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Translating Contemporary Japanese Culture: Novels and Animation

A Dissertation Presented

by

Tadahiko Haga

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Comparative Literature

Stony Brook University

May 2012

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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This project aims to investigate the cultural relationship between Japan and the US through exploring how two specific genres of Japanese narrative art, novels and animation, are exported, translated, and received in the US. Since American readers were introduced to Japanese literature, they have made different kinds of canons for Japanese literature. For some time after WWII, American readers had entertained certain exotic or aesthetic images of Japanese literature associated with some specific terms such as “subtle” and “delicate.” American readers started changing the stereotypical images of Japanese literature as the relationship between Japan and the US changed, especially in 1980s, so that readers no longer try to find “exotic Japaneseness” in modern works of Japanese literature but, instead, read using new stereotypes. Two contemporary Japanese writers, Haruki Murakami and Banana Yoshimoto will be examined to explain how American readers read Japanese literature today. They are both very popular in Japan, especially among the younger generation, and their works have been translated into many languages and are well accepted in many foreign countries in both East and West.

Another example of narrative art which is exported and well received in the US is Japanese animation. Japanese animation, in fact, has huge popularity and a high reputation worldwide. We cannot ignore the way Japanese animation influences people and creates alternative images of Japanese culture today. Hayao Miyazaki and Mamoru Oshii, two famous directors of Japanese animation, provide an American audience with good examples of Japanese animation which are not only well accepted in the US, but also make Japanese people themselves think about their own identity as Japanese. Through their work, images of Japanese culture that an American audience could experience by watching their films and the role the works of animation have played in the process of cultural exchange between Japan and the US can be appreciated. This project attempts to describe the process of the formation of images of contemporary Japanese culture which has been established in the US and has in turn had an influence on Japanese people's self-identification based on translated works of Japanese popular culture in the US.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1- Haruki Murakami's <i>A Wild Sheep Chase</i> (1989): Postmodernity in Japan.....	15
Chapter 2- Banana Yoshimoto's <i>Kitchen</i> (1993): Contemporary Japanese Female Voice.....	68
Chapter 3- Hayao Miyazaki's <i>Princess Mononoke</i> (1999): The Myth of Harmony with Nature.....	118
Chapter 4- Mamoru Oshii's <i>Ghost in the Shell</i> (1995): Animation as a Site of Exchange/Interface/ Translation.....	152
Conclusion.....	190
Bibliography.....	196

Introduction

Overview

This project aims to investigate the cultural relationship between Japan and the US through exploring how two specific genres of Japanese narrative art, novels and animation, are exported, translated, and received in the US. I would like to start my discussion with the English translations of some contemporary Japanese novels. Since American¹ readers were introduced to Japanese literature, they have made different kinds of canons for Japanese literature. For some time after World War II, American readers had entertained certain exotic or aesthetic images of Japanese literature associated with some specific terms such as “subtle” and “delicate.” American readers started changing the stereotypical images of Japanese literature as the relationship between Japan and the US changed, especially in 1980s, so that readers no longer try to find “exotic Japaneseness” in modern works of Japanese literature but, instead read using new stereotypes.

In order to understand how American readers read Japanese literature today, I would like to examine two contemporary Japanese writers, Haruki Murakami and Banana Yoshimoto, who are both very popular in Japan, especially among the younger generation, and whose works have been translated into many

¹ When I use the word “American” through the whole dissertation, I refer to “US American” with some exceptions, such as articles or reviews written in English but published in other English speaking countries, such as Canada, and the UK.

languages and are well accepted in many foreign countries in both East and West.

As another example of narrative art which is exported and well received in the US, I would like to discuss Japanese animation, which, in fact, has huge popularity and a high reputation worldwide. We cannot ignore the way Japanese animation influences people and creates alternative images of Japanese culture today. As good examples of Japanese animation which are not only well accepted in the US but also make Japanese people themselves think about their own identity as Japanese, I will focus on the works of two famous directors, Hayao Miyazaki and Mamoru Oshii. I intend to explore the images of Japanese culture that an American audience could experience by watching their films and the role the works of animation have played in the process of cultural exchange between Japan and the US.

Cultural exchange is not a simple give-and-take relationship but a very intricate mutual procedure which can always change both source and target cultures at the same time even where it may seem to be a one-sided cultural exploitation or imperialism. Post-colonial studies usually aim to reverse Eurocentric perspectives from the position of colonized cultures or countries such as African, Indian, or Asian. Japan's history is somewhat unique as it has been both colonizer and colonized, although it was never technically colonized in political terms. Japan has been long influenced by other cultures, such as Chinese culture in the early times and Western culture in the modern times, through which it has developed its own hybrid culture. Many studies have been done about the reception of European and American culture in Japan, but there have been few

about the reverse in the contemporary situation.

This project attempts to describe the process of the formation of the images of contemporary Japanese culture which have been established in the US and have in turn had an influence on the Japanese people's self-identification based on translated works of Japanese popular culture in the US. Lawrence Venuti says that translation has a big power in cultural exchange and plays a great role in the understanding of other cultures because it not only creates representations of source language culture but also changes the domestic cultural canons and conceptual paradigms in target language culture. Susan Bassnett also says that Translation Studies is a vast and complex academic field which even includes Comparative Literature inside of it, because, as Carol Maier says, translation involves every resource of literary criticism, such as historical, biographical, theoretical, philological, and intertextual. Through the analysis of the formation of the images of Japanese culture in the US based on translations of novels and animation, I would like to prove the validity of those theorists' arguments and offer some case studies specific to translation between Japanese and English taking account of the cultural relationship between Japan and the US to the field of Translation Studies.

My arguments (opening questions)

It is always difficult to find the specificity or particularity of our own culture when we live in that culture. When I started reading Murakami's novels in my teens, I did not care so much about the Western influence in Murakami's

novels because I myself was totally immersed in Americanized Japanese culture, going to McDonald's, watching Star Wars, listening to Michael Jackson, and wearing Levi's jeans exactly as the protagonist in Murakami's novels. When I started living in the US and looking at Japanese culture from the outside, I realized that this was what American cultural imperialism in Japan was. When one of my American roommates asked me if Japan was a "kind of" district of China one day, I was shocked and speechless. I also grew aware of the fact that American media rarely reported any news from Japan. It was then that I came to realize that there existed an unequal economic and political power relationship between Japan and the US. American people did not care or know anything about Japanese culture, even though Japanese people knew a lot of American and Western culture. In fact, I realized that I was wrong because I did not know really anything about Western culture, either, when I started learning in the Comparative Literature Department at Stony Brook University in NY and having communication with people from all over the world. I still remember the day when I met a graduate student in the same department for the first time. When I asked her where she was from, she said, "Well, it is a little bit complicated to say that," and explained that she was born and grown up in Hungarian language and culture, but she was a Romanian, that is, she was from Transylvania. I did not expect that someone from Europe would answer to such a question like that. Even though I had learned European history at school in Japan, the information had been dead for me, and finally became alive at the moment I met her. What I thought I knew about Western culture was all just superficial and very

stereotypically beautiful and idealized images of the West, as we often see in Hayao Miyazaki's films. Through these kinds of experiences, I've learned how important it is to always have critical points of view to both Western and Eastern culture and both Western and Eastern people's points of view to other cultures, which I would like to keep in mind through this dissertation.

Throughout this whole project, I would like to argue several points. First, American capitalistic cultural imperialism which people think is now dominant all over the world cannot be equated with the term "globalization." People started using the term globalization with a good connotation as a situation of the world without borders, but now it is often referred to and criticized as the term which implies cultural exploitation of poor countries under the action of corporate capital and the nation-state system. As one of the purposes of this project is to deconstruct the conception of Japanese culture into a much more complicated and never fixed compound, American culture should not be treated as simple or fixed either. Even in the process of cultural exchange between two countries with unequal political, economic, and social relationships, one culture cannot just overwhelm the other culture one-sidedly. By having a big influence on the other culture, the source culture itself also cannot help changing in different ways. Even though American culture seems to dominate other cultures and sustain its impact on them, we always have to doubt the fixed image of American culture. Does what we call "American culture" really exist? Can we have clear-cut borders between cultures in the first place? Isn't the "American culture" the mixed imaginary conception created by all agents who participate in the global cultural

exchanges?

Second, the relationship between American and Japanese cultures is not as simple as many people might imagine in the context of post-colonialism. Other than the question of whether or not we can really delineate the image of each culture clearly, there is also another question of whether or not we can reduce the problem into the simple argument that other cultures are always oppressed and exploited by American culture under the name of capitalism. It is too simple to claim that Japanese people can have a much better representation of American culture than American people can have of Japanese culture because of the unequal political and economic relationship between the two cultures and the consequent difference of the quantity of information each one can get about another. It is not only the quantity but also the quality of information that matters with regard to the representation of another culture. Even though we may have a lot of information about others, we may end up stressing the biased stereotypical image of other cultures if the variations of information are too limited. I would always like to keep in mind the question of whether it is Japanese or American culture that is the real oppressor of the other culture. If such a question is too simple, then how should we look at the relationship between the two cultures? How do we focus on the process in the cultural exchange more than on the result in a practical way without falling into the simple anti-Euro-centric or anti-American-cultural-imperialistic discussion repeated over and over again in the field of post-colonial studies?

Third, the dissemination of contemporary Japanese culture today does not

follow the way traditional Japanese culture was introduced into foreign countries in the past. After World War II, many kinds of Japanese culture such as novels, poetry, paintings, religions, and customs were introduced into the US, supported by both Japanese and American official institutions. Today, some types of Japanese culture, such as contemporary novels and animation, are spreading all over the world independently of the nation-state system. According to Arjun Appadurai's essay "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination" (2001), the former can be called "globalization from above," and the latter "globalization from below" or "grassroots globalization." As Appadurai claims, we have to know and study both types of globalization in order to grasp the complexity of the globalization of Japanese culture in the East and West today. How is the way the representation of classical Japanese culture was established different from the way that the representation of contemporary Japanese culture is now being formed in the US? Is the "grassroots globalization" of Japanese aspects of culture such as animation also going to be "globalization from above" eventually institutionalized under the big power of corporate capital? How does the popular reception of contemporary Japanese culture differ in Eastern and Western countries?

Methodology

Since I would like to focus on both the process and the outcome of the reception of Japanese culture in another culture, I believe that Translation Studies can very usefully serve as the basic theoretical background of my project. The

conception of translation that we have today is quite different from the one at the time when Walter Benjamin or Roman Jakobson was talking about translation. Benjamin says that the task of translator is to find the pure language concealed in the relationship between languages through translations. For Benjamin, a translator is an outside observer with a higher status and only a translator can reach the true language. Similarly, Jakobson's model of communication indicates that a translator is a transparent bearer who just transfers a message between a writer and a reader. Our conception of translation or translator today is no longer a metaphysical or transparent one like these old conceptions. In his book discussing the relationship between translation and subjectivity, Naoki Sakai says that a translator is both an addressee and not an addressee at the same time. The translator is not a real audience in the original language culture but is rather a putative audience, not an addresser in the original text, but an addresser in the secondary text (translation). According to Sakai's conception of translation, a translator is not just a transparent messenger of information but rather both an addressee (in the original) and an addresser (in translation). Therefore, within the ego of the translator, we can see some internal splits: the split between an addresser and an addressee and the split between "an addresser and/or an addressee" and a translator. As Suzanne Jill Levine says, the task of the translator is no longer just to transfer the message as a transparent bearer but to achieve what she calls "trans-creation" (creative transposition), having an adequate interpretation of an alien code according to the cultural context behind the original text. This modern conception of translation which takes into consideration the

complicated role of a translator would greatly help us understand what is happening in the process of cultural exchange.

As one of the main foci of the modern conceptions of translation, “cultural translation” would be one more very important keyword in my project. Generally speaking, “cultural translation” is how to translate, interpret, and accept other cultures when we meet unknown different cultures. Kevin Robins says that “cultural translation” is to question our relationship to others, other cultures, other states, other histories, other experiences, traditions, peoples, and destinies. In the process of globalization, he says, translation plays a great role, but we cannot avoid having unequal power relationships at the moment of translating, especially between “Western” and “others.” As a result of the unequal relationships between cultures derived from unequal political-economic relationships, many prejudiced and biased translations and interpretations of other cultures are produced. Japan’s unique history as both colonizer and colonized means that Japanese culture has been received in very different ways in other countries in East and West. With regard only to the case of Japan and the US, the power relationship has been changing continuously depending on the time period or the field of cultural exchange. I intend not only to present a close reading of a cultural text bound to a specific time and place but also to explore the text in different contexts in the US and how it functions in the processes of cultural exchange between Japan and the US through an analysis of the text’s translation and reception.

Chapter outline

The first chapter starts with an overview of how the canon of Japanese literature has been established in the US since World War II. After World War II, American readers started establishing an alternative exoticized and aestheticized image of Japan discarding the previous image of Japan as a bellicose and threatening country. In the process of establishing a new canon of literature, works by three writers, Junichirou Tanizaki, Yasunari Kawabata, and Yukio Mishima, were most preferred and translated. The canon that was mainly based on these writers' works had been a stable and influential standard for American readers and academic Japanese Studies in the US until recently. The standard tended to create a stereotypical image of Japanese culture and ironically even had an influence on revising the Japanese canon in Japan itself. From the 1980s through 1990s as the political and economic relationship between Japan and the US changed, Americans started rethinking the standard and doubting the stereotypical image of Japan. Haruki Murakami is one of the most popular contemporary Japanese writers, and many of his works have been translated in different languages and played a great role when American readers revised their old image of Japanese literature and made an alternative image of postmodern Japanese literature.

Haruki Murakami is also a good example with which to explore how American cultural imperialism has worked in Japanese culture. His writing style is greatly influenced by styles of contemporary American writers and quite different from traditional Japanese writers', exhibiting a lot of materials and events related to American culture and history, especially after World War II, as

well as Japanese culture and history. I would like to discuss how this seemingly Americanized writing style could be read by American readers, who could feel nostalgia in reading his novels as well as Japanese readers could. Since Murakami's writing style is created under the influence of contemporary American writers, it has many English-like expressions or phrases in Japanese, which make Japanese readers feel as if they were reading translations of contemporary American novels. In Murakami's writing style, Japanese readers of younger generations would find the representative voice of themselves living a Westernized modern life style, while at the same time still being bound to Japanese history and culture and having a nostalgic feeling for the beauty of traditional Japanese culture being lost in modernization as well. Some of Murakami's works, such as *Norwegian Wood* (1987) and *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (1994), are translated in English by two famous translators, Alfred Birnbaum, who translated many of Murakami's early works, and Jay Rubin, who translated some of Murakami's later works and got the fourteenth Annual Noma Award for the Translation of Japanese Literature in 2003 for his translation of Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*. Wendy Lesser, comparing their translations, claims that Birnbaum's catches the characteristics, such as rhythms and tones, of Murakami's original writing style better than Rubin's, even though Rubin's translation is perfect and looks very faithful to the original in a grammatical sense, which I quite agree with. What would cause these differences? How can we have the same impression of the translations even though Lesser does not know the Japanese language while I can read the Japanese originals? I

would like to examine what is happening in the process of the translation of Murakami's unique writing style into English regarding these kinds of interesting examples in this chapter.

The second chapter focuses on the image of contemporary Japanese women and their culture in translation. Banana Yoshimoto's novels are very popular, especially among the younger generation of Japanese women and are also translated and highly estimated in many different languages. The Italian version of *Kitchen*, Yoshimoto's debut novel, became a best seller and won the Scanno Literary Prize in 1993. On the other hand, she is sometimes labeled as "the perfect pop-culture disposable author" because she is a typical writer who is completely indifferent to literary tradition and uses a very simple writing style derived from comic books, animation, films, popular songs, and TV. Her writing style, which really represents young people's speech on the street, owes a lot to a specific Japanese *shojo* (girl) culture as a metaphor for Japanese consumer capitalism. In her book discussing international activities by contemporary young Japanese women, Karen Kelsky explains Japanese women's desire to escape from the male-dominant traditional society in Japan by means of studying a foreign language, experimenting with foreign films, working or studying abroad, and engaging with foreigners. I would like to examine how the contemporary Japanese novels by Banana Yoshimoto would be read by readers in different cultures in translation if those novels were the means through which Japanese women escape the traditional patriarchal Japanese society or represented their real female voices oppressed in the society. I would also like to explore how this

specific Japanese *shojo* culture would be received outside Japanese culture.

The third and fourth chapters are about works by two of the most famous Japanese directors of animation film, Hayao Miyazaki and Mamoru Oshii. In his works, Miyazaki has always dealt with the theme of living in harmony with nature which has often been a motif for Japanese classical art, such as poetry and painting. This conception largely derives from the Japanese religious perspectives of Zen-buddhism or Shintoism. Miyazaki's works often present us with the question of how we can live in harmony with nature by showing a nostalgic image of people's lives in close contact with nature before modernization, their struggle to conquer nature after that and the following dilemma. In her book discussing contemporary Japanese animation, Susan J. Napier points out that Miyazaki's narrative strategies for how to describe the relationship between humans and nature is quite different from American animation, such as Disney's. While in Miyazaki's works nature remains beautiful but is also a threatening other which human technology can never agree with in the end, Disney's films simplify the problem by showing a very utopian image of all species living together in peace, which totally ignores the complexity and plurality of human life. This doesn't simply mean that Japanese people are more aware of the issue of ecology than American people but shows Japanese people's fear of losing their own beautiful way of living with nature in the past. Miyazaki's films obviously function as a criticism of Japanese modernization and consumer capitalism and must work the same way anywhere in the world. I would like to develop this discussion much further taking into consideration both Japanese and American religious and

cultural backgrounds.

While Miyazaki's films are extremely popular among diverse audiences, Mamoru Oshii's animation works strongly appeal to anime fans in Japan and the US having a critical and cult success. *Ghost in the Shell*, one of his representative films, was released worldwide simultaneously in Japan, the US, and Europe, in 1995. One of the reasons why this film has attracted so many people in the world could be its original mixture of Sci-Fi themes which have been seen in many American Sci-Fi films and novels and its original adaptation of the concept of cyberspace mixed with Japanese religious perspectives. Having been greatly influenced by a lot of American films and novels and in turn influenced American films such as *Matrix*, this film has become a site of exchange/interface/translation of two different cultures as the film shows a metaphorical image for the unification of Japanese and American religious perspectives in the end of the film. This case of cultural exchange shows that the unequal relationship between Japanese and American culture, even though it still remains, works differently depending on the place of the exchange and could work in opposite directions. I would like to explore how this film, in which the "Japaneseness" is not obvious but potential, can be received in different cultural contexts and how this film plays against or for the American audience's expectation regarding Japanese high-tech pop culture or their techno-Orientalism.

Chapter 1

Haruki Murakami's *A Wild Sheep Chase* (1989): Postmodernity in Japan

An international symposium, “A Wild Haruki Chase: How the World Is Reading and Translating Murakami,” was held at the University of Tokyo on March 25, 2006, with two workshops following the next day. Over twenty translators and critics from around the world joined this gathering to discuss issues on the works of Haruki Murakami and the translations of his books into various languages. In the workshop “Representation: The Murakami Boom and Globalization: Is This Japonisme or Universal Literature?” participants from France, Brazil, Canada, Germany, South Korea, Hong Kong, Russia, Poland and the US reported how Murakami’s works were being read in their culturally, politically, and economically diverse countries. Interestingly, participants from English-speaking Canada and the US seemed to avoid specific reports on how their countries’ people were reading Murakami whether the participants were conscious of avoiding or not. Scholars from countries with globally subdominant languages, on the other hand, had determined attitudes and concrete points of view on how their people were reading Murakami—as if they were representative of the readers in their countries. This phenomenon is not new and aggressive and confident third-world speakers and deliberate speakers from politically or economically advantaged countries—because of the latter group’s presumed

guilty consciences—are often observed at symposiums and conferences. Of course, speakers' varied levels of aggression might have depended on how the moderator led the discussion.² However, the Canadian and American speakers' reluctance to arrive at simple conclusions about how English-speaking readers accept Murakami's works reveals an unconscious prejudice that the readers in English-speaking countries—into which more works of Murakami have been translated than in European or Latin-American countries and in which fewer difficult political or historical relationships with Japan or Japanese culture exist than in East Asian countries previously colonized by Japan—must be so diverse that critics can not generalize about them. It is true that English-speaking countries have been translating the works of Murakami longer and have produced more reviews and academic articles on Murakami than other countries. However, this does not necessarily mean that American readers are reading the works of Murakami in more varied ways than readers in other countries. On the contrary, American mass media may work on readers' consciences, forcing their readings of Murakami to be informed by stereotypical images of Japanese culture.

In this chapter, I will examine how Americans have read the works of Murakami in translation and how they have either constructed or renewed the images in Murakami's novels through various discourses, including academic

² Inuhiko Yomota, the facilitator of the workshop, is a professor of Meiji Gakuin University who often pays a lot of attention to the issues of colonialism, post-colonialism, or unequal relationships between countries caused by political or economical conditions. At the end of discussion, he offered a suggestive question asking what the "world" in the title of the symposium meant. Did the word "world" just mean the economically or politically powerful countries in today's global conditions since countries like Iraq and North Korea were not invited to the symposium? (Shibata et al. 224). This question could have influenced the theme of the symposium itself.

articles, books, and critics' reviews, and how the translations have influenced the way American readers have built the images of Murakami's novels and Japanese literature. In the process of the examination, I would like to reveal how American critics and scholars have discussed Murakami's postmodern characteristics in the novels. Linda Hutcheon maintains that the postmodern novel must "de-doxify" our cultural representations by its self-reflexivity, must be the mixture of parody (metafiction) and history (politics), must be the conflation of high art and mass culture, must both install and subvert the teleology, closure, and causality of narrative, and must reject the totalization of history. Murakami's novels, which have characteristics common in modernism and postmodernism, in fact, do not satisfy all these conditions of a postmodern novel in Hutcheon's terms. Minako Saito examines how Japanese reviewers and critics have read Murakami's novels and concludes that Murakami's works are interactive texts in the sense that they make the readers want to say something through the texts or to play with the metaphors or puzzles in the texts as if they were playing a game. She says that Murakami is one of few writers who succeeds favorably with the many critics who exercise the structuralist, post-structuralist, or post-modernist theory of literature popular in the 1980s through the 1990s, and, therefore, both Japanese critics and general readers are as involved with Murakami's books as when playing popular computer RPGs (27-29). I would like to show how American critics also have enjoyed this postmodern game in reading Murakami's novels in this commercially globalized world in which American and Japanese people share the same enjoyment beyond the borders of cultural difference.

Literary reviews

According to the study by Edward Fowler, Edwin McClellan, and Lawrence Venuti, in the 1950s, quite before Haruki Murakami appeared in the US, American readers held exotic views of Japanese literature and culture. They had established a canon of Japanese literature based largely on the works of post-World War II Japanese writers such as Yasunari Kawabata, Yukio Mishima, and Junichirou Tanizaki, the “Big Three in Japanese literature.” This standard produced stereotypical “exotic,” “subtle,” and “delicate” images of Japanese literature and culture and even influenced Japanese people’s conceptions of their own literature and culture, with English translations of the works of modern Japanese literature having a great role in reinforcing these stereotypical images. In his essay, “On Trying to Translate Japanese” (1989), Edward Seidensticker, one of the most important translators of modern Japanese literature in the post-World War II period, claims that English is a product of a religion which produces “individual responsibility,” while Japanese is a product of a religion which produces “resignation” and one of the characteristics of Japanese language is “ambiguity.” It is reasonable to assume that English translations of modern Japanese novels by translators such as Seidensticker, who drew from preconditioned images, influenced American readers’ stereotypical conceptions of Japanese literature and culture. As Jan Fontein reports, in the 1980s and 1990s the political and economic relationship between Japan and the US changed, with Americans beginning to rethink stereotypical images of Japanese literature and

culture. They looked to new, unexpected, or experimental contemporary art rather than re-confirming stereotypical notions by focusing on traditional art. It was in such a circumstance that *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Haruki Murakami's first book translated into English (originally published in 1982 in Japan), was published in 1989 in the US.

Many of the reviews of the book outlined two patterns, the first one of which was that English-speaking reviewers described the novel as something new and quite different from traditional post-World War II Japanese literature, paying attention to Murakami's writing style and insisting that it was influenced by contemporary American novels rather than Japanese novels. For example, Herbert Mitgang contrasted Murakami's *A Wild Sheep Chase* with the novels of Kobo Abe, Yukio Mishima, and a Nobel laureate in literature Yasunari Kawabata, and compared Murakami with Kurt Vonnegut, Raymond Carver and John Irving, and argued that his novel was not a traditional Japanese fiction but his style and imagination were closer to that of those American writers (15). Alan Cheuse also compared Murakami with Tom Robbins and Thomas Pynchon and said that American readers would be reminded of those American writers when they read Murakami's greatly entertaining *A Wild Sheep Chase*, and argued that Murakami turned over "the notion of Japanese insularity," which is a legacy of traditional Japanese literature ("Of Japan's" 6). Brad Leithauser argued that it was quite symbolic that *A Wild Sheep Chase* started the story with the day of Mishima's suicide on November 25, 1970, which indicated Murakami's departure and deviation from the past and traditional Japanese literature, and even said "The old

literary guard is dying off, and their governing aesthetic with them” (186). Debbie Sontag also agreed with this perspective that Murakami, who is very popular with young Japanese, is not “an update of the refined, grand, tradition-soaked fiction of Yukio Mishima or Yasunari Kawabata” (7C). These reviewers, however, mentioned Japanese writers from whom they believed Murakami had departed, largely limited to Kawabata, Mishima, and Tanizaki, and occasionally Abe and Endo, demonstrating that the canon of Japanese literature in the US was already quite strong and stable at that time.

The second pattern that the reviews outlined was that they emphasized how Murakami’s novel was inundated by Western cultural icons—music, foods, movies, writers, and history, with Murakami at the same time deliberately discarding traditional Japanese cultural signs such as *kimono*, *kabuki*, *noh*, and the tea ceremony, which the readers had hitherto normally expected to find in the Japanese novel. Mitgang was naively surprised that there was not *kimono* in the story and the main characters, both men and women, wore Levis (“Young” 15). Cheuse argued that *A Wild Sheep Chase* was “a buoyant critique of everything in Japanese culture that we believe” and it surprised American readers, who had sympathy with the main male character in the story because he seemed “as estranged and alienated from his own way of life as we do – at least at first glance” (“Of Japan’s” 6). When he used “we” in his review, it obviously meant American readers and it showed that they read Murakami’s novel as their own story. To emphasize that, Cheuse pointed out that the main character read Western books, such as Mickey Spillane and Allen Ginsberg, and listened to Western

music, such as the Doors, the Stones, the Byrds, Deep Purple and Moody Blues (“Of Japan’s” 6). Contrasting to contemporary fiction or nonfiction Western writers who were eager to take exotic decorations into their books, such as “sushi bars, kimono shops, tea ceremonies, moss gardens, painted screens, temple gongs, sumo matches, tatami mats,” Leithauser argued that Murakami avoided using those traditional forms of Japanese dress, scenes, customs, and entertainments, leaving them to the foreign writers (184). Sontag was also surprised that there was no *kimono*, no tea ceremony, and no indication of Japanese settings in Murakami’s book, and argued that Murakami, who lived in Rome and translated some works of American writers, such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and John Irving, represented an alternative Japanese reality, which was modern and Westernized, and therefore, was difficult to distinguish from any other part of the developed world, because “In Murakami’s Tokyo, the drink of choice is coffee, the music pop, the women loose. The tight-family togetherness of Japanese culture is gone; in its place is divorce, one-night stands and empty success” (Sontag 7C).

