not serve serious purposes in art, but it must first be entertaining.

5. Principles of Translation and Challenges Posed by Different Types of Text

As mentioned in the introduction, the translation of the 'Ochikubo monogatari' has forced me to go against principles I had developed in the process of translating the women's diaries. These principles are only two and both rather straightforward:

– In general, translate as much as possible all that is in the text without adding anything or omitting even the smallest detail.
– For poems in the waka form: what counts is the content, so preserve as much as possible the order of the images and ideas in the waka without worrying about keeping rigidly to the form of 5-7-5-7-7 syllable lines.

Let us start with the problem of 'not adding.' As I started working on the 'Ochikubo monogatari,' I found myself having to add small bridging sentences to clarify the movements of the characters, but this is a small matter akin to the necessity of having to add subjects and pronouns for any translation from classical Japanese. I also began to add the odd adverb and specific verbs to qualify speech in order to relieve the monotony of repeated '[he] said,' '[she] said,' for example, with phrases such as 'he said frostily' or 'she retorted.' The bigger problem, however, became how to deal with quoted interior monologue.

5.1 Interior Monologue

The 'Ochikubo monogatari' not only tells its story through dialogue, but also through quoted interior monologue. I was very familiar with this technique since Michitsuna's Mother skillfully employs it in 'The Kagerō Diary' to portray complex and conflicted states of mind. This is best

shown through an example. The following passage comes from the middle of the diary when the marriage is reaching a crisis point. The author's husband is visiting ever more seldom. In the Heian period, women lived in their own homes and husbands came visiting. The author's sister resides in the same house in the south apartment, and at this juncture, she has a husband who visits faithfully and has shown up even though it is raining.

雨の脚おなじやうにて、火ともすほどにもなりぬ。南面にこのごろ来る人あり。足音すれば、「さにぞあなる。あはれ、をかしく来たるは」と、わきたぎる心をばかたはらにおきて、うち言へば、年ごろ知りたる人、むかひゐて、「あはれ、これにまされたる雨風にも、いにしへは、人の障りたまはざめりしものを」と言ふにつけてぞ、うちこぼるる涙のあつくてかかるに、おぼゆるやう、

思ひせく　胸のほむらは　つれなくて　涙をわかす　ものにざりける

と、くりかへしいはれしほどに、ぬるところにもあらで、よは明かしてけり。
('Kagerō nikki,' NKBZ 9: 148–149; spaces added to poem)

Ame no ashi onaji yō nite, hi tomosu hodo ni mo narinu. Minami omote ni kono goro kuru hito ari. Ashioto sureba, "Sa ni zo a[n] naru. Aware, okashiku kitaru wa" to, waki-tagiru kokoro oba katawara ni okite, uchi ie-ba, toshigoro shiritaru hito, mukai ite, "aware, kore ni masaretaru amekaze ni mo, inishie wa, hito no sawari-tamawaza[n] merishi mono o" to iu ni tsukete zo, uchi koboruru namida no atsukute kakaru ni, oboyuru yō,

Omoiseku / mune no homura wa / tsurenakute / namida o wakasu / mono ni zarikeru

to, kurikaeshi iwareshi hodo ni, nuru tokoro ni mo arade, yo wa akashitekeri.

With the sound of rain pattering on, it became time to light the lamps. These days, there is a man who visits the south apartment. When I hear his footsteps, I think, *so, he has come. How touching and charming of him to have come on such a night,* and right alongside that feeling comes boiling up a swirl of emotion; when I speak out, one of my attendants who has known me for years, faces me and says, "It is sad. In the old days, even rain and wind worse than this would not have kept him away." The moment she says this, I feel hot tears rolling down:

I stifle these thoughts
but the flames in my breast
do not appear,

they just go ahead and
boil up these tears.

repeating this over and over to myself, I stayed up all night in a place away from my bed. (‘The Kagerō Diary,’ trans. Arntzen, p. 219)

Note how effectively the quoted content of the author’s thoughts show her first inclination to be happy for her sister, which the next moment evokes pain at the contrast with her own situation, a pain which she wishes she could conceal not only from those around her but from herself. Only the composition of the poem gives her the psychological distance she needs to get through the night at “a place away from my bed.” This is ‘The Kagerō Diary’ prose style at its best, not a word wasted, delivering an event in the past as though it were occurring before the reader who is given privileged access to her mind. It was passages such as this which made me scrupulous about always translating quoted interior monologue explicitly and using italics to set it apart.