Cecilia Segawa Seigle focused on Murakami’s almost self-conscious Westernization as the reason why his novel appealed to the young audience so much, as if “the author painstakingly avoided any reference (other than geographical names) to Japan” (Seigle 163). She also noted, “The music, books, food, and everything else the protagonists favor are American or European (Seigle 163). The English-language reviewers were so shocked by the missing traditional Japanese cultural icons in Murakami’s novel that they continually mentioned the issue and were eager to persuade themselves that the book was a representation of

contemporary Japanese society and culture. However, was it not Orientalism to expect the “Japanese” in a Japanese writer’s novel even though Murakami’s strategy may have been to overemphasize Western culture in his novel? Or were Americans trying to find similarities between their lives and Japanese lives in order to dissolve their anxiety about the worldwide threat of the growing Japanese economy? Such reviews, broadly circulated at the time of the book’s first appearance in English, regarded Murakami’s novel as a radical break from previous Japanese novels.³

As a matter of fact, American reviewers and critics’ point of view about Murakami’s *A Wild Sheep Chase* was quite similar to the reaction of many Japanese reviewers and critics back when his first novel, *Hear the Wind Sing*, was published in Japan in 1979. Murakami’s light, pop writing style, full of Western cultural icons, totally different from the heavy and serious writing style of previous generations of Japanese literature was first regarded as the main characteristic of his novel, whether they liked the style or not. However, when *A Wild Sheep Chase* was published in Japan in 1982, Japanese reviewers and critics started paying more attention to other aspects of the novel from different perspectives of narratology to the writing style. Similarly, American readers perceived traditional novels as exotic or mysterious, and Murakami’s novel’s

³ Among many reviewers who tended to focus on Murakami’s “in-Japaneseness,” Ann Arensberg exceptionally talked about a narrative aspect of the novel and the multiplicity of genres in it. She wrote: “Europeans, Latin Americans, and now the Japanese writer Haruki Murakami are more attracted to the metaphysical aspect of the category [the hard-boiled detective story], making use of its depiction of humanity’s existential predicament and paying less attention to rapidly paced plot and violent death” (BR 82). She had already captured one of the characteristics of Murakami’s novel in this early phase, that is, the mixture of various genres, such as a detective story, myth, and a fairy tale, which many critics picked up later when his other novels were published.

many similarities with the contemporary American novel allowed American readers to sympathize with this “new” Japanese novel. At the same time, its “Japaneseness” offered clues to understanding contemporary Japanese mentality and culture. As Debbie Sontag wrote, “Murakami’s voice, in smooth, slangy translation by Alfred Birnbaum, seems so familiar: a bit of Raymond Chandler here, Raymond Carver and Kurt Vonnegut there. But there is also an accent, an inflection, a listlessly ironic tone that makes this apparently American-influenced writing different, foreign”(7C). The English-language reviewers maintained a somewhat simplified image of Haruki Murakami as a rebel against traditional Japanese literature and culture, and as a representative of contemporary Japanese society and culture when more of his books were translated and published in the US.

When two collections of contemporary Japanese short stories, *Monkey Brain Sushi* and *New Japanese Voices*, both of which included Murakami’s story, were published in 1991, American reviewers extended the image of Murakami to all the writers in the book, often emphasizing the difference of contemporary Japanese writers from the past generation as well as the Westernized Japanese culture on which each story was created. One of the reviews of these two books said that “Ennui, distress, confusion, anger, arrogance and one-upmanship” were common themes among the writers in the books, which would have given a shock to “western admirers of Mishima, Kawabata, Endo, or the 11th-century Lady Murasaki, author of the ‘Tale of Genji,’” and explained that this happened because the category of the stories in the book was no longer “pure literature” but

“fiction” as a product of the 1980s, “when American lifestyle became more natural to city-dwellers than traditional Japanese ways” (“Fact” 88). Joseph Coates also said that the writers in the book reflected contemporary Americanized Japan in ways that would startle most American readers more than it would have done to older Japanese readers, and similarly argued that the stories in the book mostly represented the contemporary literary trend of “fiction” which was opposed to the traditional literary categories of “pure literature” (3). Mitgang again grieved over the Americanization of the stories of the writers in the books, who were born and raised in an Americanized postwar Japan, saying, “Their generation grew up with fast food rather than the tea ceremony. In fact, these authors are so strongly influenced by the American presence, including the omnipresence of American television and literature, that they call what they write ‘fuikkushon’ (an Anglicism for fiction)” (“Tales” C14). Mitgang criticized the writers for their imitating contemporary American writers and said, “That’s not the way to become a Kawabata, a Mishima, a Tanizaki or an Abe for their own time” (“Tales” C14).

The problem is that American reviewers contrasted contemporary Japanese writers to few standard writers such as Kawabata, Mishima, and Tanizaki, (and even jumping to Lady Murasaki in the eleventh century), probably because their knowledge about Japanese literature was limited to precisely these few authors. They also missed each writer’s particularity by paying too much attention to Americanization, which, after all, was only one aspect of the writers’ cultural backgrounds and Western influences may have only slightly affected their

writing. In addition, the reviewers forgot that Japanese culture had been Westernized since the mid-nineteenth century and the phenomenon had not occurred abruptly at the time the novels were published. These reviews may have been influenced by Alfred Birnbaum, who edited *Monkey Brain Sushi*, translated many of its stories, and wrote, “The choice of a Western epithet [Anglicism *fuikkushon*, “fiction”] is telling: these voices bear little resemblance to Kawabata, Tanizaki, and Mishima, or even Abé, Endo, and Oé – staples of the older diet. If anything, the new writers look to the American ‘city novel’ for their style and approach. They were all born and raised in an Americanized postwar Japan” (1). The editor and the publisher emphasized how different these contemporary Japanese writers were from their predecessors in order to sell the book, and hoped to give American readers a fresh impression of Japanese writers, and literary reviewers borrowed the discourse, which demonstrates that the translator can control the direction of the media through the works chosen for translation and the quality of the translation.

When Murakami’s three other books, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (1991; originally published in 1985 in Japan), *The Elephant Vanishes* (1993; an American original collection of Murakami’s short stories), and *Dance Dance Dance* (1994; originally published in 1988 in Japan) were sequentially translated and published in the US, the responses of the reviewers and critics were similar as they were all essentially relying on earlier analyses, remarking on the stylistic break from traditional Japanese novels and the numerous references to Western culture. For example, in an article on his

interview with Haruki Murakami in 1992, Jay McInerney said that Murakami's works represented "a break from the subject matter of Murakami's immediate predecessors, from, for instance, the bored esthetes of Yasunari Kawabata, the stiff aristocrats of Junichiro Tanizaki or the tortured young men of Mishima" (BR28). It is questionable to call a difference between generations of twenty-four to sixty-three years "immediate" because Murakami was born in 1949, Kawabata was born in 1899 and died in 1972, Mishima was born in 1925 and died in 1970, and Tanizaki was born in 1886 and died in 1965, and it is quite doubtful if even Mishima, the youngest of the three, can be called "an immediate predecessor" to Murakami. There were many writers between those three and Murakami, and Kawabata, Mishima, and Tanizaki were again mentioned to confirm Murakami's rebellion against traditional Japanese literature.

Stating that Murakami provided American readers with alternative views on Japan rather than "a magnet for expatriate adventuring" or "a predator nation out to destroy the American way of business – a convenient scapegoat in a melodrama of economic espionage," David Leavitt also focused on Western cultural icons found in Murakami's first collection of short stories, *The Elephant Vanishes*, and said that Japan in Murakami's stories was "an unquestioned hybrid of tradition and export" and the readers had to read many pages until they found "Tokyoite" signs and that it was not in America but in Japan (349). And again, Leavitt emphasized that the settings of the stories were Japan but the cultural icons were almost always Western, saying, "His narrators – young, urban, downwardly mobile – are as likely to eat spaghetti as soba noodles. They listen to

Wagner and Herbie Hancock, but disdain ‘stupid Japanese rock music. Love songs sweet enough to rot your teeth.’ They read Len Deighton novels and ‘War and Peace,’ not Kobo Abe and ‘The Tale of Genji.’” (349). Also regarding *The Elephant Vanishes*, Edward Hower paid attention to Murakami’s characters “often listening to Springsteen or Wagner on the stereo, reading Tolstoy or Garcia Marquez, cooking spaghetti or going out for burgers in the family Toyota” (6). Another reviewer wrote, too, regarding *Dance Dance Dance*, that the protagonist in the story “drives a used Subaru, works in public relations, eats at McDonald’s or Dunkin’ Donuts, listens to Sam Cooke and idolizes Clint Eastwood” (Rifkind A1).

Whether it was Murakami’s intention or not, the tactic of filling his novels with the stuff of Western culture worked well, in fact almost worked too well, with the effect that reviewers and critics in the US continually revisited the tactic, hardly looking at other aspects of the novels. Only a few reviewers examined the novels from other perspectives, comparing them with Murakami’s previous novels and using different terms, for example, “surrealism” (“Short” 2I), “a fabulistic feature” (Leavitt 350), and “postmodernism” (Markey 6). Among them appeared one who was bored with Murakami’s overdone favoritism toward Western culture, though he had started the argument in the first place. It was Herbert Mitgang, who said, “But I wish the characters in ‘The Elephant Vanishes,’ his new book of short stories, wouldn’t spend so much time at McDonald’s, lighting up Marlboros, listening to Bruce Springsteen records and watching Woody Allen movies as a prelude to romance. Just when you’re ready for some wisdom from the Orient, the

author serves up a Big Mac,” and “Allegorically, it would also help if he substituted some sushi for all those Big Macs” (“From” C17), and said, “Americanisms dance across the pages of the novel, practically turning Japan into an anchored aircraft carrier for American products and culture” in his another review (“Looking” B18). These Orientalistic reviews, however, might have been final voices by those who always expected to find stereotypical “exotic” or “subtle Japaneseness” in a Japanese novel.

It was when *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* was published in 1997 (originally published in 1994-95 in Japan) that American reviewers and critics finally began to move toward the second stage, picking up issues other than the same two points repeatedly mentioned in earlier reviews, that is, Murakami’s deviation from Japanese literary tradition and the Western cultural icons dispersed throughout his novels. Although many reviewers lingered on the Western cultural icons in Murakami’s novel,⁴ others introduced new points of view. The first new argument was that *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* was more “political” or “historical” than Murakami’s previous novels. For example, Cameron W. Barr said that the novel was “uncommonly political and uncommonly concerned with Japanese history” for a Murakami’s book because especially this novel dealt with Japan’s colonization of Manchuria before World War II (12). Tom Cooper also found that the theme of the novel was history and how historical events could keep effecting people’s lives in the real world on a deep and spiritual level of people’s consciousness (D5). Michiko Kakutani contrasted *The Wind-Up Bird*

⁴ See Coffin, Cooper, James, Knorr, “Murakami Tale,” Nimura.

Chronicle to Murakami's previous novels and said that the difference between them was that the novel tried not only to represent the protagonist's way of finding himself but also to explore Japan's historical responsibility and position in a post World War II world (E44).

The second new argument claimed that the story was absurd and, thus, difficult to comprehend coherently, a characteristic of the postmodern novel. Reviewers pointed out the bizarreness of a narrative that moved interchangeably between the real world and fantasy. Cooper especially focused on the characters' mysterious psychic power and their ability to move between the real world and a strange trance-world (D5). An anonymous reviewer said that the ambiguity of the novel would frustrate the readers expecting a coherent story with the considerable obscurity of the borders "between reality and imagination, waking consciousness and dreams, past and present ("Murakami Tale" D6). The uncanniness and intangibility of the story were praised by most reviewers, for example, Cooper said that many mysteries in the story were worth tackling for the readers resulting in enjoyment of the wonderful scenes and challenging thoughts, and he wondered why there were not such books of depth and complexity as Murakami's books in American best sellers, while Murakami's books always topped the sales chart in Japan (D5). The anonymous reviewer also praised the intangibility as something beautiful "to be wondered at and not 'gotten'" ("Murakami Tale" D6). Janice P. Nimura said that what made the book very seductive is the accessible postmodernity, which made the readers absorbed into the mysterious and vague "mist" making everything concrete dissolved (3). Comparing Murakami with

Kafka in his review in *the New York Times*, Jamie James said that it would not have had any value if Murakami had written the book with tidiness and concreteness (BR8). Preeti Singh also said that the novel was “compulsive” even though it was not neat or tidy because the readers were attracted to the psychic protagonist “trying to survive with meaning in the wastelands of a late-20th-century urban landscape” (29). On the other hand, there were a few critics who criticized the novel for the postmodern characteristics, for example, Michiko Kakutani wrote as a *New York Times* critic, “In trying to depict a fragmented, chaotic and ultimately unknowable world, Mr. Murakami has written a fragmentary and chaotic book,” and “Worse, ‘Wind-Up Bird’ often seems so messy that its refusal of closure feels less like an artistic choice than simple laziness, a reluctance on the part of the author to run his manuscript through the typewriter (or computer) one last time” (E44).

American reviewers and critics replaced the adjectives “rebellious” and “Westernized” with new ones, and “historical,” “political,” and “postmodern” became descriptors for Murakami’s novels, the reason being that in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, historical events hearken back to the dark side of Japanese history during World War II. Additionally, the novel has a fragmented structure, and the plot poses mysteries with no clear answers, which were regarded as characteristics of a postmodern novel, and critics claimed that the novel’s postmodern elements made a radical break from Murakami’s previous novels. However, Murakami’s early works do contain “historical” and “postmodern” aspects, for example, in *Wild Sheep Chase*, there are many “historical” elements in the story, such as a

shocking episode of Yukio Mishima's suicide, which Japanese people call the end of the post War, and some important figures deeply connected to Japanese history as representatives of the right wing during and after World War II. As for "postmodern" aspects, the novel often plays with language or history by mixing the representations of real history and fictional history together to blur the border between them, which is a typical way a postmodern novel values the signifier more highly than the signified, and by offering the readers the image of a mysterious sheep as an unrealistic and absurd central figure in the story. Even though reviewers' points of view became more diverse and fair and even as they looked more closely at the content of the text with fewer prejudices about Japanese literature than before, these reviewers had simply manufactured another classification or categorization for the Japanese novel. In short, they established additional stable images of Haruki Murakami and his work at this stage, and reviews of his subsequent books became based on these images.

Two books published in the US after *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, *South of the Border, West of the Sun* (1999; originally published in 1992 in Japan) and *Norwegian Wood* (2000; originally published in 1987 in Japan), did not attract the attention of reviewers, probably because, for American reviewers who had enjoyed the intangibility of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, the books were not complicated or referential enough to play the postmodern language game. When *Sputnik Sweetheart* (2001; originally published in 1999 in Japan) was published, reviewers also did not get excited about the book, saying that the narrative was not as well developed or puzzling as *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, although they

did try to find resemblances to Murakami's previous works and to appreciate some surreal features and metaphors in the book.⁵ Some reviewers tried to find a connection between two of Murakami's books because they were published within a year: *Sputnik Sweetheart* and *Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche* (2001; a book compiled of two books originally published in 1997 and 1998 in Japan), Murakami's first non-fiction book in which he interviewed both victims of the 1995 Tokyo subway attack by the Aum Shinrikyo religious cult and members of the Aum Shinrikyo religious cult.⁶

It was when the 9/11 terrorist attacks happened in the US in 2001 that a new measure for reading Murakami's novels was added. American reviewers compared the Japanese experiences of "1995 Subway Attack in Tokyo" and "1995 Earthquake in Kobe" in Murakami's books with their experience of "2001 Terrorism in NYC." After being attacked by terrorists, some American critics read Murakami's *Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche* as documenting a disaster parallel to the one that had abruptly overwhelmed American lives. In his review of the book in *the New York Times* in October 2001, Howard W. French could not help but mention the disaster which had just happened in the US and said that the stories and the accounts of the Aum members in the book were compelling for people who tried to find the reason why people could do such a destructive act and especially why the hijackers of the airplanes smashed into World Trade Center and Pentagon without any clear

⁵ See Freeman "Books," Hanson, Holmes, Shank, Stockinger, "Tokyo," Thomas, Zalewski.

⁶ See Freeman, Zalewski.

statement (E5). Jacob Stockinger also read the interviews of the victims in the 1995 Tokyo subway attack in the book feeling the echo of the survivors of the World Trade Center in them and grieved that it was time “for a return to an absurd, existentialist world” in which we lost any logical sense of cause and effect and secure feelings of our stable identity (11A).

The sympathetic point of view prevailed among the reviews of Murakami’s next book, *After the Quake* (2002; originally published in 2000 in Japan), a collection of short stories about people whose lives were indirectly influenced by the 1995 Kobe Earthquake. Most reviewers couldn’t help making connections between the trauma due to the 9/11 attacks and trauma experienced by the characters in Murakami’s book. An anonymous editor in *San Francisco Chronicle* in 2002 wrote that Murakami tried to explore the philosophical thoughts and psychological damage resulting from catastrophic events and how “mythologies and prophecies” were produced from wrecks, and pointed out that they were very familiar issues to American readers at that time, saying, “Both mysterious and eerily familiar, Murakami’s writing has a special urgency, given how we find ourselves these days living with the possibility of imminent disaster” (“Our” 2 2002). Charles Matthews also said that Murakami’s book illustrated how the earthquake cast a shadow on the characters’ lives the same way the 9/11 attack did to American people’s lives, saying, “Although none of them experiences the disaster directly, it encircles their lives with an aura of terrible uncertainty, the way the events of last September do for many of us.” Saying that the mixed feelings of “empathy, dislocation and despair” were universal then, Marta Salij

recommended this book to American readers because “We may be comforted by Murakami’s ultimately hopeful message, carefully constructed through these six stories.” Jeff Giles showed his surprise how Murakami’s book “resonate[d]” in the US, even though he wrote this book before Sept. 11 (G5). Another anonymous reviewer in *the New York Times Book Review* was also impressed that the stories about people living in the world of aftershocks of the quake that killed thousands of people and left millions homeless “resonate[d] eerily in an American reader’s inner ear, though they were all written before Sept. 11” (“After” 22). Joe Follick definitely stated that it was impossible for American readers to read these stories “without feeling the 9/11 tragedies and their aftermath (“When” 4). Wingate Packard in *the Seattle Times* read this book as the American people’s own stories after the “nation-shaking catastrophe” and said, “His characters are so persuasive, and the storytelling so spacious, confidently drawn and poignant in questioning destiny that ‘After the Quake’ won’t feel at all like a translation to post-Sept. 11 Americans” (K10). Due to the coincidence that 9/11 occurred just before Murakami’s *After the Quake* was published, many American reviewers read the book as their own story, without commenting on previously identified characteristics of Murakami’s work, such as similarities with American writers, Western cultural icons, and postmodern characteristics. As a result, the image of Murakami as a “universal” writer was reinforced at this point.

Murakami’s next book, *Kafka on the Shore* (2005; originally published in 2002 in Japan), was enthusiastically welcomed by American reviewers because it was a long, intricate, and absurd novel that inspired their critical spirit much as

The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle had. As many Japanese critics have pointed out, American reviewers regarded the book as a cumulative work that included the characters, plots, structures, and strangeness already familiar to Murakami fans and that simultaneously reconfirmed Murakami's "rebellious," "Westernized," "historical," "political," "postmodern," or "universal" characteristics.⁷ The topic added to reviews of this novel was how to interpret the novel's postmodernity, or intangibility because this story is indeed full of mysterious, absurd, and surrealistic characters, plots, motives, and metaphors, such as an Oedipus complex, a character who speaks with cats, spirits disguised as Johnnie Walker or Kentucky Fried Chicken's Colonel Sanders, fish and leeches falling from the sky, military deserters from World War II living in the forest, and a ghost of a living person.

Reviewers' responses to the intangibility in *Kafka on the Shore* were roughly divided into three groups. The first group of reviewers claimed that the "absurdity" was Murakami's "Japaneseness" or "un-Westerness" and, therefore, they could not find a similar style in Western literature. In his review in *New Yorker*, John Updike said that *kami*, Japanese Shinto gods, were spread through every place of Murakami's world, which made Western readers feel lost in anxiety, even though Western cultural icons such as "Goethe, Beethoven, Eichmann, Hegel, Coltrane, Schubert, Napoleon" were found everywhere (93). Laura Miller in *the New York Times* also said that the meaninglessness and the stillness in

⁷ See Cheuse "Ignoring," Follick "'Kafka,'" Freeman "Strangely," Jones, Miller, "Our" 2005, Updike, Weeks.

Murakami's novels resulted from how the author did everything different from "Western literary standards" (1). Jerome Weeks in *the Dallas Morning News* compared Murakami with Hayao Miyazaki, a famous Japanese animation film director, and said that their "beyond-good-and-evil world" with many "terrifying" but "sad" and "sympathetic" creatures felt "very Japanese, decidedly un-Western, although it remains accessible, even miraculous, to Western eyes." Richard Wallace in *the Seattle Times* explained the reason why the metaphysically mysterious *Kafka on the Shore* kept American readers so involved in the narrative as follows: the story itself was rooted in a modern post-industrial Japan, but the two main characters, Kafka and Nakata, saw many mysterious visions related to animism and fate from an older Japan, and "this psychic tension between the ancient and the new" was the secret to the book's popularity (M8). These reviewers fell back on the label Orientalism to describe events not comprehended logically as "un-Western" or "Japanese." They sometimes used a Japanese concept such as *Kami* in Shintoism to explain uncanniness, or else they placed Murakami's works alongside Hayao Miyazaki's films, probably because Miyazaki's work had become well known among Americans by this time.

The second group explained the "absurdity" in the novel from a point of view of "Magic Realism." For example, Cheuse compared Murakami with the writers of Magic Realism, such as Mann, Camus, Borges, and Garcia Marquez, in *the Chicago Tribune* and said that even though it was difficult to find a writer to compete with those writers, "Murakami can stand the heat" ("Ignoring" 4). Julie Wittes Schlack picked up some characteristics as "a magic reality," such as a

confusing mixture of past and present, dreams and reality, in Murakami's previous novels, and said that in *Kafka on the Shore* he developed this trope including various other kinds of rhetoric in it, such as "Greek mythology, personal and national identity, Christianity, and literary criticism" (C7). Roger Harris said that the thrilling puzzles and non-obviousness in the book were the "signs of the influence of the magic realism of so much Latin American fiction, where nothing is quite as we know it" (6). Some other reviewers, too, used the term "magic realism" or "magical realist" to explain the intangibility in Murakami's book (McManis E3; Nieves H4). Such critical opinions may reflect Orientalism under another guise, categorizing Murakami with Latin American writers as differentiated from Western writers or simplifying Murakami's style with the worn-out literary term, "Magic Realism."

Another school of critics recognized "absurdity" and "intangibility" as devices that prompt readers to turn the pages in *Kafka on the Shore*, as if they were reading a mystery story or playing a game. Kit Reed said that this book was complex "like an adventure, the kind that hooks the reader and doesn't let go until the end" (5P). David Thomson also said that the reason why the readers were "hooked" on the story, as if they had been reading Agatha Christie or Hemingway, was the "cross-cutting" going back and forth from one story to another with suspense (21). Geoffrey Bateman said that the appealing point of this book was the "puzzling phrases" in the story which were not illustrated logically but resonated "suggestively" (30D). Anne Rochell Konigsmark said that the readers could not stop reading the book until they found the truth and could not help but

reread it “to discover all hidden meaning and dropped hints” that they missed the first time (K4). Ariel Gonzalez said that reading this book was like watching a David Lynch movie in the sense that the audience had to “decipher a barely intelligible dream that zigzags through an obstacle course of surreal images and metaphors” (6M). This third group of reviewers did not try to find out where the “absurdity,” “intangibility,” “uncanniness,” or “puzzles” in the novel came from, nor did they conclude that the characteristics were derived from “Japanese” or “un-Western” literary or cultural contexts as the first and second groups did, or rather, they recognized those characteristics as devices prepared and then dispersed throughout the story to attract readers, whether those readers were Japanese or American.

The third group’s point of view, free from any Orientalism and tired literary terms, left the issue of Murakami’s “intangibility” untouched and seemed to explain—ironically, better than the other groups—why *Kafka on the Shore* and Murakami’s other novels have achieved so much popularity all over the world. What they implied was that the American readers read Murakami’s books not because they include something “un-Western,” “Japanese,” or “Magic Real,” but because the books provide readers with an enjoyable and mysterious postmodern game. Today, because of commercial globalization, American and Japanese people share the same enjoyment of computer games such as Nintendo’s Wii, Sony’s Play Station, and Microsoft’s Xbox, which extends beyond national boundaries and cultural differences. Many of Murakami’s works have common features, such as metaphors, puzzles, and mysteries embedded in a main plot

involving the quest for a missing person or object. Also like RPG's, Murakami's novels include several deviating subplots that are interwoven with one another. It is quite natural that American readers, literary reviewers, and critics, originally bound to Orientalism, should gradually have come to agree with Japanese readers with regard to how to enjoy Murakami's novels. In a sense, Murakami's works have been accepted by American readers the same way that Japanese computer games, animation, and comics have gained popularity in the US. In that process, as we have seen, American literary reviewers and critics have delineated, redrawn, and reinforced American conceptions of Murakami's novels. It does not matter how many of them have enjoyed products of other Japanese sub-cultures, but what is important is that they could not help but to play the postmodern game that Murakami's books have offered to American and Japanese critics alike. Then, how about American scholars? How have they been reading or playing Murakami's novels in their academic fields?

Academic articles

Even though no chronologically ordered pattern of changing views on Murakami's work exists, academic articles, like the literary reviews, establish typified images of Haruki Murakami and his work. Again, the first and strongest image of Murakami is the "rebellious" writer who is different from previous generations of Japanese writers. To show how Murakami deviated from the traditional standard of Japanese literature, Celeste Loughman cites Kenzaburo Oe, a Nobel laureate, who once criticized Murakami's works. Oe does not regard

Murakami's work as serious literature, *junbungaku*, "sincere or polite literature," and says that serious literature has been lost in Japan since 1970s and we need to fill the gap between Murakami and pre-1970 postwar literature. Loughman says that Oe's standard for literature is clearly based on literature produced between 1946 and 1970 and he quite dismisses Murakami (93-94). Because Oe is one of the most famous and authoritative of Murakami's predecessors, placing Murakami in opposition to Oe makes Murakami's position in Japanese literature very clear, and Loughman constructs the simple scheme of the old generation versus the new generation. Matthew C. Strecher illustrates how contemporary Japanese "postmodern" writers, such as Murakami, are regarded as inferior in Japanese literary studies to the old generations of "modern" Japanese writers, such as Oe. Strecher explains that the issue of "high" and "low," already dead in Western literature, still remains in Japanese literary studies, and serious discussions of the works of contemporary Japanese writers, such as Murakami and Banana Yoshimoto, are difficult to be found in academic fields, whose standards for judging literature are based on the modernist writers, such as Kawabata, Tanizaki, Mishima and Oe ("Beyond" 373). The Western scholars are, Strecher says, also still mesmerized by the images of Japanese literature and culture that the four modern writers present in their novels, "which is, however, no longer wholly relevant to contemporary Japanese literature or society" ("Beyond" 373).

Although Strecher demonstrates the change in Japanese literature clearly, two of his arguments are problematic. First, Strecher is also bound to a simple Western canon of Japanese literature, naming only of the "Big Three"—Kawabata,

Tanizaki, and Mishima—as representative post-World War II Japanese writers. As we have already seen in literary reviews, American reviewers and critics tend to mention only these three writers even though in Japan there are many other important writers between Murakami and the “Big Three.”

Strecher’s second problematic argument is the assumption that Murakami and other writers of his generation are postmodernists. It is true that many Western and Japanese academic scholars as well as literary reviewers and critics consider Murakami a postmodernist writer and discuss the postmodern characteristics of his works as Yoshio Iwamoto points out (295). For example, Naomi Matsuoka compares Murakami with Raymond Carver and says that the common characteristic of their novels is their self-consciousness “about writing a work of literature that they do not allow themselves to indulge in just one form of writing” (425). Randall Gloege similarly points out the characteristic mixture of genres in Murakami’s novels, saying, “Murakami incorporates into his fiction a variety of genres” (151). Strecher again says that Murakami plays “a structuralist game” in his novels with genres, rhetoric, and styles in a postmodern way (“Beyond” 355). Comparing Murakami’s *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* with another work of detective fiction by Lucha Corpi, Cathy Steblyk points out the postmodernity in their texts reexamining narrative, cultural history, and society (par. 19). Each article discusses postmodern characteristics in Murakami’s work, including “self-consciousness about writing,” “mixture of genres,” “parody,” and “playing with language,” and regards Murakami’s “postmodernity” as an indispensable attribute of his work. However, Murakami’s work may have simply

been labeled as “postmodernism” by publishers and reviewers in order to market his books to American readers as new or alternative, and critics and scholars may unconsciously support such a classification.

Stephen B. Snyder, who is suspicious about calling contemporary Japanese writers as a whole “postmodern writers,” in his reviews of two collections of contemporary Japanese short stories, *Monkey Brain Sushi* and *New Japanese Voices*, criticizes the editors’ simplifications of contemporary Japanese writers as “postmodern writers” and claims that creating a stereotypical image of contemporary Japanese literature is the publishing companies’ strategy because the authors in the collections still retain “a certain confidence in the subject, a certain air of self-consciousness, a certain commitment to what are often called the modern metanarratives,” even though of course their stories have some characteristics of postmodern novels, such as playfulness, gaming, and pastiche (273). It is true that many postmodern features exist in Murakami’s works, such as, “fragmented structure,” “mixture of genres,” “playing with language,” “parody,” and “absurdity,” but these are characteristic of modernism as well, and Murakami’s books do not satisfy the conditions of a postmodern novel which Hutcheon offers in her book, such as subverting the teleology, closure, and causality of narrative, and rejecting the totalization of history. In any of his novels, such as *Wild Sheep Chase*, *Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, and *Kafka on the Shore*, the characters have clear purposes (looking for a mysterious sheep or a missing wife, running away from an Oedipal father, etc.), the narratives have definite beginnings and endings, which means that they have causality of narrative no

matter how surrealistic, and the stories have coherent histories, whether they be factual or fictional. In short, Murakami's works are not chaotic enough to be postmodern by Hutcheon or Fredric Jameson's standards. Because the difference between modernism and postmodernism has been discussed by many people and has never been definite or clear-cut, it is arbitrary to define Murakami as a postmodern writer, and his position in literary classification differs depending on definitions of modernism and postmodernism. Some critics, like Iwamoto, even claim Japanese literature and culture have always been characterized by postmodernity.⁸ It is, therefore, appropriate to make the assumption that the power of mass media and marketing directors has influenced how people look at Murakami. Given the widespread influence of mass media, writers of academic articles and literary reviews relied on the marketing-influenced definition of Murakami as "postmodern."

In addition to "rebellious" and "postmodern," "Japanese" is another typical image applied to Murakami by both Academic scholars and book reviewers who identify Murakami's "Japaneseness" in allusions to traditional Japanese religions, such as Shintoism and Zen-Buddhism. They claim that these elements of traditional religion are mixed with "Western" writing style and icons. Loughman explains the phenomenon of the characters wandering in their inner life with their free imagination as "essential Japaneseness" which is "the echoes of early Shinto and Buddhist thought" (90). Susan Fisher also discusses Murakami's Japaneseness as connected to Japanese folk religion or Japanese

⁸ See Iwamoto (295-296).

shamanism, elements that appear in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*.

Like book reviewers, scholarly critics also claim that “Magic Realism” is a tool to understand Murakami’s work. Strecher analyzes the reappearance of people or things that had vanished in the past in Murakami’s work in terms of “Magic Realism,” even though, he says, it should be distinguished “from other more politicized forms of the genre” (“Magical” 267). Strecher is not the first to use “Magic Realism” to define Murakami’s work. Susan J. Napier writes about “Magic Realism” in Murakami’s work and says that Murakami’s works, which are “characterized by dreams, ghosts, and magic that still speak eloquently of contemporary Japan,” are quite “good examples of contemporary Japanese magic realism” with some fantastic tones (“Magic” 471; *Fantastic* 207). Napier’s view must have been influential, and from then on, many literary reviewers used the term “Magic Realism” regarding *Kafka on the Shore*. Whether labeled with “Japaneseness” or “Magic Realism,” scholars defined Murakami’s writing, particularly its “absurdity” or “uncanniness,” as something different from the Western way of writing.

Interestingly, the group of scholars who propose “Magic Realism” claims Murakami’s universality as the reason for his books’ worldwide popularity, while the group pointing to “Japaneseness” in his works emphasizes his particularity. For example, Napier points out Murakami’s use of fantastic motifs as the reason why his novels are popular in the US as well, because the surreal and absurd world and the unstable identity in his novels are not restricted to contemporary Japan but are universal issues shared in the modern world today (“The Magic”

473). How can these two opposite conclusions be derived from the same writer's works? Will Slocombe's essay explaining the reason why more of Murakami's work has been translated and published in the US as compared to work of other contemporary Japanese writers offers a hint to this question. Slocombe says that the selection of an author to be translated often depends not on whether a translator is available or not, but on "a capitalist framework ('what will sell?') and a desire to police the traditional binary of Occidentalism versus Orientalism," and Murakami's novels satisfy this desire by reflecting Japan's place in the global world and the place of Western culture in Japanese society in the stories (par. 1). As Slocombe writes, it would be quite natural to assume that Murakami's work offers American readers an ideal image of Japanese people and culture. He says that translating Murakami's novels meets American readers' need for "readable" Japanese cultural products and the issue of whether the contemporary Japan in his novels is real or not does not matter, because "cultural identity is determined by the economics of consumption rather than by history and geography" (par. 11).

In the late 1980s, the Japanese economy became a serious threat to the United States, and in order to understand the Japanese culture and worldview, American readers needed a contemporary Japanese literature that represented contemporary Japanese people and culture. They found Haruki Murakami and since then, his works have carried a great cultural burden. Generally, the words "universal" and "particular" (in this case, "Japanese") imply opposite meanings, but in Murakami's case, these two words are intermingled in the critical and academic discourse. His works are "universal" for those who want to have

sympathy with contemporary Japan and are “Japanese” for those who still want an exotic Japan or particular Japaneseness. In addition, his work offers enjoyable and mysterious puzzles for those who want to play a poststructuralist or postmodernist game. As a result, Murakami’s work has become a hybrid mirror, reflecting the image of Japan that American readers want to see. In her article comparing Murakami with Raymond Carver, Naomi Matsuoka writes that American readers appreciate to read Japanese novels differently since Murakami’s appearance and success in the US and says, “American readers no longer expect mystery and ambiguity from Japanese literature, but they admire Murakami’s works because they are similar works of modern American literature” (437). Matsuoka’s claims about Murakami’s work are in a sense true, but they would sound otherwise considering the fact that, as shown in the last section, many literary reviewers, critics and academic scholars still try to find “Japaneseness” in Murakami’s work.

In her article discussing which writers can achieve international fame in a global market, Emily Apter claims that what matters is whether the translations are available rather than whether the writers are excellent, in short, it depends on the market condition, which prefers the writers exotic enough but not too exotic. Showing some examples of the writers selected in a global market, being labeled such as “international,” “postcolonial,” “multiculti,” “native,” and “minority,” Apter says, “These labels, though they can help launch or spotlight world-class writers – pulling them out of ethnic area studies ghettos on the bookstore shelves – also cling like barnacles to their reception and afford constructive stereotypes of identity” (2). Apter’s argument exactly explains the case of translation of

Murakami in the US because American critics and scholars will never stop attributing “Japaneseness” to literature as long as it is originally written in Japanese by a Japanese writer and subsequently translated into English. What Murakami’s work has changed, if anything, may not be the attitude of American readers but rather the images of Japan that American readers expect to see in Japanese literature. American reviewers, critics, and scholars have created some images of Murakami’s work, such as “Rebellious,” “Westernized,” “historical,” “political,” “postmodern,” “universal,” “Magic Real,” “Japanese,” and “puzzling.” Each of these labels might be an alternative stereotypical image of Japanese literature and culture that replaces the stereotypes people held prior to Murakami’s appearance in the US. Slocombe writes that translation is a form of communication trying to understand others, and, in that sense, translators are the ones who stand in the forefront of the process of communication with others of different cultural backgrounds and contribute to the process of creating images of other cultures. Therefore, looking carefully at how Murakami’s works have been translated in the US will give us another vivid perspective on how American people have created the images of Japanese literature and culture through his work.

Translations

Murakami’s works have been translated into English by three translators: Alfred Birnbaum, Jay Rubin, and Philip Gabriel. Birnbaum translated early works,

and Rubin and Gabriel translated middle and late works.⁹ Literary reviewers and critics sometimes mention the quality of English translations of Murakami's work even though the Japanese originals are unlikely to be read, and therefore cannot be compared with the English. Birnbaum's translation is often highly esteemed by critics¹⁰ and Rubin receives positive feedback from critics about his translation,¹¹ while Gabriel's translation is not well accepted by critics.¹² Birnbaum is well known for boldly editing the original in source language for the readability in

⁹ Birnbaum translated *A Wild Sheep Chase* (published in the US in 1989), *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (1991), some stories in *The Elephant Vanishes* (1993), *Dance Dance Dance* (1994), and *Underground* (2001); Rubin translated some stories in *The Elephant Vanishes* (1993), *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (1997), *Norwegian Wood* (2000), *After the Quake* (2002), some stories in *Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman* (2006), and *After Dark* (2007); Gabriel translated *South of the Border, West of the Sun* (1999), *Sputnik Sweetheart* (2001), *Underground* (2001), *Kafka on the Shore* (2005), and some stories in *Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman* (2006).

¹⁰ **Favorable reviews:** "Without question, he [Murakami] has help from Alfred Birnbaum, who seems more like his spiritual twin than merely his translator" (Arenbsberg BR82); "... the generally skillful translation of Alfred Birnbaum, ..." (Rifkind A1); "Mr. Murakami's keen translator, Alfred Birnbaum, who keeps "Dance Dance Dance" hopping, valiantly interprets the author's numerous references to American music, books and movies. In fact, he may even exceed the challenge now and then by dropping in a New Yorkism, as when the freelancer says: 'Before noon I drove to Aoyama to do shopping at the fancy-schmancy Kinokuniya supermarket'" (Mitgang "Looking" B18); "..., in a lively translation by Alfred Birnbaum, ..." (Cheuse "Of Japan's" 6).

Unfavorable reviews: "Birnbaum's light touch is welcome, although it has eviscerated the author's literary artistry" (Seigle 49); "The translation, one suspects, was not much help, since it misuses words like 'transpire,' 'furthest' and 'shined'; it is also full of redundancies that may or may not have come from the Japanese" (West BR28).

¹¹ **Favorable reviews:** "'The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle,' in Jay Rubin's polished translation, marks a significant advance in Murakami's art" (James BR8); "... Murakami may be one of literature's newest postmodern heavyweights, but his writing (in Jay Rubin's polished translation) is accessible" (Nimura 3).

¹² **Favorable reviews:** "... smoothly translated from the Japanese by Philip Gabriel, ..." (Bernstein E8).

Unfavorable reviews: "... (an achievement only somewhat diminished by the limitations of Philip Gabriel's at times jarring translation)" (Hawthorne BR8); "... , however needlessly jivey its English translation ("Jeez Louise"), ..." (Maslin 10); "The translation from the Japanese version, which was published two years ago, may be at fault for some stodgy writing. The scenes are beautiful, and Murakami's imagery lingers long after the last page is read. But clichés abound and the dialogue feels forced" (Follick "'Kafka'" E5).

target language, often omitting or changing the original sentences in Japanese when translating to English, while Rubin is regarded as faithful to the original. In a book that studies English translations of Murakami's work, Hisao Shiohama shows that Birnbaum's translation includes omissions and obvious mistranslations, and Gabriel, too, has frequent additions, omissions, and mistranslations. Rubin, on the other hand, has few mistranslations and omissions, excepting those required by his publisher.

It is interesting that Birnbaum's translations have many fans even though his translations stray far from the original in a strict sense of faithful word-to-word translation. For example, Wendy Lesser, comparing Birnbaum's translation with Rubin's, says that Birnbaum is better than Rubin because Birnbaum succeeds in making "a Japanese writer sound so remarkably American without losing any of his alien allure" (par. 8). She writes, "In this [Birnbaum's] translation, the logic of cause-and-effect English sentence structure has been jettisoned in favor of some other mode, and it is that mode – the intrusion of the surprising and the foreign and the unknowable into the mundane regime – which marks the world of a Haruki Murakami novel" (par. 17). Michael Fujimoto Keezing also supports Birnbaum's translation over Rubin's and Gabriel's because, he says, Birnbaum has talent as a writer indispensable to artistic creativity. Even though, Keezing admits, he cannot read Japanese, he disagrees with his translator friends' opinions that Rubin's translations are better than Birnbaum's translations in the sense of faithfulness to the original because he thinks that what is the most important thing in literary translation is "the conveyance of overall artistic vision" and believes

that Birnbaum's instincts as a writer achieve "the novel's deeper purposes" at the expense of the fidelity to the original (16).

While Birnbaum has been praised by those who cannot read Japanese, Rubin has often been acclaimed by native speakers of Japanese and those who read Japanese. Rubin won the fourteenth Annual Noma Award for the Translation of Japanese Literature in 2003 for his translation of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*. Each member of the selection committee gives great honor to his translation. Motoyuki Shibata says that Rubin succeeds in making himself quite transparent, maintaining the rhythm and the representations of the original text precisely (6). Hikaru Okuizumi also praises Rubin's translation for its "extraordinary quality" and its "polished" and "exemplary" work (7). Theodore Goossen says that the judges could not find any obvious mistranslation in Rubin's translation and were impressed by "its beautiful flow of language, and the steadiness of the translator's hand" bringing together "a scholar's attention to detail, an artist's flair, a samurai's commitment, and an athlete's stamina" (8). Roger Pulvers is also impressed by Rubin's "concise and effective" rendering of the characters' dialogues in the novel and praises his translation as the one which Murakami would write if he were writing in English (9).

The opposite reactions to Birnbaum and Rubin's translations stem from the difference between Japanese and American attitudes to translation. In his articles pointing out many problems in English translations of modern Japanese novels, Yoshio Nagae says that the English translations are too free and rough, changing the structure of paragraphs and the number of sentences and omitting

nouns specific to Japanese culture. Nagae believes that these problems derive from the difference between Japanese and British-American translators' attitudes toward translation; the former value fidelity to the original, thus tending to create unnatural literal translation, and the latter value the readability in the target language, thus tending to create translations far from the original, modifying it too much. Lawrence Venuti theoretically explains these two types of literary translation, as source language friendly translation and target language friendly translation, or non-ethnocentric translation, which is open to the foreignness of the foreign text, and ethnocentric translation, which negates the strangeness of foreign culture, and claims that the process of aspiring toward non-ethnocentric translation should never be stopped in translation of culture, even though non-ethnocentric translation is naturally going to be again ethnocentric translation. Of course, we cannot miss the fact that there has been an unequal political-economical power relationship between Japan and Western countries behind the American and Japanese reviewers and critics' different points of view on translation. As a result, Birnbaum is popular among those who agree with the conception of target language friendly translation, and Rubin is popular among those who agree with the conception of source language friendly translation.¹³

¹³ Among the members of the selection committee of the Noma Award, Shibata and Okuizumi contrast remarkably with each other in terms of the conception of literary translation. Shibata says, "In the third category are those translations that succeed in reproducing the voice of the original work faithfully in the target language. Translations like these are, needlessly to say, the ideal for which to strive but ... it's easier said than done" (6). Okuizumi says, "If one is working from English into Japanese, the 'ideal translation' to be pursued is not a precise transcription, but rather a transfer that will enrich the Japanese language by its addition to that linguistic realm. This ideal translation will bring new avenues of expression to Japanese; it will increase the potential of the Japanese tongue for different areas of thought and awareness" (7). Judging from their statements

If the three translators have translated Murakami's works so differently, as many reviewers and critics point out, their translations likely have influenced ways that American readers create images of Murakami and contemporary Japanese literature and culture. I will examine the three translators' works one by one in order to discover their differences and explore the varying impacts the translations have had on American readers.

The first example from *Wild Sheep Chase* [*Hitsuji wo meguru bouken*] is translated by Alfred Birnbaum. I present the Japanese original first in the Roman alphabet and then in the English translation:

*Shimbun de guuzen kanojo no shi wo shitta yuujin
ga denwa de boku ni sore wo oshietekureta. Kare wa
denwaguchi de choukan no ichidankiji wo yukurito
yomiageta. Heibonna kiji da. Daigaku wo detabakari no
kakedashi no kisha ga rensyuu no tameni kakasareta youna
bunsho datta.*

*Nangatsu nannichi, dokoka no machikado de,
dareka no untensuru torakku ga dareka wo hiita. Dareka wa
gyoumujoukashitsuchishi no utagai de torishirabechuu.*

*Zasshi no tobira ni notteiru mijikai shi no younimo
kikoeru.*

*"Soushiki wa doko de yarundarou?" to boku wa
tazunetemita.*

*"Saa, wakaranaina" to kare wa itta. "Daiichi,
anoko ni uchi nante attanokana?" (Hitsuji 11)*

It was a short one-paragraph item in the morning edition. A friend rang me up and read it to me. Nothing special.

about ideal translation, it is clear that Shibata, who emphasizes the transparency of the translator, owes his perspective on translation much to the conception of source language friendly translation, and Okuizumi, who values the impact that translation can give to TL, adheres to the conception of target language friendly translation. Moreover, Okuizumi admits that he himself recommended not Rubin's translation but someone else's translation for the prize in the first place.

Something a rookie reporter fresh out of college might've written for practice.

The date, a street corner, a person driving a truck, a pedestrian, a casualty, an investigation of possible negligence,

Sounded like one of those poems on the inner flap of a magazine.

“Where’s the funeral?” I asked.

“You got me,” he said. “Did she even have a family?” (*A Wild 3*)

Birnbaum’s translation skips the first sentence in the original, which can be literally translated as follows: “A friend of mine, who happened to find that she died in the newspaper, let me know that on the phone.” Because the sentence is omitted, the readers in English remain unaware of what the topic of the “short one-paragraph item” is or who the “casualty” is until they see the word “she” in the second sentence of the fifth paragraph, and therefore, the translated passage sounds more mysterious in the English translation than in the Japanese original. In addition, Birnbaum’s translation divides the second sentence in Japanese into two short sentences in English (the first and the second), and merges two comparatively long sentences in the second paragraph of the Japanese into a short one in the second paragraph in the English. The reader of the English translation gets the impression that the writing style is concise, whereas the reader of the Japanese does not get this impression. Moreover, other minor changes exist in the English translation, such as changing the present tense of the Japanese word “*kikoeru*” in the seventh sentence into the past tense of the English word “sounded” in the sixth sentence and only omitting the word “*mijikai*” in the

seventh sentence.¹⁴

Just as Minami Aoyama points out in his book examining English translations of some contemporary Japanese novels, we see that Birnbaum changes the original text often and dramatically through the whole story. First of all, Birnbaum removes all pictorial icons in the shape of a hand that the original text has in many places between paragraphs, which would work as a sign of intermission. Instead, the translation uses a blank line in the same way it has for the real blank space of a line in the original. In short, the translation uses a blank space between paragraphs for both the icon in the shape of a hand and the blank space in the original—nothing differentiates the two types of pause in the English translation. Second, the translation has an icon in the shape of a star at the head of each section, which the original text does not have. Third, the translation alters section numbering. The original renumbers the sections from 1 every time the chapter renews, while the translation numbers the sections from 1 to 43 throughout the whole book no matter when the chapter renews. Last, the most remarkable change in the translation is the deletion of dates, especially the years. The original text has many descriptions of years in the story and the titles of some chapters and sections, while the translation includes no markers that tell when this story takes place, excepting a few descriptions of historical events and names of famous people. Birnbaum clearly changes the original text freely rather than necessarily.

The second example is the first passage in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*

¹⁴ “*Mijikai shi*” in the seventh sentence literally means “a short poem” or “short poems.”

[*Nejimaki-dori kuronikuru*] translated by Jay Rubin. Again, I present the Japanese original in the Roman alphabet and the English translation:

Daidokoro de supagethi wo yudeteiru toki ni, denwa ga kakatte kita. Boku wa FM housou ni awasete rosshini no "dorobou kasasagi" no jokyoku wo kuchibue de fuiteita. Sore wa supagethi wo yuderu ni wa mazu uttetsuke no ongaku datta.

Denwa no beru ga kikoeta toki, mushi shite shimaouka tomo omotta. Supagethi wa yudeagaru sunzen dattashi, kuraudhio abado wa ima masani rondon koukyougakudan wo sono ongakuteki piiku ni mochiageyou to shiteita noda. Shikashi soredemo yahari boku wa gasu no hi wo yowame, ima ni itte juwaki wo totta. Aruiwa Atarashii shigoto no kuchi no koto de chijin kara denwa ga kakatte kitanokamo shirenai to omottakarada.

"Juppunkan, jikan wo hoshiino," toutotsu ni onna ga itta.
(*Nejimaki-dori* 7)

When the phone rang I was in the kitchen, boiling a potful of spaghetti and whistling along with an FM broadcast of the overture to Rossini's *The Thieving Magpie*, which has to be the perfect music for cooking pasta.

I wanted to ignore the phone, not only because the spaghetti was nearly done, but because Claudio Abbado was bringing the London Symphony to its musical climax. Finally, though, I had to give in. It could have been somebody with news of a job opening. I lowered the flame, went to the living room, and picked up the receiver.

"Ten minutes, please," said a woman on the other end.
(*The Wind-Up* 5)

Rubin's translation merges all three sentences in the first paragraph in Japanese into one long sentence in the first paragraph in English, and the first and second sentence in the second paragraph in Japanese into one long sentence in English (the first sentence in the second paragraph). Additionally, the translation divides

the third sentence in the second paragraph in Japanese into two sentences in English (a part of the second sentence and the fourth sentence in the second paragraph) and inserts the last sentence in the second paragraph in Japanese before the last sentence in the second paragraph in English (the third sentence in the second paragraph). In short, Rubin's translation tends to change Murakami's brief and concise, as people call in Japanese, original writing style into an English translation with relatively long and complicated sentences including some participles and relative pronouns. Other minor changes are that the translation cuts out the word "*toutotsu ni*," which means "suddenly," in the sentence in the third paragraph, and it adds the phrases "I had to give in" in the second sentence in the second paragraph and "on the other end" in the sentence in the third paragraph, neither of which the original text has. With regard to the whole book, Rubin's translation also edits the original to a great extent, considerably shortening the original text by cutting out many paragraphs and even chapters. It was, however, the publisher or editor's intention to do so rather than Rubin's, as Rubin admits that he would not have cut or edited the original so much if the editor had not told him to do so.

The third example is the first passage in *Kafka on the Shore* [*Umibe no kafuka*] translated by Philip Gabriel. As always, I present the Japanese original in the Roman alphabet and the English translation:

*"Sorede, okane no koto wa nantoka nattan dane?" to
karasu to yobareru syounen wa iu. Ikubun nossori to shita,
itsumo no syaberikata da. Fukai nemuri kara mezameta*

bakari de, kuchi no kinniku ga omokute mada umaku ugokanai toki no youna. Demo sore wa soburi mitai na mono de, jissai niwa sumi kara sumi made mezamete iru. Itsumo to onaji you ni.

Boku wa unazuku.

“Dorekurai?”

Mou ichido atama no naka de suuji wo kakunin shitekara, boku wa kotaeru. “Genkin ga 40 man hodo. Sonohoka ni kaado de daseru ginkouyokin mo sukoshi. Mochiron juubun towa ienai kedo, toriaezu wa nantoka narunja naikana”

“Maa waruku nai” to karasu to yobareru shounen wa iu. “Toriaezu wane” (Umibe 3)

“So you’re all set for money, then?” the boy named Crow asks in his typical sluggish voice. The kind of voice like when you’re just woken up and your mouth still feels heavy and dull. But he’s just pretending. He’s totally awake. As always.

I nod.

“How much?”

I review the numbers in my head. “Close to thirty-five hundred in cash, plus some money I can get from an ATM. I know it’s not a lot, but it should be enough. For the time being.”

“Not bad,” the boy named Crow says. “*For the time being.*” (*Kafka 3*)

Gabriel’s translation is comparatively faithful to the original text, except merging or dividing some sentences in the Japanese original (the first and the second sentences in the first paragraph in Japanese into the first sentence in the first paragraph in English; the fourth sentence in the first paragraph in Japanese into the third and the fourth sentences in the first paragraph in English; the second and the third sentences in the fourth paragraph in Japanese into the second sentence in the fourth paragraph in English; the fourth sentence in the fourth paragraph in Japanese into the third and the fourth sentences in the fourth paragraph in

English) and another minor change (the omission of the phrase “*boku wa kotaeru*,” which means “I answer,” in the last paragraph). Compared with Birnbaum and Rubin’s translations, Gabriel’s translation does not change the length of each sentence dramatically and, therefore, maintains a rhythm equivalent to the style of the Japanese original.

Throughout the whole book, Shiohama points out that Gabriel’s translation has many mistranslations. According to Shiohama, Gabriel’s translation of *Kafka on the Shore* contains fifty-three obvious mistranslations in a book 436 pages long in English. Shiohama cites thirty-four mistranslations in *South of the Border, West of the Sun*, a book 213 pages long; on the other hand, there are thirty-one mistranslations in Rubin’s translation of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, a book 611 pages long, and Rubin has five mistranslations in *After the Quake*, a book 181 pages long. Although we cannot directly compare the numbers of mistranslations in these books because each book has a different style and includes different numbers of words per page, it is clear that Gabriel’s translation has many more mistranslations than Rubin’s, and is in part why Rubin’s translation receives praise from both American and Japanese reviewers and critics, whereas Gabriel’s does not. It is interesting that Birnbaum still has many fans—especially among native English readers—even though his translation also has many obvious mistranslations.¹⁵

Birnbaum translates “The Windup Bird and Tuesday’s Women,” one of the

¹⁵ Birnbaum’s translation has twenty mistranslations in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, which is a book 400 pages long, and seventy-six mistranslations in *Norwegian Wood*, which consists of two volumes totally 530 pages long except endnotes (Shiohama).

short stories written by Haruki Murakami, which is almost the same as the introductory part of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, translated by Rubin. Comparing those two texts makes it very clear how differently those two translators work on Murakami's story. For the passage Rubin translates in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* that I have already picked up for the second example, Birnbaum translates as follows:

I'm in the kitchen cooking spaghetti when the woman calls. Another moment and the spaghetti will be done, and there I am whistling the Overture to Rossini's "La Gazza Ladra" along with Tokyo's best FM station. Perfect spaghetti-cooking music.