In the ‘Ochikubo monogatari,’ however, quoted interior monologue is used extensively as a kind of shorthand to narrate the story. The following example needs some context. The love story in ‘Ochikubo monogatari’ between the heroine and hero is mirrored in a lower social register by the relationship between the heroine’s serving woman Akogi あこぎ and the hero’s foster brother Tachiwaki 帯刀. In fact, it is the prior relationship between the two servants/companions that enables the main love story. These two characters are well developed and especially in the first part of the work often outshine the hero and heroine in intelligence and energy. This passage takes place after the rescue of the heroine has been achieved. The hero and Tachiwaki have broken into the storeroom where the heroine was imprisoned and have put her in a carriage which is about to carry them all to safety.

The passage in the original is one long sentence with two embedded quotations of interior monologue, the first one, Akogi’s own thought and the second one, a quotation of what she imagines the stepmother to be

thinking. These two levels of quotation are marked in the original with ‹…› for Akogi's thoughts and «…» for the stepmother's thoughts. The first translation renders the passage as literally as possible to make apparent the embedded quotations and the structure of the passage as a single sentence. The second translation gives a more naturalized reading experience.

> 「あこぎも乗れ」とのたまふに、〈かの典薬が《ちかぢかしくやありけむ》と北の方思ひたまはむ〉、ねたういみじうて、かのおこせたりし文、二たびながらおしまきて、ふと見つべく置きて、御櫛の箱ひきさげて乗りぬれば、をかしげにて、飛ぶやうにして出でたまひぬ。('Ochikubo monogatari,' SNKBZ 17: 137)

> *"Akogi mo nore" to notamau ni, ‹kano Ten'yaku ga «chikajikashiku ya» to Kita no Kata omoi-tamawamu›, netō imijūte, kano okosetarishi fumi, futatabi nagara oshimakite, futo mitsu beki okite, mi-kushi no hako hiki-sagete norinureba, okashige nite, tobu yō ni shite ide-tamainu.*

> [He] called down, "Akogi, you get in too," but [she] thought, *That Old Clerk, I bet the Mistress is still thinking, '[they] must have been intimate,'* finding this so annoying, she took the two letters that old man had sent, folding them lengthwise and leaving them where they would be sure to be found and, when she, having picked up and tucked under her arm her lady's comb box, had mounted [the carriage], delightfully as though flying, it departed.

> He called down, "Akogi, you get in too," but Akogi thought, "I bet the Mistress is still thinking that awful Old Clerk succeeded in getting intimate with my lady." Finding this so annoying, she took the two letters the old man had sent, folded them lengthwise and left them where they would be sure to be found. Then, with her Lady's comb box carefully tucked under her arm, she mounted the ox carriage, which departed with a sprightly lurch as though flying.

In translating 'The Kagerō Diary,' I strove to translate as literally as possible so long as the result was intelligible and aesthetically pleasing. Most of the time, this seemed attainable, but I trust that the example above reveals that such a strategy cannot be followed for the 'Ochikubo monogatari.' In the original, the long compound sentences of the tale keep the action moving quickly, but transposed to English (or I suspect any European

language) they become confusing as well as appearing clumsy and inept. Quoted monologue within quoted monologue also appears clumsy. For my translation of the 'Ochikubo monogatari,' I have ended up adding more than omitting but I count the paraphrasing of quoted monologue as a kind of omission.

5.2 Poetry

Moving to the issue of poetry translation, here is a poem from 'The Sarashina Diary' that exemplifies preserving order of content over syllable count. As mentioned earlier, the *waka* form of poetry consists of five lines with a syllable count for the lines following the pattern 5-7-5-7-7. This poem was the first poem of Takasue's Daughter to be included in an imperial anthology. It was included in the 'Shinkokinshū' 新古今集 ('New Collection of Ancient and Modern Verse,' ca. 1200, poem no. 56), chronologically the second of the two most important imperial anthologies.