I hear the telephone ring, but I tell myself, Ignore it – let the spaghetti finish cooking. It's almost done, and, besides, Claudio Abbado and the London Symphony Orchestra are coming to a crescendo. Still, on second thought, I figure I might as well turn down the flame, and I head into the living room, cooking chopsticks in hand, to pick up the receiver. It might be my wife, or maybe a friend with word of a new job.

"I want ten minutes of your time," comes some woman's voice. ("The Windup" 44)¹⁶

¹⁶ The Japanese original text:

Sono onna kara denwa ga kakatte kitatoki, daidokoro ni tatte supagethi wo yudete ita. Supagethi wa yudeagaru sunzen de, boku wa FM razio ni awasete rosshini no "dorobou kasasagi" no jokyoku wo kuchibue de fuiteita. Supagethi wo yudeageruniwa toriaezu saiteki no ongaku datta.

Denwa no beru ga kikoetatoki, boku wa yohodo sorewo mokusatsu shite sonomama spaghetti wo yudetsuzukeyouka to omotta. Supagethi wa mou hotondo yudeagatte itashi, kuraudhio abado wa rondon koukyougakudan wo sono ongakuteki piiku ni mochiageyouto shiteita noda. Shikashi soredemo yahari boku wa gasu no hi wo yowame, saibashi wo migite ni mottamama ima ni itte juwaki wo totta. Atarashii shigoto no koto de yuujin kara denwa ga kakatte kurukamo sirenai koto wo futo omoidashita karada.

"Juppunkan jikan wo hoshiino" to toutotsu ni onna ga itta.
(“Nejimakidori”)

They obviously have different styles in translating. First of all, Birnbaum translates the first paragraph into a paragraph with three sentences, the same as the Japanese original text. Rubin translates the three sentences into one long sentence, as we have already seen. As a result, Birnbaum's translation sounds concise and light, equivalent to the original text. Second, Birnbaum's translation uses Italian words for the title of Rossini's song and a musical term: "La Gazza Ladra" and "crescendo," while Rubin translates those words into English: "The Thieving Magpie" and "musical climax." Even though the Japanese text does not use the Italian words, changing the words into Italian succeeds in making Birnbaum's text sound snobbish, also characteristic of Murakami's writing style, in which he uses foreign Western cultural words. Third, Birnbaum translates the Japanese original sentence, "..., *boku wa yohodo sorewo mokusatsu site sonomama supagethi wo yudetsudukeyouka to omotta,*" which can be literally translated as "I wanted to ignore the phone, keeping cooking the spaghetti," into the one, "... , but I tell myself, Ignore it – let the spaghetti finish cooking." By modifying the original sentence into one that expresses the protagonist's inner voice, Birnbaum produces a more lively writing style than Rubin's. Fourth, Birnbaum changes the past tense of all the Japanese original sentences into the present tense, contributing to a lively atmosphere in his translation. And fifth, throughout the entire book and other books translated by him, Birnbaum's translation has many sentences constructed without verbs, such as "Perfect spaghetti-cooking music" in the example, which give the reader a strong impression of Birnbaum's "light" and "pop" writing style.

Coincidentally, Birnbaum and Rubin translate the same work of Murakami, *Norwegian Wood* [*Noruei no mori*], and we can see their different styles of translating by comparing their translations of this book. As examples, I present first passage of the Japanese original in the Roman alphabet, Birnbaum's translation of the same passage, and Rubin's translation:

Boku wa sanjuunanasai de, sonotoki boingu 747 no shiito ni suwatte ita. Sono kyodai na hikouki wa buatsui amagumo wo kugur nukete koukashi, hanburugu kuukou ni chakuriku shiyō to shiteiru tokoro datta. Juuichi gatsu no hiyayakana ame ga daichi wo kuraku some, amagappa wo kita seibikou tachiya, nopperi to shita kuukou biru no ue ni tatta hata ya, BMW no koukokuban ya sonna nanimokamo wo furandoru ha no inutsuna e no haikai no youni misete ita. Yareyare, mata doitsu ka, to boku wa omotta.

Hikouki ga chakuchi wo kanryō suruto kinen no sain ga kie, tenjō no supiikaa kara chiisana oto de BGM ga nagarehajimeta. Sore wa dokokano okesutora ga amaku ensou suru biitoruzu no "noruei no mori" datta. Soshite sono merodhi wa itsumonoyouni boku wo konran sasete. Iya, itsumotoha kurabemononi naranaikurai hageshiku boku wo konran sase yuriugokashita. (Noruei 5)

Here I am, thirty-seven years old, seated in a Boeing 747. The giant plane is diving into a thick cover of clouds, about to land at Hamburg Airport. A chill November rain darkens the land, turning the scene into a gloomy Flemish painting. The airport workers in their rain gear, the flags atop the faceless airport buildings, the BMW billboards, everything. Just great, I'm thinking, Germany again.

The plane completes its landing procedures, the NO SMOKING sign goes off, and soft background music issues from the ceiling speakers. Some orchestra's muzak rendition of the Beatles' "Norwegian Wood." And sure enough, the melody gets to me, same as always. No, this time it's worse than ever before. I get it real bad. I swear my head is going to burst. (*Norwegian Wood* I 7)

I was thirty-seven then, strapped in my seat as the huge 747 plunged through dense cloud cover on approach to Hamburg airport. Cold November rains drenched the earth and lent everything the gloomy air of a Flemish landscape: the ground crew in rain gear a flag atop a squat airport building, a BMW billboard. So – Germany again.

Once the plane was on the ground, soft music began to flow from the ceiling speakers: a sweet orchestral cover version of the Beatles’ “Norwegian Wood”. The melody never failed to send a shudder through me, but this time it hit me harder than ever. (*Norwegian Wood* 3)

The original Japanese text has four sentences in both the first and second paragraphs. Birnbaum’s translation has five and six sentences for those paragraphs, while Rubin’s has three and two sentences. Again, in this example, we can see the translators’ tendencies to shorten sentences, cutting them into more sentences, or to lengthen them, combining them into one sentence. Moreover, like in the previous example, Birnbaum changes the past tense in the original text into the present tense. Besides, Birnbaum’s translation has many colloquialisms, such as “Here I am,” “Just great,” “sure enough,” and “No, ...,” which produce the light and pop atmosphere in his translation.

An additional explanation for Birnbaum’s style is the fact that he often edits out metaphorical expressions. According to Shiohama, Birnbaum omits seventy-four metaphorical expressions in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*. In Murakami’s first book published in the US, *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Birnbaum omits many metaphorical expressions, too.¹⁷ Giving examples of

¹⁷ For example, “*meron no shiwa mitaini*” (Murakami, *Hitsuji* 12), which can be literally translated as “like lines on a melon;” “*meiro no youna*” [like a maze] (Murakami, *Hitsuji* 26); “*Dokoka tooku*

translations of modern Japanese literature, Maki Ohsima claims that the translation of a metaphorical expression can be easily achieved when the structure of the sentence is regular, the choice of words is natural, and the metaphor is well prepared with explanatory supplements or subsequent paraphrasing; however, it can be problematic when the expression includes abstract words or the word modified by the metaphor is abstract. According to Ohsima, Kobo Abe and Yukio Mishima's logical metaphorical expressions are more concrete to translate than Yasunari Kawabata's abstract and vague expressions. This could be one of the reasons why Kawabata is often regarded as representative of typical "subtle" or "exotic" Japanese literature. Generally speaking, metaphor is something readers must take time to read and understand, and the more metaphorical expressions a book has, the more difficult to understand or vague it becomes. In a sense, metaphorical expressions could have caused American readers to retain certain exotic images of modern Japanese literature. Therefore, Birnbaum's omissions in Murakami's novels, whether intentional or not, even though many metaphors are not as abstract or difficult to translate as Kawabata's, could have contributed to creating new images of Japanese literature in the US.

As shown in the previous section, American reviewers and critics reacted to Murakami's books since his first book was published in the US in 1989. From 1989 through 1994 when his debut novel and some other stories were published in the US, they regarded Murakami as a "rebel," as "Westernized," or as a "new

kara wazawaza hakobaretekita koe mitai datta" [It was like a voice transferred from somewhere far] (Murakami, *Hitsuji* 27); "*marude rasshu awaa wo gyakuhoukou ni iku mitainisa*" [as if I were walking against the flow of people at rush hour]; etc.

Japanese” writer. Around 1997, when *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* was published in the US, they started adding images of him as a “postmodern,” “historical,” or “political” writer. Around 2001 and 2002, they were eager to read his books as “universal,” sharing the same feelings because of three catastrophic historical events: the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Kobe earthquake, and the Aum terrorism. Finally, when *Kafka on the Shore* was published in 2005, they defined it as “Magic Realism,” “Japanese” and a “puzzle.” Interestingly, all four novels¹⁸ and two stories¹⁹ published in the first phase are translated by Alfred Birnbaum (except several stories in *The Elephant Vanishes* translated by Jay Rubin), while all three novels²⁰ published in the second phase are translated by Jay Rubin and Philip Gabriel.

It can be reasonably considered that Birnbaum’s light and pop writing style of translation played a great role in American reviewers and critics’ creating some images of Murakami as a “rebel,” “Westernized” or “new Japanese” writer, and Rubin’s faithful, formal and somewhat rigid translation made them focus on “historical” or “political” aspects of Murakami’s works. While it is difficult to see the direct effect of translation on the image of Murakami in the third and fourth phases, there is no doubt that Birnbaum’s and Rubin’s translations had a great impact on the way American readers read Murakami’s novels in the first and second phases. Lastly, I would like to add that the fact that Gabriel’s translation,

¹⁸ *A Wild Sheep Chase* (1989), *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (1991), *The Elephant Vanishes* (1993), *Dance Dance Dance* (1994).

¹⁹ *Monkey Brain Sushi* (1991), *New Japanese Voice* (1991).

²⁰ *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (1997) tr. Jay Rubin, *South of the Border, West of the Sun* (1999) tr. Philip Gabriel, *Norwegian Wood* (2000) tr. Jay Rubin.

including too many mistranslations, was allowed to be published in the US could have something to do with unequal cultural, economical and political relationships between the US and Japan. As Edwin McClellan points out, both quality and quantity of Japanese Studies in the US has not yet reached a level comparative to many fields of European Studies in the US.

Globalization in the case of Murakami

In terms of globalization as the process of cultural exchange between the US and Japan, we can see several important moments in translating and publishing Murakami's works in the US. First, as often mentioned, Murakami's works can be viewed as a good example of American or European cultural imperialism in Japan after World War II, because his novels and short stories, especially early ones, include many Western cultural icons in characters' everyday lives, and it is clear that his writing style is built under the influence of some contemporary American writers. Birnbaum's translation of Murakami's early works emphasized those characteristics of Murakami as an Americanized Japanese writer through his own offbeat methods of translating, such as omitting metaphors, simplifying and shortening each sentence, and using colloquial expressions rather than literary ones. It cannot be hard for American readers of Murakami's novels to learn how contemporary Japan has been dominated by Western culture. As Stacey Olster points out,²¹ it could be one of Murakami's

²¹ "Murakami, who inherits the history of one of the few nations alleged to have an ethnically homogeneous culture, depicts popular culture—even the popular culture of the one occupying force that ever inhabited Japan—as liberating it from the kind of militarism that Nihonjinron

strategies to borrow Western cultural icons and writing styles more than necessary in order to depart from traditional Japanese culture. Second, Murakami's works can be a universal tool with which American and Japanese readers can share the same feelings, ironically, through similar experiences with catastrophic historical events. Third, if it is true that American readers enjoy his books together with other Japanese pop cultures as if they were playing computer RPG with Sony Play Station or Nintendo Wii, his works can be regarded as an example of Japanese commercial capitalistic culture's strike back at the US. In novels such as *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* and *Kafka on the Shore*, the reader can be a player searching for a missing link between parallel worlds, working on hidden meanings of mysterious motives, characters, and metaphors, and in novels such as *Wild Sheep Chase* and *Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, in which the protagonists try to find a missing someone or something, the readers can enjoy deciphering complex riddles and puzzles dispersed in a story line copying a typical medieval chivalrous romance of the quest for the Holy Grail. Fourth, as critics and reviewers focused on "Magic Realism" and "Japaneseness" in *Kafka on the Shore*, his works can be read to recognize afresh differences between American and Japanese literature and culture. This so-to-speak conservative reading, finding and specifying particular and exotic characteristics of Japanese literature that differ from Western literature, could be a reaction against liberal readings that try to find universal features in Murakami's work.

There has always been movement between open and fixed perspectives on

consensus actively promoted." (Olster 15)

Murakami's texts. In general, alternative perspectives that overcome old, stereotypical ones eventually become simplified, biased, or fixed, and this applies in Murakami's case. It is true that translations of Murakami's novels have opened up new American perspectives toward Japanese culture and literature, which are different from previous perspectives introduced into the US before Murakami. It is, however, doubtful if Murakami's texts have completely succeeded in sweeping away all stereotypical images of Japanese culture and literature. From another angle, translations of Murakami's works might have simply produced more stereotypical images of Japanese culture and literature or confirmed existing ones, such as the images of extremely Westernized and postmodern Japan or exotic and Shintoistic Japan. Especially regarding gender issues, Murakami's texts have given American readers few cues with which to think about the representations of Japanese women. No studies have been done on feminist issues particular to contemporary Japan in Murakami's novels, probably because it is hard to find an authentic female voice in his female characters, who are often depicted as stereotypical figures, and Murakami himself is a male writer. Therefore, in order to learn how American people have established alternative images of Japanese culture and literature, including female culture, it is necessary to examine how they have translated and read the books by another Japanese writer, Banana Yoshimoto, who is female and whose works have been translated and read both in the East and West as often as Murakami's.

Chapter 2

Banana Yoshimoto's *Kitchen* (1993): Contemporary Japanese Female Voice

In the first chapter, I examined how Haruki Murakami's works have been translated and read in English and how American readers have renewed images of Japanese literature and culture. As I pointed out, Americans have had various stereotyped, especially Orientalistic conceptions of Japanese novels and culture. I did not mention gender issues in Murakami's translated works because I found no articles or reviews about the representations of Japanese women in his novels, even though his representations of Japanese female characters are problematic because his female characters are often stereotypical and it is hard to regard them as realistic depictions of Japanese female voices. The representations of Japanese women in Murakami's novels could not be good samples for American readers when trying to hear the real voice of Japanese women today in any way.

Yoshi Kuzume summarizes changes in Americans' stereotypical images of Japanese women, classifying the development into four stages. In the first stage from the 1860s to the 1900s, American and English Victorian males created the image of the Japanese woman as the "geisha girl," an exotic sex object. In reaction, Lafcadio Hearn, as well as Japanese people of the time, offered the image of the "devoted woman" who would sacrifice everything for her husband and family. These two stereotypes have been very influential and are still

powerful even in the present day. In the second stage, from the 1910s to 1945, Christian missionaries recreated the image of Japanese women into “miserable creatures who needed to be saved” and were oppressed and slave-like in the male-oriented, feudalistic society of Japan. The third stage, from 1945 to the 1960s, was a “transitional period” in which Japanese women were seen as expressing their joy over newly found freedoms in the post-war era, and American scholars tried to reinterpret the status of Japanese women in history in a positive way. In the fourth stage, from the 1970s to the 1980s, “negative” images of Japanese women were recreated into “positive” images of “strong” and “motherly” women. During this last period, under the influence of American women’s studies, American scholars stopped regarding Japanese women as victims and discussed how Japanese women, both famous and nameless, have played important roles in Japanese history, politics and family, though they tended to overemphasize positive aspects and miss negative aspects of Japanese women’s lives. Kuzume concludes that the changes in American people’s attitudes toward gender issues, rather than actual changes within Japanese women’s status in society, have been reflected in the images of Japanese women in the United States, and these images have in turn influenced the Japanese people’s own images of Japanese women.

In the 1990s, some American scholars started to rethink images of Japanese women. Following the work of Gail Lee Bernstein’s *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945* (1991), in her book *Re-Imaging Japanese Women*, Ann E. Imamura discusses choices available to contemporary Japanese women, which radically increased after World War II, but the choices still remained

largely supportive, domestic, or marginal. In the introduction to the book, Imamura summarizes how images of Japanese women have expanded in Japan since World War II. According to her, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a salaried husband and a full-time housewife and two children comprised the ideal family, and the wife, called an “education mother,” focused on her children’s education. In the 1970s, images of successful women multiplied, and women participated in many kinds of social activities, such as education, work, community activities, hobby circles, part-time work, and family leisure. The term “new family” appeared, and unlike the old-generation husband, the “new” husband spent increased leisure time with his family, though in actuality most of the “new families” looked the same as the old families within five or six years after marriage. In the 1980s, especially after the Equal Employment Opportunity Law was passed in 1986, various images of Japanese women involved in work, politics, consumption, and international activities prevailed in the media.²² Even when the domestic economy dipped in the 1990s and employers cut back on recruitment of all new graduates, especially female, and when women’s age at first marriage rose and the birthrate fell, the media multiplied images of Japanese women, offering depictions of various life styles for every age and economic group, for women married and unmarried. The state also propagated three contradictory images of

²² In her book, *Women on the Verge*, Karen Kelsky illustrates how Japanese women used internationalism to escape from the traditional feudalistic male-oriented Japan in the 1980s and 1990s. Especially in the late 1980s, with the growth of the Japanese bubble economy, the number of Japanese women studying a foreign language, traveling, studying, working abroad, working at a foreign firm, or engaging with a foreigner increased. Women explored alternative life courses in order to avoid oppressive gender roles and gender discrimination in Japan. In this context, “foreign” mostly meant “Western.”

women: “fulfilled mothers,” “caregivers for the aged” and “capable workers.” In Chapter 11 of *Re-Imaging Japanese Women*, Nobuko Awaya and David P. Phillips say that both Japanese nonfiction and fiction from the 1980s and 1990s, in which female protagonists were often getting a divorce, making single-family homes, or pursuing careers, reflected the changes in Japanese women’s values of the time. According to the authors, many Japanese women were frustrated with their roles in the workplace and the home, and they started to think that marriage was not the only option. They wanted to keep their jobs, even though a large number of women were still leaving work for marriage or child bearing. Awaya and Phillips point out that popular literature, such as that by Banana Yoshimoto and Mariko Hayashi, was a convincing form of media that caught female desires and frustrations often hidden from mass media.

In this chapter, I will describe how American readers constructed and renewed images of contemporary Japanese women by reading the novels of Banana Yoshimoto, which appeared in the mainstream of Japanese literature as an alternative voice of contemporary Japanese women and the representation of Japanese *shojo*-culture at the end of the 1980s,²³ and have been translated and published throughout the world as often as Murakami’s novels have. Through analyses of various discourses, such as literary reviews, academic articles and translations of Yoshimoto’s works, I would like to show how many American

²³ “*Shojo*” literally means “girl” in Japanese, and “*shojo*-culture” is pop-culture mainly consumed by young, Japanese women in their teens and early twenties. John Whittier points out that *shojo*-culture is a symbol of contemporary Japanese consumer capitalism, and Yoshimoto’s works are one of the typical representations of *shojo*-culture.

literary reviews have missed gender issues in Yoshimoto's novels because the female characters in her novels do not match any stereotypical image of Japanese women which they have had nor challenge the stereotypical images in a clear way. I would also like to show how American academic articles have failed to catch the characteristics of Yoshimoto's specific writing style, with which she has challenged a patriarchal Japanese society, and thus, discussed only thematic issues in her novels, which are actually not so important for her innovative role in Japanese literature.

In her article about the formation of Japanese women's language in modernization, Miyako Inoue argues that Japanese women's language was suddenly and deliberately created in the early twentieth century and literary texts formed and disseminated the women's language and how women should speak based on the doctrine of "good wife and wise mother." Following Inoue's argument, Isaac Gagné summarizes how Japanese women's language has been changed in the twentieth century and says that Japanese youth, especially young women, have "a long history of engagement with language in non-mainstream forms that express resistance to certain cultural norms" (130). Even though Gagné does not mention Banana Yoshimoto in his article, her writing style can also be regarded as one of the forms of Japanese women's language which function as resistance against traditional male-dominated mainstream Japanese culture. I would like to explore how English translations of Yoshimoto's novels have failed to transfer many rhetorical effects in her novels, and thus, such an important function of her writing style due not only to the difference of the languages but

also to the untranslatability of her distinct style influenced by *shojo* culture.

Literary reviews

Before Yoshimoto's first novel, *Kitchen* (originally published in 1988 in Japan), was translated and published in 1993 in the United States, a couple of literary reviews had introduced her as a popular, young, female, contemporary Japanese writer who, like Haruki Murakami, had sold millions of copies of her novels in Japan.²⁴ Probably because Murakami's novels had already caught many American critics' attention, Yoshimoto's *Kitchen* was also reviewed in many literary reviews in the United States. Like the early reviews of Murakami's works, many of the reviewers began by comparing or contrasting Yoshimoto's novel with contemporary American novels, such as those of the "literary brat pack's."²⁵ For example, comparing Yoshimoto's writing style with some American writers, such as Jane Smiley and Anne Tyler, Michiko Kakutani said that *Kitchen* might be easily mistaken for an American story except for the characters' names and the mention of specific Japanese foods (C15). Some other reviewers also compared Yoshimoto not with any other Japanese writer but with American writers which was "literary brat pack," and said that Yoshimoto's "humorous" or "adorably nerdy" style was quite different from those "banal" or "jaded" American writers (Howard 6D; Garrison 110).

While many reviewers stressed how similar Murakami's works were to

²⁴ See Mitgang ("Letter"), Tanabe.

²⁵ "Literary brat pack" refers to the three American authors, Bret Easton Ellis, Tama Janowitz and Jay McInerney, who emerged in the 1980s influenced by Raymond Carver and Ann Beattie.

contemporary American novels and how different they were from traditional Japanese literature of previous generations, many reviews of Yoshimoto's novel focused on stereotypical characteristics of traditional Japanese literature and culture. Patricia Smith—in order to find out why Yoshimoto's *Kitchen* was so popular in Japan, selling more than a million copies—used stereotypical terms or phrases such as “polite in the Japanese manner,” “Japanese literary sensibilities,” and “the author's delicate strokes,” which were often used by American critics to describe Japanese literature and culture. Other reviewers also mentioned characteristics of traditional Japanese literature and culture in the novel. For example, Scott Shibuya Brown used a classical Japanese phrase “*mono no aware*,” which means pathos or sensitiveness to beauty feeling the mutability of everything in the world and missing something lost, to explain why this novel had such a great popularity in Japan (X8). Deborah Garrison said that she saw the spirit of Zen in the heroine's spiritual feeling in a scene in the story (110). “*Mono no aware*” and “Zen” are typical signs of classical Japanese literature and culture, which are easy to use when describing any Japanese work of art, and are therefore banal.

At the same time, critics often recognized *Kitchen* as an accurate representation of contemporary Japanese culture, and they recognized the female protagonist in the novel, Mikage, as an authentic representation of a contemporary Japanese woman. Elizabeth Hanson said that the heroine of the novel was a typical representation of young Japanese women, who were attracted to kitchens and cooking as signs of comfort and womanliness and tried to live independently

at the same time (BR18). Some other reviewers also saw Banana Yoshimoto as the representation of 20-something young Japanese women (Brown X8; Garrison 109). It seems that American reviewers were trying to catch images of both traditional and contemporary Japanese culture and the image of the contemporary Japanese woman reflected in *Kitchen*.²⁶ When *Kitchen*, Yoshimoto's debut novel, was first published in Japan, many Japanese critics, especially older males, paid attention to her unique writing style that had been largely influenced by contemporary Japanese comics and light novels for young women, and many of the critics praised the novel as something new in Japanese literature. On the other hand, American reviewers were not interested in that issue, though some pointed out the "simple" and "light" writing style,²⁷ and this is probably due to differences in literary history and the untranslatability of her style, which I will discuss later in the section on translation.

While Yoshimoto's first novel, *Kitchen*, was generally warmly welcomed in the United States, her next three novels, *N.P.* (1994; originally published in 1990 in Japan), *Lizard* (1995; originally published in 1993 in Japan), and *Amrita*

²⁶ This is obvious because some reviewers went so far as to mention the picture of an Asian woman on the cover of the book: "There's a photograph on the mint-and-dark-peach jacket of a bright-eyed Japanese girl in a white eyelet dress, her hair stylishly longer on one side than the other – someone it might be fun to know. She's not Banana, but the packaging doesn't entirely lie" (Garrison 109); "The face of Tokyo native Banana Yoshimoto graces the book's front cover. Throughout the book, I found myself returning again and again to that cover to stare at the wistful features, the self-conscious gaze, the tentative posture" (Smith 57). As Garrison points out, this woman on the cover is not Banana Yoshimoto but an anonymous model. In any case, do they not sound as if they were valuing the Asian girl with a colonialistic or male chauvinistic gaze?

²⁷ "Yoshimoto's language, as translated by Megan Backus, is simple and spare, minimally fleshing out each scene" (Howard 6D). "The dialogue of her characters, while possibly distorted by translation, is too often banal, hinting at nothing but the obvious, in the manner of bad television" (Brown X8). "Yoshimoto's writing isn't itself very complex; it skips lightly over the surface of even Mikage's darkest hours" (Garrison 109).

(1997; originally published in 1994 in Japan), were often criticized by American reviewers, and it was in particular her writing style that was especially criticized, even though her seemingly simple style was a specific style of writing popular in Japan in certain types of works. For example, in the reviews of *N.P.*, some reviewers said that Yoshimoto's writing style was quite boring and they pointed out that Yoshimoto's prose was "banal," "mediocre," and "clichéd," though it is interesting that they never imagined that it might have resulted from Ann Sherif's translation. Rather, they blamed the original author for the "banal" writing style (Galef BR23; Cryer 48; Herter "Banana" 6D). *Lizard* and *Amrita* were also criticized by some reviewers. In his review of *Lizard*, Mark Bautz, who wrote that Yoshimoto's book was not "charming or insightful" but just an "exercise in writing," and the title story was "dead on arrival" (B6). In his review of *Amrita*, Yoji Yamaguchi pointed out that Yoshimoto's "impressionistic narrative style," which had been very effective for the previous novels, did not work well for this longer novel and concluded that this was hardly her most appealing novel. Deirdre R. Schwiesow also agreed that this was not Yoshimoto's best book, saying that unlike her earlier books it "doesn't always hang together (6D). Schwiesow was clearly frustrated with incoherencies in the novel, such as the vague time sequence of the events, the characters who did not behave like their ages, and the heroine's unchanging personality.