> あさみどり　花もひとつに　霞みつつ　おぼろに見ゆる　春の夜の月 ('Sarashina nikki,' SNKBZ 26: 335; spaces added)
>
> *asamidori / hana mo hitotsu ni / kasumitsutsu / oboro ni miyuru / haru no yo no tsuki*
>
> Lucent green—
> misting over, becoming one
> with the blossoms too;
> dimly it may be seen,
> the moon on a night in spring.
> [3-8-5-6-7]
> ('The Sarashina Diary,' trans. Arntzen/Itō, p. 174)

The figures below the translation show that the syllable count in English differs from the original. Of course, it is common practice in the translation of poetry to privilege content over form even though form is so important to poetry. It is simply that form cannot often make the transition between languages. There are also good arguments for not trying to dupli-

cate Japanese syllable count in English because the sound structures of the two languages are so different. A Japanese speaker will hear at least three syllables in the word 'orange' (and need four characters of Japanese script to transpose it), whereas an English speaker will only register one.

With the *waka* poems in the 'Ochikubo monogatari,' however, I found the content sometimes too thin to turn into poetry. I resorted then to translating the poems as much as possible with the traditional syllable count of the waka form. If it does not result in the same musicality produced by the syllable pattern in Japanese, at least rigid adherence to form provides a unity that helps set the poems apart and encouraged more creativity with syntax. The following is an example of one of the heroine's poems from the early unhappy period in her life. A literal translation follows the original and then a translation that keeps to the 31-syllable count by adding a bit of padding:

> 世の中に　いかであらじと　思へども　かなはぬものは　憂き身なりけり
> ('Ochikubo monogatari,' SNKBZ 17: 20; spaces added)
>
> *yo no naka ni / ikade araji to / omoedomo / kanawanu mono wa / uki mi narikeri*
>
> In this world / how much I want not to be / even though I long thus / since [it is] not granted / I am wretched
>
> Although all I want
> in this sad world is simply
> to exist no more,
> since nothing ever goes my way,
> how wretched have I become.
> [5-7-5-7-7]

5.3 Names

The final issue I want to address is the absence of a name for the main heroine in the 'Ochikubo monogatari.' The central female characters in Heian *monogatari* are never given what constitutes the equivalent of a personal name in western languages. They acquire nicknames often taken

from images in poems that appear in the narrative along with the characters or from the names of the apartments in which they reside. This is the case for all the women characters in 'The Tale of Genji' for example. Lesser characters in serving positions are designated by nicknames derived from the governmental posts in which their male relatives serve. This fictional practice mirrors what is known of actual Heian-period social practice. The family identities of the prominent women writers of the Heian period are known, but, as with Michitsuna's Mother and Takasue's Daughter, we do not know the personal names of any of them. The heroine in the 'Ochikubo monogatari' is referred to in various ways, including:

– *Ochikubo no Kimi* 落窪の君 ('Lady of the Low Chamber')
– *kimi* 君, *onnagimi* 女君 ('the lady')
– *onna* 女 ('the woman')
– *aga kimi* あが君 ('my dearest/my lady,' used only by her husband)
– *Kita no Kata* 北の方 ('mistress of the household/the mistress,' used after she becomes the hero's wife in a separate residence)

The closest she has to a personal name is the first one in the list above, which is derived from her living quarters in the family home, the *ochikubo* 落窪 ('low chamber'). Her stepmother has assigned her to a small room that is on lower level than the rest of the house. Japanese traditional houses are raised up on posts so that air can freely circulate underneath, an important feature for residences in a climate with a hot, humid summer. There is uncertainty as what the *ochikubo* actually was in Heian residential architecture, but it seems to have been a chamber raised up only half a level and used most of the time as a multi-utility space. Apparently, however, when there was death in the family, it was where the corpse was laid out before cremation (Fujii, SNKBT 18: 411). Also, from the fact that the father passes the heroine on his way to the toilet, it appears that the room was placed close to the latrines. If that isn't bad enough, Mitani notes evidence that *kubo* 窪 was a euphemism for 'vagina' and that that connotation is likely present in the word *ochikubo*. It ex-

plains why the first time the hero hears the lady's nickname, he is so enraged by it that he commits himself to wreak revenge on the family (Mitani, SNKBZ 17: 354). It is obvious that the stepmother meant the nickname to be deeply insulting. This is the name of shame she leaves behind when she escapes the family home. Thus, electing to use 'Lady Ochikubo' as a name for the character throughout the novel was not possible in my opinion.

The other terms are obviously not names. *Onnagimi* and *onna* are often stand-ins for the personal pronouns that do not exist classical Japanese, in other words, they take the place of 'she.' Other times *onnagimi* is a term of respectful address: 'my lady,' 'your lady,' as in, 'Has your lady looked at the letter yet?' *Aga kimi* is an endearing form of address taking the place of 'you' in speech addressed by the hero to the heroine. After the heroine is established in a separate residence belonging to her husband, she is referred to as *Kita no Kata* ('Mistress of the Household,' literally, 'the Honorable Person of the Northern Quarters' because the central women's quarters were located in the north end of the house). The stepmother is also called *Kita no Kata*, as is the mother of the hero, so, for a substantial part of the novel, three principal characters are referred to by the same 'name.' Presumably readers of the time could tell easily from the context which *Kita no Kata* was present on the narrative stage, but it is very difficult for modern Japanese readers to keep track of the characters in the original judging from the necessity for explanatory notes in the scholarly editions, and if these designations are translated as is into English, it is confusing to say the least. This is the practice followed by Whitehouse and Yanagisawa in their translation from 1965 with the addition of footnotes to help identify which character is on stage.

Here we have a novel without a fixed name for one of its central characters. It points to a very different conception of personhood. It is as though a person's identity is not linked to a single personal name but rather exists as a complex of identities designated by forms of address and references

that are keyed to the relation of the addresser to the addressee. This phenomenon is connected to the fact that the narrator in classical Japanese *monogatari* assumes a position of deference to the tale's characters of superior status. Thus, even though the heroine of the 'Ochikubo monogatari' is being treated worse than the servants and has been given this horrible nickname, the narrator always relates her thoughts and actions with honorific suffixes. She is of royal lineage and the narrator never forgets that. To refer to the heroine by a personal name is simply unnatural within the classical narrative frame.

When it comes to translating this aspect of the *monogatari* into English, however, it cannot be rendered literally and still maintain a clear narrative line. One must choose between having the translation accurately reflect the social structure of the time or making the story work in English. I struggled with this problem through most of translating the first book of the tale. Although this may sound strange, I also had difficulty relating to the heroine. Without a personal name, she seemed elusive, as much as I could appreciate intellectually why she does not have a personal name. Then, at a certain point, the name Aya came to me. I didn't consciously devise it by looking up possible personal women's names in the Heian period. One day, it was just there, and it seemed to work. Here is the passage that introduces the heroine into the tale, in two versions, one more literal without a name for the heroine and the other with the name.

> また時々通ひたまふわかうどほり腹の君とて、母もなき御娘おはす。
> ('Ochikubo monogatari,' SNKBZ 17: 17)
>
> *Mata tokidoki kayoi-tamau wakōdōri hara no kimi tote, haha mo naki ōn-musume owasu.*
>
> He had another daughter who had lost her mother, a woman of royal lineage whom he had visited from time to time.
>
> He had another daughter named Aya born from a casual affair he had pursued with a woman of royal lineage, who had died when Aya was still a child.

Here is that introductory sentence again in my preferred translation within the full context of the extended description of the heroine, her place in the household and the bestowing of the nickname. I present it to show that the name does not have to be used all the time. I do not, for example have other characters call her by this name. It is useful, however, to have the name as a marker for an existence that the heroine has on her own.

> He had another daughter named Aya born from a casual affair he had pursued with a woman of royal lineage, who had died when Aya was still a child. Now, the man's wife and mistress of his household refused to consider this stepdaughter worthy even of inclusion among the household serving maids. (One can only wonder at the heart of such a stepmother.) Rather, she had her stepdaughter live in a room separated from the main part of the mansion and on a lower level, only two bays wide. Accordingly, she also forbade the other members of the household to address her stepdaughter as one would a woman of noble rank let alone a lady of royal lineage. When the stepmother came to decide what to call this stepdaughter, since, after all it seemed she felt obliged to pay some respect to the girl's lineage, she fixed on the mocking title 'Lady of the Low Chamber.'