As the lone exception to the critical trend regarding Yoshimoto's writing in *N.P.*, *Lizard* and *Amrita*, Cathleen Schine read Yoshimoto's writing from a favorable perspective. Even though Schine claimed Yoshimoto's writing had

many negative elements, using phrases such as “monotony,” “trite,” “platitude,” “cliché,” “shopworn words,” and “shallow language” to describe Yoshimoto’s writing, she also claimed that these words worked as devices to make readers feel comfortable and connected to others and the world. And she said that Yoshimoto’s descriptions of Gen-X girls and boys were earnest, deep, and unaffected. In addition, unlike other reviewers²⁸ at that time, she found universal characteristics rather than Orientalistic characteristics in *Lizard*, saying that the all the stories in this book were thematically and formally as alike as fairy tales, and the heroes and heroines were all rescued in the end. Schine concluded that *Lizard* was about how to find one’s proper place and how to grow up and that Yoshimoto found a way out for her characters and a way into the world, which are universal characteristics found in any bildungsroman.

At this time period, Yoshimoto’s novels had become more familiar to American reviewers, and they often mentioned her thematic characteristics in the reviews, such as her “wildly offbeat characters and a plot that alternates fantastical moments with celebrations of worldly pleasures” (Yamaguchi A1), “psychic communication,” “the occult,” “lesbian attraction” and “the anomie of the twenty something mind” (Schwiesow 6D). Nicole Gaouette delineated the image of Banana Yoshimoto’s works in the US as of 1998, saying that Yoshimoto’s works were “a perfect reflection of Japan – old and new,” which had

²⁸ Some reviewers still tried to find classical characteristics of traditional Japanese literature in her novel: “Ms. Yoshimoto updates what is actually a traditional evocation of “*aware*” with a hip sensibility” (Galef BR23); “Yoshimoto writes with a reverence for the Japanese tradition that’s refreshing in a Generation X-age writer” (Vivinetto 6D).

“modern Japanese culture in their use of androgyny, fantasy worlds, and psychic phenomena, all major motifs in Japanese manga, or comic books” and “ an older Japanese aesthetic that helps explain the pensive quality of some Yoshimoto’s characters,” called “*mono no aware*” or “the pathos of things.” This typical image of Yoshimoto’s novels as the mixture of old and new Japan—the mixture of “*mono no aware*” and Japanese comic books—was quite fixed at that time in the US and has remained so ever afterward.

By the time *Asleep* was translated and published in 2000 in the US (originally published in 1989 in Japan), American reviewers finally started reading Yoshimoto’s novel not just as a representation of old and new Japan, but also as a universal novel familiar to American readers. For example, Philip Herter said that this novel evoked the “interior lives of contemporary Japanese” and showed us “something real and human about our times” (“Rev.” 4D). Stephanie Deutsch said that the book represented “a foreign culture” which “feels more familiar” with the young female characters studying “the tea ceremony and ikebana” but also drinking “gin and tonic” going “to bed with inappropriate men” and spending “long evenings in front of the television” (B6). As the reviewers mentioned, Yoshimoto’s novel was both “Japanese” and “about our times,” “foreign” and “familiar,” to them. Probably because of the fact that reviewers now could enter into the stories because they felt them to be universal enough to be even their own stories, to see their own life and experiences reflected in them, they looked for a word to explain the novel’s atmosphere without relying on Orientalistic terms such as “subtle” and “delicate” that typically illustrate

Japanese culture. For example, while other reviewers could have described the novel as “subtle,” using the conception of the traditional Japanese aesthetic “*mono no aware*,”²⁹ Maggie Galehouse and Laura Miller explained the melancholic feelings of the characters in the novel, which were particular to Yoshimoto’s works differently. Galehouse expressed the feelings as “those physical and emotional states that are more often than not aligned with silence” (BR14). Miller said that Yoshimoto’s novel depicted “a state of broody, quasi-existential melancholy that’s no less pleasurable for being a bit adolescent and about an inch deep” (X15). Aside from whether their phrases are appropriate or not in explaining the unique feelings of Yoshimoto’s novels, it is clear that they at least tried to avoid typical terms in their reviews.

Goodbye Tsugumi, translated and published in 2002 in the US (originally published in 1989 in Japan), was again criticized and read as something very Japanese. John Freeman criticized this novel saying that this was like a practice compared to *Kitchen*, and it was understandable why this book had not been published in the US until very much later. He said that this was a story of an “It girl,” a fashionable and attractive woman, but the heroine’s usage of language was so childish that she did not sound like she was in her twenties but rather like a girl of ten, though typical teenagers’ speech had effectively expressed complicated feelings and emotions in Yoshimoto’s other works (“Writing”). On the other hand, Wingate Packard read this novel as a very Japanese one. Comparing Yoshimoto’s

²⁹ Deutsch used the word “subtle” in her review of *Asleep* as follows: “For the most part, though, the stories capture something subtle and real about the way we process emotion and experience; they portray magical moments when a character is able, at last, to move on” (B6).

Goodbye Tsugumi with Haruki Murakami's *After the Quake*, Packard said that both Yoshimoto and Murakami wrote about "loss" in their novel, but Yoshimoto's novel was much more Japanese than Murakami's because Yoshimoto's novel had "delicate sensitivity" and "perishability and impermanence" as part of the traditional Japanese aesthetic, which are common in thousand-years-old Japanese literature, but, he said, the thousand year old aesthetic that centered on such concepts as sentimental admiration of the beauty of cherry blossoms was not effective for Western readers. Packard even said that such Japanese aesthetics were too intense and present in the novel, even though his reading of intense Japaneseness in the novel may have arisen from his Orientalistic perspective.

One of the reasons why many American reviewers have mentioned the Japaneseness in Yoshimoto's novels again and again is that Yoshimoto herself has also sometimes admitted that her works were close to traditional Japanese fables and parables and that they had many elements of traditional Japanese aesthetics. For example, in an interview, she talked about her own novels as follows: "In Noh plays, ghosts appear. And sometimes a character's personality changes entirely. Just by putting on a mask they suddenly become a demon. I think what I write is very close to the tradition. ... These are modern version of Noh, I think" (Pilling 36). Besides, because Yoshimoto said that she wanted to encourage young readers with her novels to realize that "there is a place for everyone in human society," David Pilling, the writer of the review, described Banana Yoshimoto as a Japanese Salinger—a representative or supportive writer for troubled and sensitive young people lost in a severe, real world. In that sense, it is appropriate that Pilling,

unlike other reviewers, chose universal words, such as “grieving,” “healing,” and “hope,” to describe the attractive characteristics of Yoshimoto’s novels. The author herself wanted to use the classic terms such as “delicate,” “subtle,” “perishable,” and “impermanent” to appeal to readers all over the world. As a matter of fact, according to Motoko Rich, American publishers picked up Yoshimoto’s novels to translate and publish in the US not because her novels were very Japanese, but because they were not very Japanese, and, therefore, could appeal to ordinary readers who were not necessarily interested in Japanese literature and culture, in which manner, publishers gained a large readership in the US.

By the time *Hardboiled & Hard Luck* (originally published in 1999 in Japan) was translated and published in 2005 in the United States, the three typical images of Banana Yoshimoto had clearly been established in the US. The first one is a writer who concerns herself with serious themes such as “loss,” “death,” “love,” and “female friendship” but uses a simple, light writing style (“In Brief;” Farr; Freeman “Morose;” Ervin). The second image is that of a writer always dealing with spiritual and psychological issues, and the reviewers explained the characteristics of Yoshimoto’s novels with the terms, such as “true Freudian fashion,” “a psychological catalyst,” “the naturalness of the supernatural” and “the ghost story” (“In Brief;” Farr; Janairo; Herter “Haunted”). The third image is that of a writer very much influenced by both traditional Japanese literature and culture and contemporary Japanese comics, mixing them in the novels (Herter “Haunted”).

American reviewers, who first had the images of Banana Yoshimoto's works as the mixture of traditional and contemporary Japanese literature and culture and as a representation of contemporary Japanese women when *Kitchen* was published in the US, later tried to find words to describe the unique feeling of her work without relying on classical, stereotypical terms for Japanese literature. These reviewers became quite familiar with Yoshimoto's themes when her other novels were translated and published one after another. Finally, by describing her work with universal characteristics such as "spiritual," "supernatural," and "psychological," the three images of Banana Yoshimoto have been completed. This is the overall flow of the reviews of Banana Yoshimoto in the US. Because Yoshimoto's novels do not have as many modern or postmodern devices as Murakami's novels have, the reviews tend not to delve too deeply.

In Japan, Yoshimoto's novels were both criticized and praised by both ordinary readers and critics, especially when her early novels were published in the late 1980s and the early 1990s,³⁰ and she has been nominated for many literary awards, and her novels have sold millions of copies. In the US, however, more reviewers have criticized her novels, especially her writing style, and, as we have seen, fewer reviewers highly esteemed her works. The reason why American critics' evaluation of Yoshimoto's writing style is comparably low, describing her novels as "monotonous," "banal," "clichéd," or "jejune," could be partly because it is difficult to appreciate her writing style without familiarity with Japanese comics for girls since her writing style is similar to the lyrical and poetic

³⁰ See Saito.

monologues found in these comics. Because those kinds of lyrical monologues are always accompanied by beautiful graphic images of landscapes or characters in Japanese comics, readers of those comics would imaginatively translate such images when reading Yoshimoto's writing. They might also have similar healing or relaxing emotional responses as when they read the comics. The reason why many older, male, Japanese critics welcomed Banana Yoshimoto, even though they may also not have been familiar with her writing style, could be because Yoshimoto's conservative narratives appealed to their conservatism. Perhaps, also, her writing style had unique characteristics that were shocking and refreshing for them but impossible to translate into English, which I will discuss later in the section on translation.

As we have seen, not many American reviews of Banana Yoshimoto have mentioned gender issues in her novels. It is true that some reviewers say that Yoshimoto's heroines were representations of contemporary young Japanese women, but they neither discuss how they are different from older generations, nor do they offer clear images of the female characters in Yoshimoto's novels. This is probably because Yoshimoto's characters neither overlap with typical images of Japanese women held by Americans, such as "geisha girls," "devoted women," "miserable creatures," and "strong and motherly women," nor do the characters challenge these stereotypical images of themselves. Besides, they sound too childish to be called "women" by American readers. Therefore, in order to examine whether Yoshimoto's novels have offered alternative images of Japanese women, it is necessary to look closely at American academic articles,

which have discussed social and gender topics in her novels, such as “girl,” “home,” “patriarchal society,” “kitchen,” and “homosexuality.”

Academic articles

In *The Columbia Companion to Modern East Asian Literature*, edited and published in 2003, Banana Yoshimoto is introduced as an author dealing with “subjects such as the non-nuclear family, sexual orientation, incest, spirituality, new religions, death, violence, the single person, and AIDS” making these serious themes “palatable to readers” with “comforting and upbeat spiritual solutions or means of emotional healing” and a lyrical writing style “exceedingly easy to read” whose roots are found in *shojo* culture, particularly in comic books aimed at young female readers (Mostow 257). It is clear that the three images of Yoshimoto’s work often seen in American reviews are already fixed in academia as well. First, scholars point out that Yoshimoto usually deals with serious themes such as “loss,” “death,” and “loneliness” with a simple and light touch. For example, Ann Sherif³¹ says, “She handles serious subjects with a remarkably light hand or even, as many critics have noted, a studied nonchalance” (279), and “Yoshimoto’s narrators characteristically treat the occurrences that surround them – incest, suicide, drugs, murder, transsexuality, lethal violence – with utter nonchalance” (293).³² Second, Sherif also pays attention to the universal “spiritual,” “psychological,” and “healing” characteristics of Yoshimoto’s novels,

³¹ Ann Sherif is a translator of Yoshimoto’s novels, *N.P.* and *Lizard*.

³² See also Treat (379), Buruma (33).

saying that Yoshimoto's novels could appeal to readers of many cultures because she does not especially show imagery "as evocative of traditional/exotic/non-Western Japan or the Anglo-European world" but suggests imagery of "spiritual, mythical, and psychological categories of transcendence, enlightenment, and the unconscious," which makes her novels "marketable in so many countries around the world" (298, 299). Third, of course, scholars discuss the influence of both traditional and contemporary Japanese literature and culture, "*mono no aware*" and Japanese comics, saying that the representations of specific feelings of "sadness" and "nostalgia" in Yoshimoto's novels are very much influenced by both contemporary girl's comics and classical Japanese aesthetics (Treat 353; Buruma 31, 33, 34).

Unlike literary reviews, which seldom mention gender issues, many academic articles discuss an important question, whether the images of women in Yoshimoto's novels are alternative or, whether they succeed in renewing stereotypical images of Japanese women, such as "geisha girls," "devoted women," "miserable creatures," and "strong and motherly women." Their answers to this question are "Yes" and "No." For example, John Whittier Treat says that "nostalgia" is a pivotal concept in all of Yoshimoto's works and that this "nostalgia" is "a simulated nostalgia anticipated from a future perspective"(380), meaning that the female protagonist sees the present from a future perspective, and with that kind of "nostalgia" Yoshimoto thematically challenges patriarchal society. Treat picks up the female protagonist in *Goodbye Tsugumi* as an example and says that she contests patriarchal authority by refusing to grow up, behaving

childishly and remaining a *shojo*, who can be still free from any gender role as a woman in the workplace or marriage. Treat claims that *shojo* are now a postmodern sign of Japanese consumer capitalism, and that they “constitute their own gender, neither male nor female but rather something importantly detached from the productive economy of heterosexual reproduction” (364), and in that sense, Yoshimoto achieved an alternative point of view when narrating her stories, discarding a stereotypical conception of “family” and “oedipal father,” which is “a *shojo* ‘subject position’” with which Yoshimoto articulates a certain place for contemporary consumer capitalist *shojo* culture in Japanese society (360).

Ian Buruma also says that Yoshimoto’s female protagonist is a typical representation of contemporary Japanese women who are still restricted in a patriarchal society and want to be free from their oppressive “family,” saying, “Since family duties are (or at any rate were) particularly onerous in Japan and sex roles so rigidly defined, it is no wonder that young girls so often long to stop time and to retreat into a fantasy world of purity, androgyny and pre-pubescence” (34-35).³³ Like Treat, Buruma regards Yoshimoto’s particular concept of “nostalgia” as an effective means of escaping her “family.” However, the concept of “nostalgia” for the days of the good old girls’ as a way of freeing the heroine from strict gender roles in a patriarchal society, which Treat and Buruma offer, does not challenge as much as retreat, and, therefore, it is questionable to call it “alternative.”

There are more positive articles about the alternative images of Japanese

³³ On Japan’s cute culture see, for example, Kinsella, Miller (“You”).

women represented in Yoshimoto's novels. For example, Ann Sherif says that one reason why Banana Yoshimoto's works have achieved popularity outside Japan is that her novels offer alternative images of women in a utopian, *shojo* fetishistic world with a background of the postmodern global economy, which does not have dark images of the memory of World War II. Furthermore, Sherif says, the novels deliberately lack typically feudalistic, male characters, and elements of patriarchal, sexist society, but instead offer a site free from male domination of financial and political power with very sensitive males, transvestites, and lesbians as a postmodern and post industrial society. Moreover, like Treat, Sherif praises Yoshimoto for bringing *shojo* culture, which was "the separate/marginalized realm," to the center of "orthodox heterosexual journalism and critical establishment" (283). In this sense, Treat and Sherif have the same favorable point of view on Yoshimoto's contribution to the renewal of the image of Japanese women as important components of society, as both consumers and producers of *shojo* culture.

In his article examining the translation of Banana Yoshimoto's *Kitchen*, Jaime Harker also says that Yoshimoto's *Kitchen* transforms stereotypical images of "homosexuality," "transsexuality," and "passive, speechless, sexualized 'oriental' woman" (41). This argument of Harker's, though, is simple and overly optimistic because the transsexual character in *Kitchen* is represented in a stereotypical way. Eriko, who is a male-to-female transsexual father of the heroine's male friend in *Kitchen*, always makes up, dresses up, behaves, and speaks exactly as transsexual or homosexual queers in drag appear in various

kinds of media, such as TV shows, never challenging stereotyped expectations. Besides, Eriko even tries to behave like a heterosexual father to her son before she dies, though she fails to. It is hard to say that Yoshimoto is sensitive about gender issues only taking this example.

Among those who say that Yoshimoto's novels show alternative images of Japanese women, Nobuko Awaya and David P. Phillips most strongly insist that her female protagonists are alternative role models with whom contemporary young female readers sympathize and who they believe represent their voices. According to them, the female protagonists in Yoshimoto's novels *Kitchen* and *Tsugumi* fascinate many young, Japanese, female readers because the heroines are marginal and can be "iconoclastic" or "antisocial" without fear. By reading the stories of the girls free from social constraints and expectations which always burden young Japanese women, Awaya and Phillips say, the readers can experience the thrilling life without endangering their real life. Awaya and Phillips maintain that the attitude of Mikage, the heroine in *Kitchen*, challenges the present social norm because she never wants to get married, in spite of the fact that romance and marriage are still important goals for many Japanese single women. Through many difficulties in her life, Awaya and Phillips say, Mikage finally becomes independent and, therefore, an alternative role model for young female readers, who often give themselves up to their fates and cannot help but become passive in the male-dominated world. By living independently and facing the fear of isolation, Awaya and Phillips say, the heroines in Yoshimoto's novels show us a possibility of living free from gender roles in society and give

especially young female readers a message that they can challenge conventional values in the society and live as equally as men without being stereotypically masculine or feminine. Awaya and Phillips conclude that Yoshimoto expresses desires and voices of real contemporary Japanese young women through her characters, and she shows an alternative image of Japanese women disposing “the gender-laden baggage of social expectations”, offering hope for young readers to change their own life “not merely through the attainment of material success, but through a better understanding of oneself” (255-56). We cannot, however, simply accept Awaya and Phillips’ conclusion. The female protagonists in Yoshimoto’s novels are usually in their twenties or early thirties. At these ages, women still have choice regarding how to live in Japan, either independent or married, with less social pressure than perhaps later on in their lives. Is not a more important question for many Japanese women how to live in their late thirties, forties, and fifties? Would readers not prefer to see how female characters at those ages struggle with social pressure and patriarchal society?³⁴ Can we say for sure that Yoshimoto only portrays hopeful role models and wide-open possibilities for her readers?

Some scholars, actually, say “No” to the statement that Yoshimoto succeeds in replacing stereotypical images of Japanese women with alternative perspectives on gender issues. While insisting that Yoshimoto’s heroines discard traditional gender roles and create an alternative image of Japanese women,

³⁴ On how Japanese women struggle with their femininity constructed under the tension between “women as natural caregivers” or “mother as main parent” and “gender equality” see, for example, Charlebois.

Awaya and Phillips, at the same time, admit that Yoshimoto's novels are still half conservative because her stories value the conventional idea stressing the importance of people's forming together as a family, whether they have a real blood relationship or not.

Sandra Buckley strongly opposes others' evaluations on Yoshimoto's representation of gender and holds that Yoshimoto is rather conservative on those issues. First, in her article about *Kitchen*, Buckley points out that the title and the motif of the novel prove that Yoshimoto follows the traditional Japanese, modern Japanese, and universal myths that a "kitchen" is the center of family and nation, and this discourse seemingly praises women, but it actually disperses a gender-biased perspective, pushing women into the traditional realm of women's activities and into different kinds of media such as, television drama, advertising, fiction, and comic books, even though there are some others who claim that Yoshimoto renews the gender-biased connotation of "kitchen" by using the English word instead of the Japanese word *daidokoro*.³⁵ Buckley's argument is quite obvious and persuasive because the heroine of *Kitchen* constantly hangs around a kitchen, talking, thinking, sleeping, and of course, cooking, and she even chooses to work as a cooking instructor in order to live independently. This choice of location and vocation for the young, female protagonist can never challenge nor threaten the traditional rigid social norm, or rather, she is a good candidate for

³⁵ For example, Sherif says that Yoshimoto gets rid of the traditional connotation of kitchen (*daidokoro*) bound to the conventional gender role by using the English word "kitchen" for the title of the novel (294). On the use of English as a tool for Japanese women to express their own "voice" see, for example, Stanlaw.

a “strong and motherly woman,” and therefore it is easy for old, male, conservative critics to accept the novel. Second, Buckley says that Eriko, a male-to-female character who is supposed to challenge traditional gender roles, finally is absorbed into male-masculinity and never opens up possibilities of alternative gender. Eriko is murdered by a male stalker in the story, which Buckley sees as something to symbolize that Japanese society excludes such an excessive personality endangering the conventional gender roles and says, “Yoshimoto Banana’s fictions remain firmly grounded in normative dominant discourses of sexuality and gender” (240). Buckley concludes that Yoshimoto never goes beyond traditional gender roles in her novels and is limited to a conservative point of view and a traditional concept of family, comparing Yoshimoto’s *Kitchen* with a Japanese film, *Okoge* (1992) directed by Takehiro Nakajima, which portrays a woman hanging around gay people but never shows gay people in an exoticized or stereotypical way.

Ann Sherif says that Yoshimoto’s conservative perspective is represented not only in her stereotypical expressions of gender issues but also in her Orientalism regarding Asian countries, pointing out that Yoshimoto herself and the characters in her novels often look for mental healing in other Asian countries, such as Bali, Middle Eastern countries, and India. Viewing those places as mysterious and exotic spiritual healing spots and as temporary escapes from Japanese patriarchal society is a perspective typical of Orientalism. Sherif says that Yoshimoto’s use of the Orient and exotic settings and spiritual and psychic experiences in her novels perfectly meets the needs of the market for Japanese

tourists looking for some spiritual sports in South Pacific islands, such as Bali. Besides, Sherif says, Yoshimoto is conservative about Japanese language and culture in the sense that she thinks they could be contaminated or damaged once they touch Western language and culture, as the characters in her novel, *N.P.*, abandon their family roles and conventional morals violating incest taboos when they live in the US.

It is true that Yoshimoto has made a certain contribution to the renewal of the images of Japanese literature and Japanese women by bringing a marginal writing style and *shojo* culture, specific to Japanese comics and novels aimed mainly at young girls, to the mainstream of literature and culture. However, the fact that her novels, which have many conservative aspects, have been popular among Japanese and American readers and critics shows that they share a universal conservatism and conventional expectations about gender roles and family issues. Japanese and American critics and scholars both praise and criticize Yoshimoto's novels because of her alternativeness and her conservatism. Many of those who affirm her alternativeness are blinded to her conservatism and do not notice, or pretend not to notice, that Yoshimoto's novels always depict a sensitive and nostalgic moment of a young woman's life when she is temporarily free from family obligations and gender roles. Therefore, the novels could be a refuge from a real world that is isolating or frustrating for readers, but they may not challenge already existing social prejudices and stereotypical images of women. In Japan, one of the reasons why Yoshimoto's novels, especially early ones, had so much attention from both ordinary readers and critics is that her novels are a well-

crafted mixture of a traditional, conservative story line (content) and an innovative and alternative writing style (form). Her writing style, influenced by Japanese comics and light novels for young people, strongly impacted critics who were not familiar with that sub-culture.³⁶

The question is whether Yoshimoto's writing style has impacted American readers in translation, as well, or not. As we have already seen, American critics and scholars are less impressed by Yoshimoto's writing style than Japanese critics and scholars. Does this mean that we lose the essence of Yoshimoto's novels in translation? In order to examine this point, we need to discuss how Yoshimoto's novels have been translated into English. In her article, "The Politics of Translation," discussing the role of translation as the feminist agenda of achieving women's solidarity, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is concerned that non-Western female writers' texts are often translated into English under the Western feminists ideology or strategy because the translators miss the specificity or the rhetoricity of the original, and argues that the task of translator is to "surrender" to the text and "engage" with the rhetoricity of the original, taking time and thorough preparations. In the next section, I would like to examine the specificity and rhetoricity of Yoshimoto's original writing style and how the translators face or do not face the issues in their English translations.

Translations

Two articles, both published in 1999, which discuss English translations of

³⁶ See Saito.

Banana Yoshimoto's novels, have opposite attitudes toward the translations. In one of the two articles, "Contemporary Japanese Fiction & 'Middlebrow' Translation Strategies: The Case of Banana Yoshimoto's 'Kitchen,'" Jaime Harker states that the reason why Yoshimoto's *Kitchen* had a certain popularity in the US is that the novel was translated half in a natural way and half in an Oriental way, which he calls "middlebrow translation." Harker criticizes Lawrence Venuti's famous translation theory because it recommends foreignizing translations in order to protect source-language cultural values from racism and imperialism, which may create cultural stereotypes, depending on the translator's point of view on another culture. Therefore, Harker insists that we should do both domesticating and foreignizing translations to make the readers of translations feel that the novel is familiar and foreign at the same time, which exactly agrees with Apter's argument on the market needs for international writers who should be exotic enough but not too exotic. As a good example of such "middlebrow translation," he picks up Megan Backus' 1993 translation of *Kitchen*, saying, "Backus' middlebrow translation strategy is carefully constructed, reminiscent of Japanese rhythms and language and yet fluently readable" (37).

Comparing Backus's translation with Ann Sherif's translation of *Kitchen* in *New Japanese Voices: The Best Contemporary Fiction from Japan*, edited by Helen Mitsios in 1991, Harker shows us better points of Backus' translation. First, Harker says, Backus keeps the word order of the original Japanese sentence and gives the readers "the happy-go-lucky tone of the narrator's speech" by translating, for example, the second sentence of the novel as "No matter where it is, no matter

what kind, if it's a kitchen, if it's a place where they make food, it's fine with me"³⁷ (*Kitchen* 3), while Sherif translates the same sentence as "I'm happy with any kind of kitchen, no matter where it is or what condition it's in" ("Kitchen" 152). Second, Backus mimics an onomatopoeic verb, *pika pika suru*, by translating it as "White tile catching the light (ting! ting!)" (*Kitchen* 3), which is erroneous because the Japanese verb *pika pika suru* means something sparkling or twinkling. According to Harker, however, "Backus' 'ting ting' is recognizably English and yet has a slightly foreign air, hearkening back to the Japanese" (38). Third, Harker says, "In every sentence, Backus chooses language which interests and draws the reader in" (38) such as "dead worn out in a reverie" (*Kitchen* 4) and "stepped in a sadness ... shuffling softly in gentle drowsiness" (*Kitchen* 4), instead of translating them respectively as "really tired" ("Kitchen" 153) and "felt overwhelmed and sad" ("Kitchen" 153). Fourth, Backus sometimes uses an English idiom, such as "three sheets to the wind" (*Kitchen* 63), and sometimes uses an Orientalistic, religious, or mystic phrase such as "I think I heard a spirit call my name"³⁸ (*Kitchen* 6), even though this translated quote does not match the original Japanese sentence in which the heroine's male friend just calls her by her first name when they first meet. Fifth, Harker says, Backus' translation both comforts and disturbs readers by using an English phrase in a slightly different way; for example, Backus translates: "There were many, many difficult times, god knows" (*Kitchen* 41) without capitalizing "god," which creates a different

³⁷ "Doko no demo, donna no demo, sore ga daidokoro de areba syokuji wo tsukuru basyo de areba watashi wa tsuraku nai" (*Kichin* 7) in the original Japanese.

³⁸ "Fui ni na wo yobareta sei mo aru to omou" (*Kichin* 12) in the original Japanese.

connotation for American readers.