I only use the name Aya when the character is acting on her own or dwelling on her own feelings or when it is absolutely necessary to differentiate her from other characters in the passage.

This problem occurs to a lesser extent with the names of other characters in the tale. The hero is identified with a personal name at first appearance, Michiyori 道頼, but he is referred to in the rest of the tale by his shifting official court titles. I have opted to use his personal name most of the time, often in conjunction with his current title, and to use his official court titles on their own sparingly. The heroine's maid servant/companion is given the name Akogi early in the narrative by the stepmother with no explanation, except that she needs a new name when she is posted to serve the family's Third Daughter (San no Kimi 三の君). As 'Akogi,' the maid servant is the most active and vivid character in the first book of the tale, critical to both the romance and the rescue. Once the heroine is established in a separate residence and Akogi becomes her household man-

ager, she steps into the background of the action, and at the same time is given a new title Emon 衛門 in keeping with her increased status. Emon means literally 'Guard' and we are to assume she is given this nickname because her husband Tachiwaki has been promoted within the palace guard. It is as Akogi, however, that her personality and history have become fixed in the reader's mind. It is hard to transfer that character to the new name Emon, at least for a reader used to western forms of narrative, so I have opted to note her new title but keep referring to her by Akogi for continuity's sake.

6. Free Translation

When I started the process of translation, I would never have predicted that I would stray so far from my principles as to invent a name for a character. Moreover, I always considered myself opposed to the adaptation or naturalization of texts from another culture. I am much more in favor of having mainstream western literary culture open itself up to challenging narrative styles from beyond its usual parameters. Yet, the more I progressed with the 'Ochikubo monogatari,' the more I felt I had to adopt a free translation style in order to be true to the genius of the original narrative. The author of this tale was first and foremost a storyteller wanting to captivate an audience. If the entertaining quality of this text is not communicated in an accessible way to an English reading public, the tale loses its life. And, of course, it easier to take liberties with a text that can be categorized as 'low literary art.' Perhaps, after all, there is a value judgment involved. I do not think the author of this tale took its writing as serious as the women diary authors did theirs. It is posited that the early *monogatari* are anonymous because their presumably male authors were embarrassed to have their names associated with such a frivolous activity as writing fiction in the vernacular (Fujii, SNKBT 18: 408–409). One could say that fiction writing was a lark for them. So, if the author of the

'Ochikubo monogatari' was playing, cannot the translator be allowed to play too?

7. Reflections on 'The Tale of Genji' and Its Two Most Recent Translations in English

The process of translating the 'Ochikubo monogatari' has opened up for me a new perspective on 'The Tale of Genji.' Since 'The Tale of Genji' has come to occupy an exalted position in the canon of Japanese classical literature, it is difficult to think of it as 'pop fiction,' even though we know from the author's diary and from the discussion of fiction in the novel itself, that Murasaki Shikibu was well aware how 'low' *monogatari* was regarded as a genre. The most famous case is in Chapter 25, where she has her main character Genji first voice the generally accepted condemnation of fiction as lies and fantasies to fool women, but then has him reconsider, even going so far as to suggest that tales might be considered complementary to the official histories because they enable insight into the private side of life ignored by the official histories. Murasaki Shikibu mentions in her diary the notice her tale attracted from the Emperor and male courtiers because it references the official histories. What she achieved in 'The Tale of Genji' was a perfect union of the 'low art' of early monogatari with the sophisticated and refined writing style in the vernacular language that was brought to a height of perfection in recording psychological states by Michitsuna's Mother in 'The Kagerō Diary.' One may say by analogy, that Murasaki Shikibu did for Heian *monogatari* what Shakespeare did for Elizabethan drama. By combining the best of 'high' and 'low' culture, she brought the genre to a zenith unmatched by any earlier or later author.