According to Harker, Backus' strategies add up to her "middlebrow translation" and help her achieve both domestication and foreignization in her translation. Because of this "middlebrow translation," Harker says, Yoshimoto's *Kitchen* received two opposing reactions on the part of reviewers and critics in the United States: one states that *Kitchen* is a very Japanese novel expressing traditional Japanese beauty "*mono no aware*," and the other states that *Kitchen* is a Japanese novel giving them an impression of reading an American novel. Harker concludes that Yoshimoto's translated *Kitchen* opened up a new market in the US for novels that include alternative images of Japanese women, challenging American "Oriental" stereotypes of Japaneseness by partly domesticating the foreign novel. While pointing out aspects of Japanese language and culture lost in the translation of *Kitchen*—such as a complicated Japanese system of honorifics,³⁹ the distinction between Japanese male and female colloquial languages,⁴⁰ and the usage of different kinds of Japanese personal pronouns⁴¹—Harker admits that Backus' translation succeeds as a whole. Do the advantages of Backus' translation that Harker mentions actually allow the translation to retain Yoshimoto's original innovative writing style? As some Japanese critics point out, one of the salient characteristics of Yoshimoto's novels is their simple, light, and

³⁹ On the relationship between honorifics (politeness) and Japanese women's language see, for example, Ide et al, Smith.

⁴⁰ On the difference between Japanese male and female colloquial languages see, for example, Adachi and Stanlaw's Introduction in Itoh, Ohara.

⁴¹ On the variations of a first person pronoun which Japanese girls could use see, for example, Miyazaki.

unique writing style inspired by Japanese comics and light novels for young, Japanese, female readers. This *shojo* culture offers readers deliberately comical yet cool and objective expressions that allow readers to struggle with or escape from a severe outer world.⁴² It is true that Backus' translation accurately represents young people's offbeat street conversations and monologues also present in the original Japanese, but it is also true that the achievements of Backus' translation have nothing to do with the characteristics of Yoshimoto's original writing style specific to Japanese *shojo* culture.

From a more linguistically sophisticated perspective than Harker's, in the article about the English translations of Banana Yoshimoto's novels, "A Poetics of Grammar: Playing with Narrative Perspectives and Voices in Japanese and Translation Texts," Senko K. Maynard analyzes five grammatical devices appearing in the original Japanese texts of Banana Yoshimoto's *Kitchen* and *Lizard* but missing in the translations, and she states that American readers in translation cannot appreciate various rhetorical effects in Yoshimoto's novels because of the untranslatable grammar. The first grammatical device that Maynard mentions is "the perspective preference of scene-to-agent versus agent-to-scene." According to Maynard, the original Japanese text of *Kitchen*, as well as other Japanese literary texts, tends to move the narrator's eyes from a scene (surroundings) to an agent (I), while the English translation tends to move it from an agent (I) to a scene (surroundings). For example, Backus translates the original Japanese sentence "*Ame ni oowareta yakei ga yami ni nijindeyuku ookina garasu,*

⁴² See Aoyama, Saito.

ni utsuru jibun to me ga au” (*Kichin* 17) as “I saw myself reflected in the glass of the large terrace window while black gloom spread over the rain-hounded night panorama” (*Kitchen* 10) instead of literally translating it as “The rain-covered night scene blurring into the darkness; (on this) large glass, myself reflected, (that) (I) see eye to eye” (Maynard 121). This example demonstrates not only that a flaw exists in Harker’s first argument, namely that Backus keeps the word order of the original sentence, but also that the original text and the English translation have different interpretive experiences. Thus, as Maynard says, the English and the Japanese texts create different kinds of empathy between narrator and reader.

The second grammatical device is “the perspective preference toward topic versus agent.” Maynard says that, in Japanese literary texts, “Only by reference to concrete objects (often items taken from nature such as cherry blossoms, the moon, or a dewdrop) is one able to express emotion indirectly and thus more movingly” (124), and Yoshimoto’s original novels, of course, use this kind of rhetorical method very often, whereas the translations do not. For example, Backus translates the original Japanese sentence “*Ojamashimasu to agatta soko wa, jitsuni myoona heya datta*” (*Kichin* 15) as “‘Thanks.’ I stepped inside. The room was truly strange” (*Kitchen* 8) instead of literally translating it as “The place (I) entered by saying ‘Excuse me’ was a truly strange room” (Maynard 125). This example again shows that Backus does not exactly follow the word order of the original sentence and that the original text and the English translation have different perspectives of “topic-comment structure” and “subject-predicate structure,” and, thus, different styles of narration. Maynard comments that the

readers can sense the commenting person existing behind the comment with the topic-comment structure more clearly than with the subject-predicate structure, and the consequent high frequency of the mixture of the two structures in Japanese original produces such specific narrating manipulation, which is quite absent in English translation (126).

The third grammatical device is “self-quotation.” According to Maynard, the Japanese originals often use the verb *omou* “think” and its variants to manipulate multiple voices in Japanese discourse, but the translators almost always avoid the use. For example, Backus translates the first sentence of *Kitchen*, “*Watashi ga kono yo de ichiban sukina basho wa daidokoro da to omou*” (*Kichin* 7), as “The place I like best in this world is the kitchen” (*Kitchen* 6) instead of literally translating it as “The place I like best in this world is the kitchen, (I) think” (Maynard 127). As Maynard says, even though it is possible to translate *omou* into English, the translators tend not to use the phrase because of differences in language preferences. Thus, the English translations do not effectively recreate the original Japanese author’s play—her mixing of voices by the use and non-use of *omou*.

The fourth grammatical device is “style shifts.” Maynard says that two verb forms, *da* (abrupt) and *desu/masu* (formal) endings, are commonly used in Japanese, and the two forms represent different “styles,” such as spoken versus written or informal versus formal language. If the abrupt style appears in the predominantly formal style text, the text will have “immediacy and directness in expression” and “a narrative internal perspective” at that point, and, conversely, if

the formal style appears in the predominantly abrupt style text, the text will have “the impression that the narrator awaringly addresses the reader.” In the original Japanese text of Yoshimoto’s *Kitchen*, we often find such style shifts. The formal *desu/masu* style suddenly mixed with the abrupt *da* style is dominant throughout the whole text, as follows: “*Shinto kuraku, nani mo ikizuite inai. Minareteita hazu no subete no mono ga, marude soppo o muiteiru dewa naidesu ka*” (*Kichin* 36). Backus translates this passage as “Cold and dark, not a sigh to be heard. Everything there, which should have been so familiar, seemed to be turning away from me” (*Kitchen* 22). The style shift in Japanese helps readers sense the narrator’s existence and creates a narrator who looks at the world objectively from a distance, but the English translation does not have an equivalent effect because of the lack of style shift. In addition, the original text often uses a colloquial style, such as *ne* and *wa* (interpersonal particles) or *monosugo-o-ku* and *na-a-n-nimo* (an elongated vowels of the adverbs), usually spoken by women in everyday conversation. The English translations do not reflect these style shifts, either, and thus, they miss giving the readers the impression that the narrator is in conversation with the reader, which is “the emotional realm of the narrator-reader interaction (133).

The fifth grammatical device is “the self-referencing manipulation.” The usage of the first-person, self-referencing word *watashi* in Japanese is different from usage of the pronoun “I” in English. As Maynard says, the grammatical subject *watashi* “I” is not required and is often omitted in Japanese when the narrating self is obvious in context, but the pronoun “I” is grammatically

necessary in English. Because *watashi* is often absent in Japanese sentences, the narrating self is foregrounded and detached from the experiencing self once the word *watashi* is deliberately used in the sentence. Maynard says that this strategy of the use/non-use of *watashi* in Japanese is not available in English, and, thus, the English translations cannot use this rhetorical effect. Besides, Maynard points out, Yoshimoto often uses the word *jibun* “self,” a self-reflexive noun in Japanese and plays with the narrative perspectives and voices, to express the sense of a self-reflecting inner self and the narrator’s multiple perspectives toward the self, but English translations lack the rhetorical effect created by Yoshimoto’s manipulating, self-referencing poetic strategy.

By identifying the five grammatical devices in Yoshimoto’s novels and the rhetorical effects that are created by the devices and by explaining how similar rhetorical effects cannot be achieved in translation because of the differences in the languages, Maynard concludes that the English translations of Yoshimoto’s novels leave readers with quite different impressions compared with readers of the originals. Maynard argues that the manipulation of perspectives and voices using grammatical devices and her playing with the text production in general make Yoshimoto’s writing style unique, original, and untranslatable. Maynard’s arguments are quite persuasive because all five grammatical devices, especially three rhetorical strategies, “self-quotation,” “style shift,” and “self-referencing strategy,” are indispensable for Banana Yoshimoto’s innovative and alternative writing style, which had a great impact on the readers in Japan when her first novel *Kitchen* was published in 1988. Her frequent use of *omou* “I think” (self-

quotation), her insertion of the formal *desu/masu* style into the abrupt *da* style (style shift), and her manipulation of self-referencing words *watashi* “I” and *jibun* “self” (self-referencing strategy) are all common in Japanese comics and light novels for young Japanese female readers (*shojo* culture) and are commonly used in an *otaku shojo*’s everyday conversation. In a sense, Yoshimoto’s representation of girls’ culture using this specific writing style is a challenge to Japan’s patriarchal, feudalistic society. It is her innovative writing style, not her thematic motifs, that she drops like a bomb on the traditional and authoritative Japanese literary establishment.

Banana Yoshimoto’s works have been translated by four people: *Kitchen* was translated by Megan Backus in 1993; *N.P.* and *Lizard* were translated by Ann Sherif in 1994 and 1995; *Amrita* was translated by Russell F. Wasden in 1997; and *Asleep*, *Goodbye Tsugumi*, and *Hardboiled & Hard Luck* were translated by Michael Emmerich in 2000, 2002, and 2005. As shown in Maynard’s article, Backus and Sherif hardly succeeded in representing Yoshimoto’s five strategies in their translations, and, thus, their translations miss transferring Yoshimoto’s alternative *shojo* writing style to the target language. Some reviewers have characterized Backus and Sherif’s translations as good, mediocre, or having no problems, which sound, however, impressionistic or inappropriate from Maynard’s point of view.⁴³ How about translations by the other two, then? How

⁴³ “As impeccably translated by Megan Backus, ‘Kitchen’ might easily be mistaken for an American story: ...” (Kakutani C15); “A more serious flaw is the prose itself. There are too many banalities like ‘a chill ran down my spine’ and ‘some cruel, twisted fate.’ The translation by Ann Sheri is not entirely at fault in finding English equivalents for this Japanese mass-market version of melancholy” (Galef BR23); “Ann Sherif’s English translation of *N.P.*, is steady and idiomatic

do they manage to translate Yoshimoto's five rhetorical strategies?

Unfortunately, it is hard to say that Russell F. Wasden succeeds in properly translating the five grammatical devices in *Amrita*. As for the first device of “the perspective preference of scene-to-agent versus agent-to-scene,” he fails to move the narrator's eyes from scene to agent in many passages. A few examples are shown below. I present the alphabetized Japanese originals (a) and the English translations (b).

(1) a. *Suwatte bikutaa no inu o, sono setsunai katamuki no kakudo o miteitara, totsuzen ni, watashi wa futatabi nakitaku natte kite, kidzuitara mou nakihajimete ita. (Amurita 22)*

b. Sitting down, I turned to look at the statue. He seemed to be leaning forward in a painful way, his quiet head cocked to one side. All at once I felt like crying, and before I could see them coming, the tears just started to flow.⁴⁴ (*Amrita* 11)

(2) a. *Fuyu no rouka wa sizuka de, sumizumi made yoru no nioi ni michite ita. Watashi no heya made no 2 meetoru, mado garasu wa kuraku, watashi no kao to issyo ni wasurerareta subete no koto o utsusidasu youna tsuya o motte ita. (Amurita 68)*

b. It was winter, and the corridor between our rooms was chilly. Every inch of the hallway seemed saturated with the scent of night. The glass window that ran the length of the hallway was pitch black, and I gazed into it, hoping that along with my face it would reflect all I had lost in memory. (*Amrita* 41)

(3) a. *Watashi wa TV o tsuketa. //Masani tenkiyohou o yatte ite, kyasutaa ga kono ooame ni tsuite tantan to katatte ita. Mado no soto no zaazaa toiu amaoto to tomoni sore o kiite itara, nandaka himitsu no bangumi o chitei fukaku de miteiru mitaina*

throughout. The shallowness of Yoshimoto's prose is in the writing" (Herter "Banana" 6D).

⁴⁴ In this sentence, Wasden mistranslates a Japanese word *setsunai*, which means "sad" or "melancholy," as "painful."

tozasareta kibun ni natte kita. Kedarukute, taikutsu de, zutto nagaikoto koko ni koushiteiru youna, eien ni ame ga tsudzukisou na kanji datta. (Amurita 73)

- b. I leaned over and flipped on the TV. Wouldn't you know – the weather report was just starting. The newscaster rambled on about the rain. Listening to his words pound from the TV as the rain pelted on the window outside, I felt trapped, as if I were watching a secret television program from deep within the bowels of the earth. It made me think that the rain would continue endlessly, in the same way that I would remain here forever trapped in listless boredom. (*Amrita* 44-45)

In the original Japanese (1a), the narrator's eyes move from a scene (the statue of Nipper) to an agent (I crying), but in the translation (1b), the narrator's eyes catch an agent (I turning) first and then move to a scene (the statue) in a totally opposite way. In the original Japanese (2a), the narrator's eyes move from a scene (the corridor in winter, the glass window) to an agent (my face reflected on the window), but in the translation (2b), the narrator's eyes watch a scene (the corridor, the glass window) and catch an agent (I gazing and hoping), which never appears in the original, before finally reaching an agent (my face). In the original (2a), there is no "I" who is "gazing," "hoping," or "having lost." In this way, the translation does not express how the agent finds him/herself constantly in relation to the narrated scene in the original text. In the original Japanese (3a), the narrator's eyes move from an agent (I turning on the TV) to the surroundings (the weather report, raining outside) and vaguely come back to an agent (the feeling, the atmosphere), but in the translation (3b), the narrator's eyes first catch an agent (I leaning over), which does not exist in the original, and then move to the

surroundings (the weather report, raining outside). The rest of the passage is anchored on “I,” repeating it three times, which does not occur in the original. Because of this I-centered perspective, the translation fails to depict the scene-centered perspective from the original Japanese.

The following are examples of the second device, “the preference toward topic versus agent,” which is again not properly reproduced in translation.

(4) a. *Syoumen no mado kara massugu ni hi ga sashite kite, hisashiburi ni abiru asa no hikari wa, karada juu ni shimite kuru you datta. Soshite asa no daidokoro ni tatsu haha no ushirosugata wa, sukkiri to chiisakute, nandaka shinkon gokko o shiteiru koukousei mitai ni mieta. (Amurita 11)*

b. Sunlight shone into the kitchen through the front window in a single, a straight line. For the first time in a long time the sunlight poured over my body, and I bathed in its warmth for a while. Glancing over, I saw my mother from behind as she stood in front of the counter, working away in the morning kitchen. She looked so small, almost like a teenager playing newlywed in the kitchen. (*Amrita 4*)

(5) a. *Ningen ga, ima koko ni aru kono shikkari shita katamari ga, jitsu wa gunyagunya ni yawarakaku, chotto nanika ga sasattari, butsukattari shita dakede kantan ni kowarete shimau shiromono da toiu no o jikkan shita no wa, saikin no koto datta. (Amurita 58)*

b. Only recently have I discovered that humanity, that large, solid body which seems so steadfast and strong, is actually nothing but a soft, flabby object, easily ruined under pressure – like when it’s stabbed, or run into. (*Amrita 34*)

In both examples, the Japanese sentence takes the topic-comment [NP *wa* NP *da*] structure, but none of the English translations follow this grammatical structure.

Instead, the translations keep the agent-does structure. The original Japanese (4a) has two sentences of the structure with a nominalized topic followed by a comment, but the English translation (4b) always takes the narrator “I” as an agent who does the action: “I bathed ... ,” “I saw” The topic-comment structure in the original Japanese (5a) is literally translated in English as “The moment I discovered that humanity, that large, solid body which seems so steadfast and strong, is actually nothing but a soft, flabby object, easily ruined under pressure – like when it’s stabbed, or run into was only recent.” The translation (5b), instead, takes the agent-does structure: “Only recently have I discovered” As Maynard points out in her article, the agent-does structure does not give the sense that the commenting person lurks behind the comment and, thus, does not express the narrator’s feeling or emotion indirectly in the way the topic-comment structure does. As a result, readers of the original empathize with the narrator differently than readers of the translation.

The following are examples for the third device of “self-quotation,” using the Japanese verb *omou* “think.”

- (6) a. *Ikura geinoujin demo sonna fuuni naranai hito wa ikurademo iruno dakara, mayu wa motomoto muite inakatta no darou to omou.* (*Amurita* 17)
- b. A lot of people can go through a life of fame and fortune without letting it go to their heads, but no matter how many get away with such a thing. I know Mayu had never been ready to handle such a lifestyle. (*Amrita* 8)
- (7) a. *Sono syousetsu wa, hontou no kokoro o motanai wakamono tachi o egaita koudo ni chyuusyouteki de hijou ni noumitsu na*

naiyou de, honnin ni au mae ni mayu ni sore o yomasareta watashi wa, kowakute konna hito niwa aitakunai to omotta. Kyoujin dewa naika to omottanoda. Shikashi attemiru to kare wa goku futsuu no seinen datta. Soshite watashi wa, kono hito ga ano noumitsu na syousetsu o tsumugidasu noniwa taihen na jikan no gyousyuku ga hitsuyou ni chigainai to omotta. Souiu arikata no sainou datta. (Amurita 17-18)

b. It's a serious novel, somewhat abstract, depicting the lives of a group of insensitive young people. Before I met Ryūichirō, Mayu had forced me to read it, and when I finished I was convinced that I never wanted to meet the author. The book scared me. I figured that it had been written by a maniac. However, when I met him he turned out to be a pretty normal guy. I knew the second I laid eyes on him that it must have taken a tremendous amount of concentration, of both time and effort, for someone like Ryūichirō to weave together a novel so thematically dense as his. It takes a special talent for anyone to accomplish such a task. (*Amrita* 8)

(8) a. *Mochiron, sou omotteita no wa watashi dake datta. (Amurita 21)*

b. Of course, I was the only one who'd received that impression. (*Amrita* 11)

(9) a. *Soshite sore ga fusagikomi yori mo mushiro, akarui gyoushi no kanji ni todometeita no wa kitto, watashi ga hitori de miteita node wa nakute, kazoku to issyo datta karada to omou. Eiga ga owatte, watashi wa toire ni ikou to heya o deta. Hajime no syokku wa mohaya kieteite, goku futsuu ni "ii eiga datta naa" to omoinagara, toire no doa o aketa. (Amurita 21-22)*

b. But don't get me wrong, I wasn't brooding. Rather, I'm convinced that I was caught in that strange space precisely because I was there watching the video with my family, not by myself. //When the film was over I got up and headed for the bathroom. The shock that had come over me in watching the movie was already gone, and I opened the door, saying to myself, like I normally would, "What a pleasant movie." (*Amrita* 11)

Maynard divides the usage of *omou* into three types, as an attitudinal marker for the narrator's attitude, as a description of the thinking behavior, and as a marker for direct discourse as the content of the narrator's thoughts. Examples (6) and (9) have the first type of *omou*, and each one is translated as "know" and "am convinced." Examples (8) and (9) have the second type of *omou*, and each one is translated as "had received" and "saying to myself." Example (7) has the third type of *omou*, and it is translated as "was convinced," "figured," and "knew." None of the translations use the verb "think," even though it is grammatically possible. Because the translator avoids using the verb "think" as shown, the translations do not represent the original author's play with mixing voices, typical of Yoshimoto's writing style.

The next examples are for the fourth device of "style shift."

- (10) a. //*Yatto nakete, sorekkiri watashi wa nakanakatta. //Sorega, bikutaa no inu ga katarikakete ita koto? (Amurita 22)*
- b. //I had cried, finally cried. But that was it. I don't recall ever crying again. //Was that the reason Nipper had been there all along? (*Amrita 12*)
- (11) a. *Zenbu oboete iru. Kono toki no tenki wa kou datta, jitsuwa kono toki seiritsu de, tatte iru no ga yatto datta toka ne. (Amurita 52)*
- b. I remembered ... //... the weather in this picture, and ... //... I had my period when they took that shot, so it was a pain to even stand up, and ... //... and so on. (*Amrita 30*)
- (12) a. *Kouiu ki no tsukaikata de nantoka ikinobi, kouiu ki no tsukaikata de tsukarehatete kita no darou, to watashi wa sono yoku shirimo shinai 'sakumi' to iu hito no jinsei wo omotta.*

*Shikashi soremo kyou kagiri nano desu, imakara wa ikitari
battari ni yatte morau hoka arimasen. To kakugo wo kimeta.*
(Amurita 61)

- b. I realized that by perceiving myself in one way I would manage to go on living, but if I thought about things another way I would only wear myself down. In a matter of seconds I'd been introduced to "Sakumi," and before long I'd received a crash course on her life until then. Of course my real knowledge was limited to what came to me on a day-to-day basis, and from there on out I was forced to live a haphazard life, a balancing act, so to speak. But what else could I do? I was only certain of so much. (Amrita 36)

In examples (10a) and (11a), the original Japanese texts use a colloquial style at the end of the passages, such as *koto* or *ne*, so that the texts give the readers the impression that the narrator is in conversation with the reader. The translations (10b) and (11b), however, fail to reproduce such an impression because of the lack of style shift. In example (12a), the formal style *desu/masu* appears in the predominantly abrupt *da* style text to create an impression that the narrator is looking at herself and the world around her very objectively from a distance, which is typical of Yoshimoto's writing style inspired by *shojo* comics and light novels. The translation (12b), of course, cannot recreate this effect because English does not have an equivalent style shift.

The following are examples of the fifth device of "self-referencing strategy."

- (13) a. // *Watashi wa itta. Gurasu no naka dewa sunda cha ga koori no
tsumetai iro ni tokete, yukkuri to tokete ita. Watashi wa sore o,
jitto miteita. Kokoro no pinto ga kimyou ni nannidemo*

umaiguai ni atte shimau yoru ga aru. Sono yoru ga soudatta. Mou yoihajimete ita noni, sukoshi mo sore ga bunsan shiyō to shinakatta. Usugurai tennai to, kutsuoto no youni tooku kara kisoku tadashiku yosetekuru piano no merodii ga syuuchyuu ni hakusya o kaketa. (Amurita 31)

b. I let out a sigh. Next to me the brown interior of the bar seemed to melt into the window like cold ice, slowly. I watched it for a while. Every so often there are times when I have a clear understanding of my surroundings, and oddly enough, everything was perfectly aligned that night. Even though I was tipsy from my drinks, the comfort I felt with Ryūichirō was not disturbed in the least. The dim interior of the bar and the melody of the piano that came to us methodically like the sound of approaching footsteps also contributed to how I was feeling. (*Amrita* 15)

(14) a. //*Sono toki watashi wa totsuzen, tooku e iki, mou modoranu hito no tame no soubetsukai o shiteiru youna kurai kibun ni natte kita. Basho wa itsumo no arubaito saki nanoni, sukoshi fuan na kurasa ga tadayotte ita. Setsunaku nattari kanashiku naru no wa kowakatta. Tasuke o motomeyouka to kauntaa no naka o mita ga, masutaa to baito wa sakki kara nanika o shinken ni hanashi konde ite, totemo akarui joudan de hanashi ni kuwawatte kuresou ni nakatta. (Amurita 31)*

b. //At that point our conversation sounded like a going-away party for someone long gone, someone who had managed to run far, far away. Even though we were in a place I knew so well, a feeling of uncertainty began to float on the air. I was afraid. It felt painful, that stifled atmosphere. I looked at the counter, hoping to find something or someone who could help the situation, but my manager and coworkers were engaged in their own conversations and it didn't look as if they were about to throw out any jokes to lighten the mood. (*Amrita* 17)

The original Japanese (13a) has *watashi* only twice, and the surroundings (the night, the bar, the piano) rather than the agent (I) are foregrounded in the latter half of the passage. The English translation (13b) has “I” six times and, therefore,

does not contain a similar rhetorical effect as the original. Example (14) is more interesting because the original Japanese (14a) uses *watashi* only once in the first sentence of the passage, but the English translation (14b) somehow avoids using “I” in that sentence and uses “I” three times in other sentences where the corresponding Japanese sentences do not use *watashi*. As a result, the rhetorical effects of the original text and the translation become completely opposite. While the agent *watashi* is backgrounded sentence by sentence in the original Japanese, the agent “I” is foregrounded in the English translation.

Compared to the other three translators—Megan Backus, Ann Sherif, and Russell F. Wasden—Michael Emmerich transfers well Yoshimoto’s first and second rhetorical devices to the target language. Here are some examples for the first device in *Asleep*:

(15) a. //*Kuruma no retsu wa zurari to hikatte, tooi kaabu o magatte yuku. Ikinari yoru ga mugen ni nagaku natta youni omoete, watashi wa ureshiku naru. Shiori no koto nante wasurete shimau.* (Shirakawayofune 13)

b. //The lines of cars shimmered, one car after another, curving off into the distance. Suddenly it felt as if the night had become infinitely long, suddenly I felt happy. I found myself able to forget Shiori entirely. (*Asleep* 112)

(16) a. *Kare no kao ga, kuragari no naka de totemo yatsurete mieta. Zurari to narabu kuruma ga hidoku shin to shita mono ni kanjirareta. Semai chuusyajou ga konoyo no hate no youni omoeta. Wakaregiwa wa itsumo sukoshi souiu kibun ni naru.* (Shirakawayofune 39)

b. In the darkness his face looked terribly thin. The long lines of cars were bathed in a silence so profound it was awful. It felt as

if the parking lot were at the very edge of the world. Things always felt a little like this when we parted. (*Asleep* 134)

In the original Japanese (15a), the narrator’s eyes move from a scene (the lines of cars, the night) to an agent (I), and in the translation (15b), too, the narrator’s eyes move from a scene to an agent. In the original Japanese (16a), the narrator’s eyes move from a scene (his face in the darkness, the lines of cars, the parking lot) to an agent (the narrator’s feeling), and in the translation (16b), too, the narrator’s eyes move from a scene to an agent. In both examples—and this is the case throughout the entire text of *Asleep*—Emmerich reproduces Yoshimoto’s first device of “the perspective preference of scene-to-agent” by strictly following the movement of the narrator’s eyes in the original and deliberately avoiding simply using the pronoun “I.”

The following are examples for Yoshimoto’s second device of “perspective preference toward topic.”