I had occasion to do a review of the most recent translation of 'The Tale of Genji' in English by Dennis Washburn (New York/London: Norton, 2015), and it was natural to draw comparisons with the other twenty-first century translation of 'The Tale of Genji' by Royall Tyler (New York: Viking, 2001). Tyler's translation remains the most skillfully literary and

literal translation to date. For example, Tyler manages to handle the challenge of the absence of names for main characters by adding, similar to modern Japanese editions of the tale, before every chapter a list of 'persons' in which he also recapitulates titles and relationships among the characters from earlier chapters. It works brilliantly and makes it possible, for example, to feel Genji's rise in status through the tale almost as if one were a member of that society. On the other hand, it also makes his translation a particularly demanding read. Washburn keeps the characters and their relationships clear by more extensive use of their nicknames along with their changing titles. In fact, Washburn has made many judicious additions to produce a 'Tale of Genji' with all the lights on and many its ambiguities smoothed out. As I summed up in the review:

> [Washburn] fully captures the enthralling quality of the original, with its reliance on dialogue and interior monologues, and finely tunes the diction to the age, status and emotional state of the characters, as well as to the demands of the social situation. His translation makes some aspects of the tale more prominent. While maintaining an appropriately elevated tone, he makes the sexual excitement seething below the surface of the story much more palpable. The same can be said for the political undercurrents in the narrative. The last ten chapters of *The Tale of Genji* have a darker tone and the main characters are more troubled. With exquisite irony, the narrative progressively reveals that the seductive myth of romance is quite empty at its core. Washburn's version brings this out powerfully. (Arntzen 2017)

After working on a new translation of the 'Ochikubo monogatari,' I have come to see these two translations in a slightly different perspective. Although both translators have done justice to the full complexity of the 'The Tale of Genji,' it seems to me that Tyler has recreated magnificently the 'high literary' side of the text while Washburn has brought out more fully its 'low literary' side. The critical importance of the 'Ochikubo monogatari' as a rare surviving example of early *monogatari* in its 'low' register has also become very apparent. This is particularly true, given its parodic aspect. Parody always reveals the essential features of a literary genre. Over and above the great socio-historical value of the text, it is invaluable

to see what a contemporary author found to make fun of in the genre of romance popular at the time.

8. Conclusion

The rise of schools of criticism such as cultural studies and postmodernism has thrown the categories of 'high' and 'low' literature out of favor. It seems that to speak of high literary value brings guilt by association with elite culture, which has acquired negative connotations. Moreover, in the global internet-driven culture we now inhabit, popularity is everything and considerations of high and low have fallen by the wayside.

I think there is still a place for a distinction between high and low in the understanding of literature, not as a value judgment but to distinguish between different kinds of art with different goals. I have come to this position not from rigorous theoretical debate but rather from engagement in a specific translation project. Anyone who translates works of premodern literature is necessarily a scholar-translator, as defined by Michael Emmerich in his recent study of the translation and canonization of 'The Tale of Genji' as "not simply [...] a scholar who also translates, but whose scholarship, and whose knowledge, is shaped by translation" (Emmerich 2013, p. 384). He has urged the recognition that

> Translation is in fact more than theoretical—it is a particularly intense form of research, a stream of the best sort of applied work, detailed practice gushing over the pebbles and sands of settled theories, sweeping them into new alignments and configurations. (Emmerich 2013, p. 395)

In scholarly work, hypotheses must always be firmly rooted in evidence. Translation—no matter how scholarly—requires a more even balance between analysis and creativity. The process of finding a way to make a primary text 'speak' in another language requires an understanding of the goals of the original text. The literary diaries such as 'Kagerō nikki' and 'Sarashina nikki' were written for a small, sophisticated audience, and the authors were aware of breaking new ground, so they took special care with

the crafting of their language. Adhering as closely as possible to the language of the original texts seems to achieve the best results.

The author of 'Ochikubo monogatari' was writing to amuse a broader audience already intimately familiar with the 'romance' genre. There was no need to describe settings in detail or labor over expressing subtle psychological states. Instead, the author concentrated on creating witty dialogue and a plot that keeps the readers engaged. A western reader, however, is missing not only the genre familiarity but also familiarity with the social context that forged the language of the tale. To make this text in translation more accessible, my approach to translation has become much more open in the process.

Notes

1 This translation is my working title. Previous English translation is 'The Tale of the Lady Ochikubo,' translated by Wilfrid Whitehouse and Eizo Yanagisawa (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1965).

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Abbreviations

NKBZ Nihon koten bungaku zenshū 日本古典文学全集
SNKBT Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei 新日本古典文学大系
SNKBZ Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū 新編日本古典文学全集

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