- (17) a. //*Honno hitotoki no koto datta ga, sono furui yuujin tonon deai wa watashi no atama no naka o totemo konran saseta.* (*Shirakawayofune* 23)
- b. //Though it was a very brief encounter, that meeting with my old friend left my head in a state of chaos. (*Asleep* 120)
- (18) a. //*Hajimete kare to futari de kichin to atta no wa mafuyu de, kuruma de umi e itta.* (*Shirakawayofune* 31)
- b. //Winter was at its very coldest the first time he and I arranged to meet. We drove to the beach. (*Asleep* 127)
- (19) a. //*Saigo ni shiori no heya o tazuneta no wa, shiori ga shinu*

nisyuukan kurai mae no koto de, sore ga hontou no saigo ni natte shimatta. (Shirakawayofune 43)

- b. //The last time I went to Shiori's apartment was about two weeks before she died, and that ended up being the last time I ever saw her. (*Asleep* 137)

The original Japanese sentences (17a), (18a), and (19a) take the topic-comment [NP *wa* NP *da*] structure, and all the translations follow or, at least, try to follow the grammatical structure by avoiding the agent-does structure. The noun phrase as the subject of the sentence in example (17a), “*sono furui yuujin tonon deai,*” is translated as the noun phrase, “that meeting with my old friend,” in example (17b). The noun phrase as the subject of the sentence in example (18a), “*Hajimete kare to futari de kichin to atta no,*” is translated as the noun phrase, “the first time he and I arranged to meet,” in example (18b). The noun phrase as the subject of the sentence in example (19a), “*Saigo ni shiori no heya o tazuneta no,*” is translated as the noun phrase, “The last time I went to Shiori's apartment,” in example (19b). Even though the grammatical role of the subject is shifted to the conjunctive clause in the example (18), Emmerich, unlike the other three translators, basically keeps the topic-comment [NP *wa* NP *da*] structure in his translation.

As for Yoshimoto's other rhetorical devices, Emmerich fails to transfer them to the English as the other translators do. Here are some examples:

- (20) a. //*-Shikashi sore ga jinsei o shinsyoku suru no wa dounano kashira, to saikin wa mezameru syunkan ni futo omou. Sukoshi kowai ki ga shita. Tsuini kare karano denwa ni kidzukazu nemurikokete ita koto dakede wa naku, itsumo watashi wa mezameru tabi ni ittan shinde kara ikikaetta youni omoeru*

kurai fukaku nemurushi, moshikasitara neteiru jibun o soto kara miruto masshiro na hone nanodewa naika to omou toki ga aru. Mezamenu mama kuchihatete, eien to iu tokoro e itte shimaetara iikamo shirenai to uttori omou koto mo aru. Watashi wa, moshikashitara nemuri ni tsukarete iru kamo shirenai. Shiori ga shigoto ni tsukarete shimatta youni. Sou omou to, kowai noda. (Shirakawayofune 53)

b. //Yet lately a certain question had been fluttering through my head right at the moment I awoke. *But isn't this eating away at my life?* I began to feel a little but afraid. It wasn't just that I'd started sleeping right through my boyfriend's calls, utterly oblivious to the ringing, it was also that recently I'd been settling into a sleep so profound that, every time I woke, it was like I'd died and was just returning to life – I could almost believe that, and sometimes it even occurred to me that if I were able to look at myself while I slept, all I'd see would be my perfectly white bones, nothing else. Sometimes I'd find myself in a dazzled haze, wondering if maybe it wouldn't be best for me just to rot away as I lay there, without ever waking; to slip away to that place called eternity. It occurred to me that I might be possessed by sleep, just as Shiori had been possessed by her work. the thought scared me. (*Asleep* 145-46)

(21) a. //Mezameru syunkan dakega, chotto samishii. Usugumori no sora o miageru to, nemutte kara mou zuibun to jikan ga tatte shimatta no o shiru. Nemuru tsumori nanka nakatta noni, ichinichi o bou ni futta naa to bonyari omou. Kutsujoku ni yoku nita sono omoi koukai no naka de watashi wa fui ni hiyari to suru. (Shirakawayofune 7)

b. //I'd feel a little lonely when I woke, but only for a moment. I'd look up at the overcast sky and realize just how much time had passed since I'd fallen asleep. *I wasn't even planning to sleep*, I'd think vaguely to myself, *and now I've gone and wasted the entire day*. Suddenly the heavy regret I felt, a regret that was almost shame, would be pierced by a cold blade of fear. (*Asleep* 107)

Example (20) uses Yoshimoto's third device of "self-quotation" with the Japanese

verb *omou* “think.” The original Japanese (20a) has the verb *omou* five times, but the English (20b) translates the incidences of the verbs respectively as, “had been fluttering,” “just omitted,” “occurred to me,” “wondering,” and “The thought.” None of these cases except the last uses the English word “think” for the Japanese verb *omou*, and, therefore, the translation does not achieve the equivalent effect of the original text. The fourth device of “style shift” is hardly found in the original Japanese text of *Asleep*. Example (21) uses Yoshimoto’s fifth device of “self-referencing strategy” with the Japanese first-person pronoun *watashi*. The original Japanese (21a) has *watashi* only once in the last sentence, in which the agent comes to the foreground, but the English translation (21b) has “I” as often as eight times, which means that the agent is foregrounded throughout the passage.

As shown, Emmerich’s translation of *Asleep* translates Yoshimoto’s first and second rhetorical devices equivalently but does not translate the third and fifth devices as effectively. Because, as Maynard maintains, the first and second devices are common in traditional and modern Japanese literary works, and because the third, fourth, and fifth devices are characteristic of Yoshimoto’s distinctive writing style inspired by *shojo* culture, Emmerich’s translation of *Asleep* highlights the traditional Japanese aspects of the novel but does not reveal the contemporary aspects of the novel to American readers.

As we have seen, almost all the translations of Yoshimoto’s novels in English fail to overcome the “politics of translation” and equivalently translate her original writing style specific to *shojo* culture, and it is therefore hard to say that readers in English appreciate the characteristics of contemporary Japan,

which include comics and other aspects of sub-cultures, in her novels. It is also doubtful that literary reviews and academic articles on Yoshimoto's translated work identify her novels as a mixture of traditional and contemporary Japan, and it is highly probable that the image of traditional-contemporary Japan is delivered to Americans largely through Japanese media, literary reviews and articles. As I concluded in the last section, Yoshimoto's innovative role in Japanese literature, if it indeed exists, is that she has brought the marginal *shojo* culture writing style to the mainstream of Japanese literature and culture as a means of resisting or escaping feudalistic, patriarchal, Japanese society. Therefore, when Yoshimoto's challenging writing style is not translated properly, only the conservative and jejune aspects of her novels are emphasized for readers of translations. Of course, some thematic motifs such as "lack of typical feudalistic male characters" and "contemporary imperfect family" can be translated and reach English readers' understanding. However, these motifs are neither alternative nor innovative in late twentieth and twenty-first century literature. The reason why many scholars in English interpret Yoshimoto's novels as challenging enough to overturn stereotypical images of oriental women is probably due to their outdated points of view on oriental women and Japanese literature, never expecting to find these motifs in Japanese literature and therefore considering Yoshimoto's works innovative. Whether Yoshimoto's novels look innovative depends on the reader's view of gender issues, that is, they are innovative for readers with a conservative view but not innovative enough for readers with a liberal view. The answer to the questions whether Yoshimoto's novels have had a substantial impact on the

readers of translations in the US as well as on readers of the original in Japan and whether translations have succeeded in changing stereotypical images of Japanese women is, unfortunately, we have to say, “not so much.” Because Yoshimoto’s innovations rely on her distinctive writing style, her novels lose their essence when the writing style is not equivalently translated to the target language. One can not claim that the translations of Yoshimoto’s novels have been missionaries of Japanese *shojo* culture compared with other types of Japanese sub-culture such as comics, games, and animation, which have each had a great impact on American culture.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ On Japan’s Gothic/Lolita subculture, which could transfer Japanese *shojo* culture to American culture with a much bigger impact, see, for example, Gagné.

Chapter 3

Hayao Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* (1999): The Myth of Harmony with Nature

In the previous chapters, I examined the possibility that contemporary Japanese novels have had an impact or influence on American readers' points of view on Japanese literature and culture. However, the genre of Japanese animation—even more than Japanese novels—has impacted people and art in the United States in the last few decades.⁴⁶ In today's commercially globalized world, American and Japanese people alike enjoy pop-culture, such as movies, TV shows, music, fashion, comics, video games, and animation made in either country, influencing each other beyond the borders of cultural difference, and nowadays, the number of female American anime and comic fans is increasing, as Susan Napier says, “At many cons – [anime] conventions - the participants seem to be evenly split between the genders, although it is clear that some types of anime may appeal more to one gender than the other” (*Anime*, IX-X).

Among influential Japanese animation, Hayao Miyazaki's animated films have been broadly accepted in the United States, to the point that Disney contracted with Miyazaki's studio in 1996, and one of his films, *Spirited Away* (originally released in 2001 in Japan with the title *Sen to Chihiro no kamikakushi*),

⁴⁶ See Napier (*Anime* 5-10), McCarthy, Osmond (“Castles”).

subsequently got an Academy Award in 2002. Roland Kelts even says that Miyazaki's films have become a standard for American families, in his book about how Japanese culture is assimilated in American pop culture today. Not only are Miyazaki's films widely accepted, but many articles on his work have also been published in journals and books in English, and these often discuss his films based roughly on four critical points: (1) representations of contemporary Japanese society, Japanese identity, and universal social problems such as the relationship between human beings and nature, (2) comparison and contrast with Disney's animated films, (3) potential of Japanese animation as an alternative to Hollywood movies, and (4) images of female characters in the films as related to images of real Japanese women.

In this chapter, examining how American audiences have watched and accepted Hayao Miyazaki's films, and which issues they have found in his films, through analyses of various discourses written and published in English, such as film reviews and academic articles, I would like to show how Miyazaki's films have offered the American audience alternative, diverse, and complex images of Japanese culture, history, and identity quite different from conventional ones, and how his films have represented alternative cultural values related to the complex relationship between humans and nature which Disney's animation has missed, functioning as a new medium for the American audience. I would also like to discuss how his films failed to represent alternative and realistic images of women because the types of female figures in the films are too limited, even though the female protagonists in his films are often strong, attractive, and independent

subverting the stereotypical devoted and obedient image of Japanese women.

The representations of contemporary Japan

Because Hayao Miyazaki's films are, of course, made in Japan, it is natural that many American reviewers and critics try to find "Japaneseness" in his films and argue that his films reflect problems in contemporary Japan, which could be globally universal, even though the films are not necessarily set in contemporary Japan. For example, Paul Wells points out that Miyazaki's films develop the traditional Japanese aesthetic by combining traditional Japanese artistic forms with animation—a postmodern approach, and claims that the films represent the uncertainty and diversity of contemporary Japanese culture and society in the way Miyazaki has been establishing for a long time, which is different from Disney's way (22-23).

The sorts of representations of contemporary Japan which the reviewers and critics find in Miyazaki's films vary from concrete and specific to abstract and general. Regarding *Princess Mononoke*, released in the United States in 1999 (originally released in 1997 in Japan with the Japanese title *Mononokehime*), some scholars compare the motifs and themes of the movie with disastrous events in Japan during that period. Marilyn Ivy argues that the chaotic situation in Japan in the 1990s, mainly due to the economic decline, appears in the film as metaphor, and she associates very violent scenes of slaughter and battlefields with many corpses and the decapitation of a god in the film with traumatic experiences for Japanese people in the 1990s, such as the new right-wing movement aspiring to

return to World War II, the 1995 subway gas attack in Tokyo by the Aum cult, and a serial murder committed by a fourteen-year-old boy in 1997, who beat three school girls' heads on the street with a hammer and killed one of them and killed an eleven-year-old-boy on another day, cutting off his head and putting it on the gate of school. Ivy connects those violent motives and scenes in the film with these tragic cases, using the terms "decapitate" and "revenge," and concludes that the film manages to allegorize and visualize the theme of "restore," which means regaining the divine and achieving peace with the assistance of "fantasy space," or animation, which is symbolized by the severed head of a god that the main characters in the film finally retrieve from villains and return to the nature (837-38). Andrea G. Arai also sets the heroine of the film, San, against the fourteen-year-old serial murderer-boy, respectively representing healthy ancient Japan and sick contemporary Japan. Because San is a girl who has grown up in the forest, nurtured by a wolf god and lacking human relationships, it is easy to see her as a child of nature, "the spirit world of the forests of ancient Japan," contrasted to the murderer-boy as the sign of "the oddly repellent side of this radiance and potential of modern childhood" (Arai 843, 846).

Without using direct references like the ones above from Ivy and Arai, Melek Ortabasi also argues that *Princess Mononoke* is a representation of chaotic and diversified contemporary Japanese culture and identity, and a criticism of contemporary Japanese society increasingly mixed with Western culture. Ortabasi first says that the film deviates from standard Japanese history films because it is not concerned with the usual concepts, such as "nation," "harmony," "emperor,"

and “samurai,” which would normally be expected to be found in a film dealing with fifteenth-century Japan. What is represented in *Princess Mononoke* instead is, Ortabasi says, the fragmented view of Japan, in which there is no strong national polity or harmony, or no strict values of *bushido* the “way of the warrior,” which was a well known concept in the society in fifteenth-century Japan, and the sense of diversity in Japan, contrasted to the image of samurai, which symbolizes honor based on strict feudal hierarchy and loyalty to one’s lord (202-4). And then, Ortabasi discusses the hybridity of the film as Eastern and Western, saying that the film has a hybrid perspective derived from both Christianity and Shintoism, representing the border between humans and nature as ambiguous and nature not as “the objectified and unknown realm associated with modern Western metaphysics” but as “the perceived syncretism and harmony of folk-religious orientations,” while critics in English often tend to see the theme of the film only as the struggle between humans and nature in the sense of dichotomy (208-9).

The main characters in *Princess Mononoke* are good examples of the hybridity because, as Ortabasi points out, each of them has a complex identity and psychology. For example, Ashitaka, who is a male protagonist trying to find the origin of a curse put on him when saving his village from a monstrous animal and later involved in the war between Eboshi as a representative of humans and San as a representative of nature, is not a typical masculine samurai hero, but a neutral young mediator from a minority ethnic group. Eboshi, who is a female governor of a village refinery employing women and lepers, treating them equally as members of society and trying to conquer the nature forest to extend her authority,

is not just a cold, evil villain, but also a reasonable, intellectual woman who is generous to people in the social minority. San, who is a female protagonist raised in the forest by a wolf god and fighting for her “mother” and nature, is not a “noble savage,” but an unrealistic wild child who never awakes completely as a human.

Because of the hybridity and metaphor specific to Japanese culture, Ortabasi continues, it is difficult for an American audience to grasp the theme of the film as the conflict between Japaneseness (ancient) and Western influences (modern) rather than the struggle between nature and culture that many reviewers and critics identify as the main theme of the film. For example, both Ivy and Arai use the conflict as a key concept to interpret the ending of the film, in which Ashitaka retrieves the head of a god, returns it to nature, stops the war between nature and humans, sees off San going back to nature, and himself stays at Eboshi’s village, though they reach different conclusions. For Ivy, the ending shows us how it is impossible for nature and culture to coexist, while for Arai, it gives us a hope that nature and culture can reconnect to each other. Paul Spicer also recognizes the conflict between environmentalism and industrialism as the main theme of the film and comes to another conclusion that the ending of the film does not show any clear answer for the question if humans can really co-exist with nature but leaves it open to the audience, which is symbolized in the character Ashitaka, who is always in a position between nature and human, environmentalism and industrialism (241). In this sense, Ortabasi says, the film is a valuable example of the difficulty in exporting a cultural product meant to “go

global,” and of cultural mixture not in the superficial way, for he concludes that the film, unlike any other pop-culture product, captures a dilemma that modern people share in this globalized world, and it therefore subverts the stereotypical image of Japanese culture as a refiner of other cultures rather than a producer of its own unique culture (220).

Susan Napier argues that Miyazaki’s *Princess Mononoke* also quite subverts the traditional conceptions of Japanese history, identity, gender, and culture, and shows us alternative perspectives on those issues, not just representing contemporary Japanese culture and identity. According to Napier, the more globalized the world gets, the more important the history and the identity of each nation becomes, and visual media such as film and television exerts a more powerful influence than written media such as literature in this globalized context, as Akira Kurosawa and Yasujiro Ozu each articulate the identity of Japan for both international and domestic audiences. Napier argues that Miyazaki is also an important figure in globalization, and his film, *Princess Mononoke*, gives us an alternative vision of Japanese history and traditional culture by deconstructing Japanese people’s central myths of culture and society, even though it is not based on a factual historical event (*Anime* 176). First, by making the hero of the film not a samurai but an *Ainu*⁴⁷ youth, Napier says, the film refuses a conception of Japanese history as a top-down system in which only royal courtiers or samurai warriors affect history. Second, the film shows the battle between humans and nature as a main plot against a conventional assumption that Japanese people used

⁴⁷ A minority ethnic group in a northern part of Japan.

to live together peacefully with nature in ancient times before modernization (*Anime* 176).

Supporting Napier's point of view, John A. Tucker also argues that Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* revises Japanese history on four points: war, gender, the West, and religion, each from an ecological point of view. First, Tucker and Napier both say, *Princess Mononoke* reverses the conception of Emperor-centered Japanese history by making Ashitaka a central hero of the film. Ashitaka is an *Ainu* youth and is totally opposite from Yamatotakeru, the hero of ancient Japanese myth. While Yamatotakeru fights to expand the Japanese Emperor's power in Japan of that time and therefore stands as a symbol for militarism, nationalism, and imperialism, Ashitaka defends himself and his people and is a symbol of harmony and environmentalism. By focusing on the figure of a hero like this, the film depicts an alternative (peaceful and ecological) version of traditional Japanese myth (77-88). Second, Tucker says, the heroines in the film, San and Eboshi, are strong and independent, which would be nearly impossible in an actual historical context. Models for the figure of Eboshi exist in Japanese history, but Eboshi never depends on anyone and is quite independent, unlike famous Japanese women from medieval times. In this film, Tucker says, Miyazaki focuses on and enlarges marginal female gender roles and sometimes reverses traditional gender roles, and in the 1980s and 1990s, when women's social rights and status were improving, the strong and independent female characters Miyazaki offers in his films would be welcomed (88-94). Third, Western influence is represented as evil in the film in the way that Western weapons—and

culture—violate the Japanese ecosystem of harmony between humans and nature/gods because humans in the film fight nature/gods with imported, Western guns, which gives the audience the impression that the West is evil and Japan is a victim of globalization (94-97). Fourth, Tucker says, *Princess Mononoke* reverses some religious conceptions of Shintoism, criticizing or satirizing existing religions, such as Shintoism and Buddhism with greedy monk or bonze characters and with unusual images of Shintoism thus offering an alternative role for religion to show how to live ecologically (97-102).

Many critics and reviewers discuss religion, especially Japanese Shintoism and Buddhism, as obvious and important characteristics of Miyazaki's films. For example, Ortabasi points out that the images of forest spirits and deities in *Princess Mononoke*, such as *shishigami*, the silent and mysterious deer with a humanoid face, and *daidarabotchi*, its gigantic and transparent humanoid night form, are created based on traditional Japanese folklore and Shintoist animism (212). David R. Loy and Linda Goodhew also discuss Miyazaki's three films, *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Winds* (released in 1986 with edited and in 2005 with non-edited in the US, and originally released in 1984 in Japan with the title *Kaze no tani no nausika*), *My Neighbor Totoro* (released in 1993 in the US, and originally released in 1988 in Japan with the title *Tonari no totoro*) and *Princess Mononoke*, from a religious point of view, and differentiate Miyazaki's films clearly from other Japanese anime (which often include sex and violence) because the films follow Buddhist disciplines in the thoughtful and moving depictions alternative to violence (77). Loy and Goodhew say that, even though the films

contain a lot of violence, some of Miyazaki's protagonists, such as Nausicaa in *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Winds* and Ashitaka in *Princess Mononoke*, are self-sacrificing and non-violent trying to do whatever they can to stop the violence and help people like a bodhisattva, cutting the chains of hatred and revenge (82-84). Because each of Miyazaki's films is created with Buddhist or Shintoist religious points of view, Loy and Goodhew say, there is no dichotomy between humans and nature/gods, nor is there one between good and evil, which betrays the expectations of Western audience and makes the films different or alternative for them. As a result, Miyazaki's narratives are complex including many layers beyond the good guy/bad guy routine with the antagonists possessing distinct motivations and philosophies, such as defending their own people, which renders them real for the audience, and avoiding any simple definition of nature as something created by a transcendental God which humans can conquer or use as they like (86, 88-89).

Agreeing with Loy and Goodhew's point of view, Christine Hoff Kraemer says that *Princess Mononoke* avoids the simple dichotomies of good and evil, or of technology and nature, and Ashitaka's character as a savior-mediator for a chaotic world resonates both with Buddhism, Shintoism, and Christianity, which makes his figure more understandable for the Western audience (par. 3-4). In their article about *Spirited Away*, James W. Boyd and Tetsuya Nishimura say that the film is the most religious, or Shintoist, among Miyazaki's films, and its central theme is how to live with a pure heart, which is a Shintoist conception, representing how Chihiro, the heroine of the film who accidentally slips into the

fantasy world where myriads of gods and deities live and tries to remove the curse from her parents and escape the world, grows up from a gloomy child to a sincere young person for caring others and the world (par. 12) According to Boyd and Nishimura, we can find many Shintoist motifs and conceptions in the film, such as *yaoyorozu no kami* (millions of gods), *torii* (a gateway at the entrance to a Shinto shrine), *kamikakushi* (spirited away), and *kiyome* (purified), and the story never follows a simple good-versus-evil plot, and the film also has an appealing message for the Japanese audience, that Japanese traditional Shintoist conceptions must save a sick contemporary Japanese society (par. 21, 25).

Lucy Wright extends the religious method of interpretation to Miyazaki's many other films and says that the key concepts of his films are a Shintoist animistic viewpoint and a mystic relationship between humans and nature. While Shintoist viewpoints tend to be nationalistic, Wright says, the Shinto in Miyazaki's films looks globalized, due to the fact that the films include both Japaneseness and foreign culture because Miyazaki is a leftist who does not care to show Shintoism in the foreground of the film because of its dark history during the war. That is why, Wright continues, Miyazaki's films are welcomed and popular in various areas in the world without making the audience feel a strong religious atmosphere, even though his films are full of Shintoist motifs. For example, *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Winds* gives us a Buddhist or Shintoist type of healing, *My Neighbor Totoro* and *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (released in 1989 in the US, and originally released in 1986 in Japan with the title *Tenku no shiro Rapyuta*) shows us a nostalgic image of a god tree representing a Japanese

ancestor and nature, and *Princess Mononoke* makes us feel fear of nature/gods by showing us the humans' struggle against them. According to Wright, Miyazaki's films convert and revive traditional Japanese Shintoism and myth by incorporating global culture, inspired by American science fiction writers, Russian filmmakers, and Greek myths, to create a "hybrid Japanese modern myth" that appeals to "post-industrialized" audiences all over the world (par. 39).

Among many critics discussing the religious aspects in Miyazaki's films, Jay Goulding regards Shintoist and Buddhist motifs and metaphors in the films as a reaction against globalization—in particular, Miyazaki tries to emphasize East Asian viewpoints and philosophies in order not to be overwhelmed by globalization, that is, Euro-Americanization. Goulding says that Miyazaki's films include visual icons of Western culture, but they also include Japanese philosophy, religion, and folklore as intrinsic components of the plots, ideas, and messages. Goulding gives us examples for his argument from *Princess Mononoke* and *Spirited Away*, and says that *Princess Mononoke* restores the ancient spirit and morality of Shintoism that have been lost in contemporary Westernized Japan by reaching into Japanese folklore and the age of the gods, and *Spirited Away* includes a number of Confucianist, Shintoist, and Buddhist motifs and themes juxtaposed with ugly Western commodification so that Japanese culture does not disappear in the wave of Westernization (119, 122).

Napier, in her article about *Spirited Away*, also says that the film is a reaction against globalization, and it emphasizes local, traditional Japanese culture in order to criticize polluted and materialistic contemporary Japanese

society, which makes the film clearly Japanese and self-critical. Playing an important role in globalization, Napier argues, the film reconstructs old, “good” Japaneseness by juxtaposing it against representations of the disgraced culture of contemporary, post-industrial Japan, which Napier calls “cultural recovery” or “cultural rehabilitation” aspiring to rediscover elements of “purity,” “self-sacrifice,” “endurance,” and “team spirit,” which have been regarded as “quintessentially Japanese” (“Matter” 288-89).

Andrew Yang offers the opposite perspective of Goulding and Napier’s simplified and Orientalistic interpretation, saying that such an interpretation contributes to nationalistic sentimentalism by emphasizing the uniqueness and purity of the traditional Japanese, and maintains that Japanese culture—and any nation’s culture for that matter—should be diverse, flexible, and complex enough to embrace both “modernity” and “tradition” in a dialectical manner, and we need to examine the film, *Spirited Away*, not to find the essence of Japanese culture but to reveal Japaneseness as something more variable and complex (435). According to Yang, in Miyazaki’s *Spirited Away*, traditional Japan and modern Japan are represented not as two opposite good and bad, or right and wrong conceptions, but rather, as two supposedly contrasting Japans intersected and mingled in the film (443).

Yang’s argument that the film portrays a complicated and unfixed representation of Japanese culture is more persuasive than Goulding and Napier’s argument about the film as the representation of good old Japanese culture, because it is difficult for a film to illustrate a clear-cut and comprehensive image

of one nation's identity or culture. In *Spirited Away*, we see traditional Japanese Shintoist deities coming in and out of the public bath house run by a witch where the heroine of the film is forced to work after she slips into the fantasy world, which includes modern architectures, vehicles, machines, and tools, and each character is represented not just as good or bad, but as someone very similar to a person in a modern world who does good and bad things, and is greedy and generous, in a realistic way, which implies that the deities in traditional Japanese Shintoism are not so very different, at least in terms of characteristics, than the modern Japanese people who are supposed to be blamed for corrupted modern Japan. Yang's conclusion that *Spirited Away* shows us how the national identity is complex and frequently changing is quite convincing considering how the film represents Japanese identity and culture in a dialectic way.

Rayna Denison analyzes the relationship between anime (Japanese animation) and globalization by doing a case study of the translation and exportation of *Spirited Away* to France and then the United States. First, she claims that other critics, such as Susan J. Napier, have constructed an inadequate explanation for why anime is welcomed and popular in many areas in the world when they say it is welcomed simply because it is distinct from the cultural material of any other country. Denison decides to research how *Spirited Away* has been accepted in three countries' markets—Japan, France, and the United States—and in the process of exportation, how the film gets increasingly modified, less popular, and less Japanese. First in Japan, *Spirited Away* depicts the hybrid identity of Japan as fantasy and the West as reality, which both represents and

criticizes contemporary Japanese culture. By showing each pure-Japanese character's identity crisis, Denison says, the film sends a message that people must transcend borders of nationality, and *Spirited Away* is never limited to traditional Japanese culture but offers an image of contemporary "uncertain" and "transforming" Japanese culture (312), and in this sense, Denison's argument agrees with Yang's argument that the film shows a complicated and unfixed representation of Japanese culture. Next in France, Denison says, the film is introduced as an "art film" rather than a "blockbuster" because of its initial appearance at a film festival, and the captioned version appeals to art house filmgoers, while the dubbed version appeals to the general public, and the Japaneseness of the film decreases because of translation, for example, literally translating the Japanese word "*yaoyorozu no kami*" (myriads of gods and deities) into "eight million gods" in French, translating the proper formal name of Haku "*Nigihayami Kohaku Nushi*," who is the heroine's male friend and the disguised figure of the white dragon, into "the spirit of the Kohaku River" in French in a dubbed version, and keeping other characters' proper name but with the French accent. Finally, in the United States, John Lasseter, the famous director of Pixar, supervises the dubbed version, rendering it very American by omitting some dialogues and changing some proper nouns into more explanatory names, even though, of course, it is impossible to make it perfectly American because of the many Japanese letters on the screen. Therefore, Denison concludes, the film can never be the same in different countries and different cultures, but it can nevertheless offer images of Japanese culture which depend on the target culture,

getting assimilated into the culture with the help of translation, and the plurality and hybridity of the film work to make it not “stateless” but “global,” rooted in each place in the world (318-19).

Like Denison, Shiro Yoshioka says that the film shows Miyazaki’s hybrid, dynamic, and diverse Japanese culture—a culture that is changing, eclectic, chaotic, never static, and not unique but just one of many Asian cultures, and in that sense, *Spirited Away* embodies “the heart of Japaneseness” and brings it more directly and subconsciously to the audience than *My Neighbor Totoro* and *Princess Mononoke* by blending “the real world with the fantasy world in a way that makes it an extension of our reality” (269). However, it is clear that “the audience” Yoshioka mentions is an exclusively Japanese audience and “our reality” means a Japanese people’s reality. Then, do the audiences with different cultural backgrounds receive similar impressions from the film? Does the film offer the subconscious feeling of “the heart of Japaneseness” to audiences worldwide? Yoshioka has an optimistic point of view on the issue, saying that Miyazaki’s Japaneseness as a mixture of Asian and Western culture “transcends temporal and territorial boundaries” because “Miyazaki’s anime is a modern ‘folktale’ fusing a pastiche of disparate fragments into a new story” (272). It is true that the “plurality” and “hybridity” of *Spirited Away* could be in good part transmitted to audiences in different areas of the world through translation, because, unlike literature, animation depends more on visual and auditory imagery than on language. Taking into account Denison’s observation on the translation and exportation process, and how the film’s Japaneseness is lost

through translations and edits, it is nevertheless difficult for the film to offer audiences outside Japan the Japanese nostalgic feeling strongly enough to make it as popular in other countries as it is in Japan.

The comparison and contrast with Disney

Hayao Miyazaki is often introduced as “Disney in Japan” in film reviews written in English, and, when contrasting Miyazaki and Disney, many critics say that Miyazaki’s films are more complicated, “reinventing and subverting cultural myths and exposing the complexity of life’s problems, rather than simplifying them” as Wright says (par. 39; see also Kraemer) , and, therefore, have a wider audience, ranging from children to adults, than do Disney’s. Critics give different points of view on how much more complicated and challenging Miyazaki’s films are than Disney’s. For example, Wells argues that Miyazaki’s films are curiously both “emotional” and “speculative,” saying, “The ‘openness’ of his characters with their deceptively simple ‘child’s eye’ perspectives, have a degree of emotive suggestion *and* political relevance largely unavailable in the Disney canon” (23).

Admitting some similarities between Disney and Miyazaki, such as their popularity, high quality, merchandising, and some character design, both Osmond and Margaret Talbot argue that Miyazaki’s films lack absolute villains, and thus, their plots become more complicated than Disney’s plots (Osmond “Nausicaa” 60; Talbot 67). In addition, Talbot points out that Miyazaki’s films look upon antagonistic characters with a generous gaze, showing them tolerance and sympathy, and the films portray heroines as likable and loyal, but ordinary girls,

who can be extraordinary in the world of children's films (67). Loy and Goodhew agree with this point of view and explain how simple the plots of Disney's films are, using as example *The Lion King* alongside other Hollywood films, such as James Bond, Star Wars, Indiana Jones, Terminator, and Harry Potter films, and say that these films have simple good-versus-evil scripts and predictable plots, while the protagonists in Miyazaki's films identify with everyone rather than conquering other groups for their own or others' righteousness (94-95).

Comparing Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* with Disney's *Tarzan*, Ortabasi says that the films both deal with the theme of relationship between humans and nature, but *Princess Mononoke* has more diverse and ambiguous ideas about the issue, while in *Tarzan* humans finally triumph over nature, reaching this simple solution due to its human-centric conception (219-20). Napier also contrasts the two films and says that Disney's *Tarzan* has a human-centric ideology, pretending there is no diversity in the world, anthropomorphizing wild animals, and creating a utopian ending with harmony between humans and nature ignoring issues with technology and progress in human society, while Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* pursues diversity and otherness, emphasizes differences, represents violent and nonhuman wild animals as such, shows current dilemmas about how to negotiate with nature while maintaining technology, and claims that nature is beautiful but fearful, awful, and perpetually inapprehensible ("Confronting" 486-87; *Anime* 191-92). Through this comparison and contrast between Disney and Miyazaki, what Napier demonstrates is each production's attitude toward cultural myths and values, and

she suggests that Disney films emphasize American values and cultural myths, assimilating other countries' myths into American culture, and the protagonist's "performing Americanness" no matter what country or culture they belong to, while Miyazaki's films offer a universal sense of value, such as humanity, courage, and respect for the environment, not emphasizing cultural tradition, but rather doubting or criticizing contemporary Japanese values and cultural myths and referring to the cultural values of other countries⁴⁸ ("Confronting" 472; *Anime* 282).

Chris Wood says that in Japanese art and culture, the West has not been represented realistically or actually, but as a simulated fantasy space, and Miyazaki's films are not exceptions, and argues that the European setting is represented as the object of a 'tourist gaze' in Miyazaki's *Porco Rosso*, which is "a spectacular simulation and a site of pleasurable consumption" (112), for example, the setting place and time in *Porco Rosso* is early 1930s Italy in the time of the economic depression and the presence of the fascist secret police after World War I, which is absolutely different from the viewers' everyday life, and one of the few main sites in the film is "the Hotel Adriano," where Gina, the heroine of the film, sings every night attracting the public's attention, and the climax scene in the film is the dogfight between the hero and the antagonist over the sea again drawing a huge crowd's attention in the film, and all of these features are simulated and set to be spectacles meeting the expectation of the

⁴⁸ Kraemer completely agrees with Napier's argument, saying, "... where Disney films tend to affirm existing cultural values, Miyazaki's perform a complicated dance between performing Japanese cultural values and destabilizing them" (par. 2).

audience's tourist gaze. As Wood points out, representations of Western culture in Miyazaki's other films are also often fantastic, beautiful, and dreamy, but fall under the stereotypical conception of an old and good Europe, though, not as much as the ones in *Porco Rosso*. Napier says that Miyazaki does not force Japanese values and that he is critical of Japanese culture and identity, but would his focus on Japan not mean that he does not care about other cultures as much as he does about Japanese culture? Otherwise, it would be impossible for so many reviewers and critics in English to have discussed Japaneseness in his films. Even though Yang's argument that Miyazaki's films represent the diversity, complexity, and flexibility of Japanese culture and identity sounds quite reasonable, it is doubtful that Miyazaki's films represent the diversity, complexity, and flexibility of other cultures and identities as well, which, therefore, makes it difficult to insist that Miyazaki's critical perspective is always global and universal.

The potentiality of Japanese animation as a new medium

Basically, Hollywood films are made for a global market and are meant to be universal and easy to understand entertainment for young audiences of different cultural backgrounds all over the world. On the other hand, Japanese animation directors and producers are free from such limitations, and they can make various types of animation films for Japanese audiences of varied ages, who have enough literacy to watch animation as seriously as they would live-action films because of the unique and long history of animation and comic culture in Japan. Contrasting American and Japanese markets for animation films, Patrick

Drazen says, “In the United States, comics and animation are defined as media to be consumed primarily by children. Anime, on the other hand, like the comics (manga) from which many anime are derived, has no such limitation, and the sophisticated stories of some titles scan more like novels than fairy tales” (189). This could be one of the reasons why Japanese animation, including Miyazaki, is so different from Disney’s animation and why many critics believe that such Japanese animation could become a new medium never before experienced in the United States or other places in the world. Wells recognizes Hayao Miyazaki as an important figure who could have a great impact not only on animation but also on all types of movies (22), and says that Miyazaki has innovatively redefined negative graphical icons as positive in his films, such as the image of a mushroom cloud of an atomic bomb redefined as a sprout and the development of a big tree full of life in *My Neighbor Totoro*, or of the image of a robot of a cold technology redefined as a warm, human-like creature in *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (24). Miyazaki’s hopeful vision of the future, believing in nature, the purity of children, and the maternal qualities of girls, often alongside the motif of flying in the sky as a sign of freedom, Wells concludes, makes a large contribution to both animation and live-action films all over the world (25). Osmond also admits that Japanese animation has been having an influence on some Euro-American films recently, saying “In recent years several western films have imitated or included anime (as Japanese animation is known outside Japan), drawing on the medium’s action and sci-fi strands, which have won most international acclaim” (“Castles” 28).

Some critics argue that the reason why Japanese animation has been well

accepted in the United States and other countries is because it has something different from Hollywood animation, such as complicated stories, characters, genres, visual expressions, and the diversity expressed alongside attractive plots and characters, all of which are appealing to American audiences (Napier *Anime* 9-10, 236, 249; Kelts 116, 209; Kraemer par. 1). Taking interviews with anime fans in the US, Europe, and Canada, Napier researches how Western audiences accept Japanese animation and argues that Western, especially American, audiences watch Japanese animation not because they want to see something Japanese, that is “Japaneseness,” in it but because they are attracted to its differences from Western animation, that is “Otherness” (Napier *Anime* 255). Because the Japaneseness which Napier mentions here is clearly Japanese culture in a narrow, stereotypical sense, such as *kimono*, tea-ceremony, *geisha*, *samurai*, and *Fuji-yama*, we can recognize the hybridity or “something different” in Japanese animation to which many Western audiences are attracted as an alternative image of contemporary Japanese culture and identity, as Ortabasi says, “*Mononoke* manipulates cultural representation to create a complex intertextuality not ordinarily associated with a product of popular culture; it is also a deadly serious effort to cultivate new possibilities for representing Japanese culture and, therefore, Japanese identity” (201). A disagreement appears between Napier’s point of view and Ortabasi’s, because Napier argues that American audiences are attracted not specifically to something Japanese but only to something different from American products, while Ortabasi argues that the innovativeness in Miyazaki’s films is an alternative way of specifically representing Japanese

culture and identity. However, their points of view could concur if we read Napier's "Otherness" as the "new possibilities for representing Japanese culture and identity" that Ortabasi mentions.

As for the new possibilities for Japanese animation, Thomas Looser argues that Miyazaki's films play a transitional role from "cinematic" to "animeic" in the history of film, says that the characteristics of Miyazaki's films, such as the combination of detailed backgrounds with simple characters in the foreground and the complicated narrative interwoven with different media stories in the manner of a tapestry, could open up possibilities for a new media that supersedes cinematic films, still being nostalgic for cinematic forms at the same time (314). Thomas Lamarre also says that Miyazaki's films have both "cinematic" and "animeic" aspects, and there is always tension between them in his films. They are cinematic because of the films' large budgets and because he is an *auteur* who is involved in every process of film making—writing, directing, overseeing, and working on animation and storyboards, and they are animeic because the style of drawing the foreground (the characters) and the background are clearly different, the movements of both the human and animal characters are quite different from live-action films, and because Miyazaki is persistent in a two-dimensional cel-animation (Lamarre 341). It is interesting that both Looser and Lamarre use the term "animeic" to express the new possibilities of Miyazaki's films and Japanese animation in general, and clearly differentiate between live-action films and animated films.

As many critics point out, unlike Disney's films, Miyazaki's films are

popular among a range of audiences, both children and adults and both ordinary people and critics. Lamarre explains the reason for such audience diversity, saying “His childhood is an adult’s childhood; his earlier technologies arise in a post-technological world and history. Likewise, *manga* films like *Castle in the Sky* do more than reconstruct children’s adventures, fantasies and experience” (365). As Lamarre argues, the kids in Miyazaki’s films are not just kids, but kids viewed through the adults’ experiences and perspectives, and this is why not only children but also many adults enjoy Miyazaki’s films by identifying with the young characters in the stories. Mariano Prunes similarly explains the reason why Miyazaki’s films are popular among different types of audiences in his article discussing *My Neighbor Totoro* and *Porco Rosso*, and says that in the case of *My Neighbor Totoro* the film blurs the borders between fantasy and reality and makes the fantasy look natural by building the fantasy world from the children’s perspective of the “full-fledged” characters constantly and seamlessly moving back and forth from a world of fantasy to one of adulthood, and thus, the film manages to offer diverse points of view that the adult audience can easily accept (54). Prunes says that the kids in Miyazaki’s films are not the stereotypical “pure and innocent” children prevalent in Euro-American films, but rather are children who each possess a complex individuality with intelligence, sensibility, and velar moral judgment, and a personality with strength and vulnerability, and innocence and self-awareness, such as adults usually have, and thus, it becomes easier for the adult audience to identify with the child characters in the films (46-47). The magic of Miyazaki’s films is, Prunes concludes, the clever way of setting up the

mise-en-scène with “the idea of a scrupulous historical reconstruction that is seen slightly out of focus, perfect in its detail and yet always elusive, just like in a dream” to evaporate the borders between fantasy and reality, between the children and the adults, as examples, the detailed depiction of Italy in 1920s that deliberately avoids actual names and events in *Porco Rosso* and the detailed depiction of 1950’s Japan in *My Neighbor Totoro* with many images of the spirits everywhere that only children can see, and with these kinds of tropes, “the fantastic” in Miyazaki’s films looks like a perfectly natural and real utopia to both young and adult audiences (48). Drazen explains, from a different perspective, the reason why Miyazaki’s films appeal to both children and adults, saying that Miyazaki’s films allow the audiences diverse interpretations, either simple or complicated, depending on how the films are watched. For example, *Porco Rosso* is full of romantic or sexual metaphors, such as sexual appeals to the hero by Fio, a seventeen-year-old girl who is a mechanic’s granddaughter and helps him to repair the hero’s plane, kissing on the hero’s cheek and swimming half naked in front of him, to prove that she is mature enough to have sex with him, and the undeniable femininity of Gina, an older and good-looking woman who married three times to three pilots and lost all of them, and for whom, thus, the images of flight and sex are always combined, implying her ongoing sexual relationship with the hero, which are subtly insinuated so that the children are not offended while watching the film (193-97).

As we have thus far seen in the articles written and published in English, the potential of Hayao Miyazaki’s films and Japanese animation in general as a

new medium different from Hollywood films lie in the elements that critics point out, such as the complicated stories, characters, genres, visual expressions, the diversity, alternative images of contemporary Japanese culture, the young characters with complex individuality that the adult audience can sympathize with, and the ambiguous connotations behind the scenes, and little by little, each of these elements is being assimilated into different aspects of contemporary American culture. Lawrence Venuti says that the translation has two kinds of power: (1) to create the representations of foreign cultures in target language culture, which are first stereotypical and later domesticated and (2) to change the domestic literary canons and conceptual paradigms. Hayao Miyazaki's films are a quite typical example of Venuti's theory, representing alternative images of Japanese culture and having some influence on Hollywood films. Even though the influence of Miyazaki's films and Japanese animation on American culture is still small, it is surely being assimilated in this globalized world in different ways. However, considering examples of Hollywood films that are clearly influenced by sexualized, violent, and stereotypical examples of Japanese animation,⁴⁹ there may be a long way to go before Hollywood filmmakers apply the full potential of Japanese animation to their work, and Disney's pride may be too high to follow Miyazaki's style of animation.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* inserts some animation scenes produced by Production I.G., a famous Japanese animation production, and some remakes of Japanese animation as live-action films have been done in Hollywood, such as *Astro Boy*, and *Dragonball Evolution*, though they have neither had commercial success nor been critically acclaimed.

⁵⁰ The conception of "Disney," of course, cannot be simply categorized into only one way of animation production or one genre of the film. On the complex significance of Disney films see, for example, Bell et al.

The images of female characters

In the previous chapter, I discussed how English translations of the novels of Banana Yoshimoto failed to replace stereotypical images of Japanese women. Napier claims that Japanese animation often presents powerful female characters, highly sexualized sometimes, that are quite different from the stereotypical obedient and devoted Japanese women not found in reality, which reflect the changes in women's empowerment in the 1980s and the 1990s (*Anime* 33). Then, do Hayao Miyazaki's films, which often feature attractive female protagonists, manage to replace stereotypical images of women with more progressive images? Have they altered or renewed stereotypical images of Japanese women as "geisha girls," "devoted women," "miserable creatures," and "strong and motherly women"?

Some critics point out that in Miyazaki's films the female characters subvert the stereotypical images of Japanese women and have the potential to become alternative models for women. For example, Osmond analyzes the characteristics of the heroines in Miyazaki's films and catches positive images of them, which are realistic, innocent, creative, attuned to nature, and associated with positive ideas of curiosity, journey, and flight ("Nausicaa" 3). From a perspective of gender studies, Wells argues that the female characters in Miyazaki's films play a rebellious role in male-dominated feudalistic society, saying, "His use of the feminine discourse is a way of subverting established patriarchal agendas both in the practice of filmmaking and the art of story-telling" (23). Napier agrees with

this point and develops it into further discussion, and says that Japaneseness and non-Japaneseness are mixed in the characteristics of the heroines in Miyazaki's films, that is to say, they are Japanese because they are *shojo*, feminine, innocent, cute, and potentially erotic, and they are non-Japanese because they are active, determined, independent, courageous, and heroic ("Confronting"). Napier argues that Miyazaki creates female characters that deviate from traditional gender roles and patriarchal feudal society to deconstruct and defamiliarize conventional conceptions of Japanese gender coding as well as to revise Japanese history. For example, Napier says, two female protagonists are quite gender neutral and far from the traditionally female and completely outside of the misogynistic patriarchal society in *Princess Mononoke*, as Eboshi has masculine power and San is violent and wild, even though she is representative of nature and supposed to be harmonious within a traditional conception of the relationship between women and nature ("Confronting" 481). Napier argues that Miyazaki's heroines are not realistic, because of which, however, the audience can see ideal women in the figures on the screen, and says that the female characters in Miyazaki's films overturn the audience's conception of femininity as well as their conventional notion of the world in general and show new possibilities by deconstructing traditional images and gender roles of Japanese women (*Anime* 125-26). For example, Napier says, *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Winds* offers an ideal independent and strong figure of woman and alternative bright possibilities, and *Princess Mononoke* gives female characters masculine attributes instead of presenting traditional masculine heroes and defamiliarizes the traditional image of

patient and devoted Japanese women and the traditional myth of Japanese people living in harmony with nature by deliberately representing alternative cases of violent relationships between women and nature, in which one female character attacks nature to protect and develop human society, and another fights against humans to protect the nature where she was born and raised (*Anime* 177).

Lamarre also points out that Miyazaki's films are critical of traditional gender images and show alternative images of women by attributing extra masculinity to female protagonists, though some of them, especially earlier ones, are still conservative, and strictly speaking, Miyazaki does not try to break with gender conventions (351). Lamarre says that Miyazaki uses both stereotypical images and alternative images of women deliberately to prompt viewers' metaphysical questions about technology and nature, and for Miyazaki, the image of flying girls is an alternative to existing genres and technologies (351-52).

While some critics simply point out that the female characters in Miyazaki's films, such as Eboshi in *Princess Mononoke* and Kushana in *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Winds*, are feminists or proto-feminists because they are stronger, more intelligent, and more independent showing compassion for the weak in society than Disney's female characters, such as Pocahontas and Mulan (Loy and Goodhew 89; Kraemer par. 2), Freda Freiberg analyzes characteristics of the female characters in Miyazaki's films in terms of the more complicated image of the *shojo*. In studies of *shojo*, Freiberg says, there are three major issues: (1) the identity of the *shojo* as a liminal stage between adult and child, free from any social or gender role, (2) the relationship of the *shojo* to consumer culture as an

icon of cute culture, and (3) *shojo's* relationship with the audience as appealing to both genders and every age, not only young girls, but also adult women and men. Freiberg argues that the heroines in Miyazaki's films have attributes of both *shojo* and masculine heroes who undertake heroic actions related to social and ecological issues, and says that *Shojo* characters in Miyazaki's films always stand for the weak or victimized, and they fight for social change, combining maternal qualities, masculine heroism, and even cuteness (par. 13). It is interesting that Freiberg points out that the heroines in Miyazaki's films, who could be perfect women, are never feminists because they do not fight for the rights of women, team up with other women, nor even have female friends, and they often fight against independent adult women usually identified as feminists (par. 15).

Now, we have two different points of view about how female characters in Miyazaki's films function as feminists, one of which is affirmative, saying that powerful and independent heroines subvert conventional Japanese gender roles, and the other of which claims that it is not the heroines, but rather the adult women, such as Kushana in *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Winds* and Eboshi in *Princess Mononoke*, against whom the heroines fight, who are truly feminists. Eunjung Kim and Michelle Jarman add a quite compelling third perspective to this topic, claiming that even Eboshi, the independent adult woman, is not a feminist but an imperialist exploiting oppressed women and the handicapped. Kim and Jarman discuss how disability and sexuality are represented in Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke*, and say that even though Eboshi is often regarded as an ideal female leader who creates an alternative community against

central authority in which she protects prostitutes and lepers, she nevertheless discriminates against them, giving them manual labor and using them to fight a war against nature as an imperialistic exploiter (Kim and Jarman 54-56). This is a quite different point of view on Eboshi compared with those who view her as a feminist, and this perspective of Eboshi as imperialist could be universal considering that in the dubbed version, only Eboshi speaks in British English, as if she were a representation of a British Queen conquering other regions. As Kim and Jarman suggest, it is clear to the audience that Eboshi represents Western civilization bringing modernity to both the East and to nature, finally triumphing as she stops San's fighting and welcomes Ashitaka into her own community. Therefore, Kim and Jarman conclude, *Princess Mononoke* is a film representing how imperialistic modernity subsumes marginalized people, such as prostitutes and the disabled, into the Western system by pretending to be a gentle guardian (66-67).

Now that the possibility of feminist female characters in Miyazaki's films has been theoretically rejected, it is impossible to find a female character in his films that actually subverts traditional Japanese gender roles or offers an alternative image of a Japanese woman. It is true that we find attractive, strong, and independent female characters in Miyazaki's films, but they always look cute or beautiful and are often maternal from the spectator's gaze both on and off of the screen, which means that they can never escape the spectators' male chauvinistic expectations. Even though Miyazaki's animated films have created diverse and novel images of women on the screen for both Japanese and

American audiences, most of the heroines in his films are in fact categorized into a few types, such as a cute and pure infant, a cute and beautiful princess, or a beautiful adult woman, as if women can not play important roles unless they are cute or beautiful. We cannot deny the fact that the heroines in Miyazaki's films are strong and independent, unlike typical images of devoted and obedient Japanese women, but they are never alternative images of women with which contemporary Japanese women can identify. They are rather unrealistic images of women who have both typical masculine and typical feminine attributes, neither of which move beyond the audience's expectations. Therefore, it is difficult to claim that these characters are realistic representations of Japanese women's voices, or, even worse, these characters may simply end up becoming objects for the fetishistic desires of the director or the audience.

Unlike the reviews and articles about contemporary Japanese novels that I examined in the previous chapters, we rarely find reviews or articles about Hayao Miyazaki's animation films that include a prejudiced or stereotypical perspective on Japanese culture and identity. They generally discuss specific issues on Miyazaki's films or general issues on Japanese animation, cinema and pop-culture not from a naïve Orientalistic point of view but from a neutral and objective one with much understanding of both contemporary and traditional Japanese culture and identity. This implies, fortunately or unfortunately, that the level of Japanese animation studies is more developed than Japanese literature studies in the United States at present. Under the circumstances, then, have Hayao Miyazaki's films

offered alternative images of Japanese culture and identity to American people? Taking into consideration the fact that many reviews and articles published in English have included fruitful discussions about the representations of contemporary and traditional Japanese culture and identity in Miyazaki's films and have found Miyazaki's original style of representation unique when compared with other works of Japanese art, it could be said that Miyazaki's films have shown American viewers alternative, diverse, and complex images of Japanese culture and identity, although the American audience would not have the nostalgic feeling of the Japanese audience because of cultural and historical differences. It could be also argued that Miyazaki's animation, along with other Japanese animation, has presented Americans with alternative cultural values regarding the relationship between humans and nature that Disney's animation has ignored. Many reviewers and critics in English have found potential for a new medium in Miyazaki's and other Japanese animation which could appeal not only to children but also to adults, with the complicated stories, characters, visual expressions, and diversity. Miyazaki's films, however, have not represented diverse and complex images of other cultures enough, such as European culture, probably because they largely focus on Japanese culture and identity. It is also hard to say that Miyazaki's films have succeeded in offering alternative images of Japanese women. It is true that female characters in his films subvert the traditional images of Japanese women and gender roles in Japan as some critics argue, but, as I have already mentioned, images of female characters in Miyazaki's films are not realistic and the types of female figures are too limited to represent Japanese

women's voices, and Miyazaki's female characters are still bound by the male chauvinistic gaze and its expectations. Those who have one hundred percent positive perspective on the female characters in Miyazaki's films must either hold outdated gender codes or miss the possibility that beautiful, cute, and maternal female characters can become fetishistic objects under the male chauvinistic gaze at any moment. In any case, the idea that it is women who finally save or cure a world that has been destroyed and polluted by men, which is often found in Miyazaki's films and other Japanese animation, is banal and stereotypical. Additionally, Miyazaki's animation has both conservative and progressive aspects, and is, therefore, located in between old and new media, as Looser and Lamarre point out. It is because of this, of course, that the films have achieved tremendous popularity with both young and older viewers in Japan and other countries. In order to investigate what kinds of cutting-edge images of Japanese pop-culture American people could have, further research on more experimental or challenging Japanese animation that appeals to limited audiences with specific preferences or audiences who work professionally in the arts will be required.

Chapter 4

Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* (1995): Animation as a Site of Exchange/Interface/ Translation

In the previous chapter, I examined how Hayao Miyazaki's films, which have had a great popularity amongst diverse audiences in Japan, offer alternative images of Japanese culture and identity as well as alternative cultural values in the United States. The animated films of another famous Japanese director, Mamoru Oshii, have also impacted the United States, not appealing to all audiences, rather to anime fans, nevertheless, having received critical and cult success. In this chapter, I will examine how American audiences and critics discuss alternative subjectivities in cyberspace and cyborg culture that are expressed in Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell*, which is a story about a full cyborg heroine's activities as an elite top secret agent of the Japanese National Public Safety Commission against cyber criminals or terrorists and her encounter with a notorious cyber criminal, "the Puppet Master," particularly focusing on the differences between, and the unification of, Japanese and American cultural and religious perspectives, and also on how the film either meets or fails to meet the American audience's expectations regarding Japanese high-tech pop culture and their techno-Orientalism, which includes a stereotyped image of women in cyberspace.

Ghost in the Shell, based on a comic series published in 1989 written and

drawn by Masamune Shirow, was released worldwide in 1995, simultaneously in Japan, the United States, and Europe, and in the United States, it climbed to No.1 for DVD/VHS sales on Billboard. This film has since become something like a node of cultural exchange between Japan and the United States, now reciprocally influencing American films after being influenced by many American films and novels. Cultural exchange is always subject to the power relationship between cultures, that is, the more politically powerful culture imposes its culture onto others or distorts other cultures one-sidedly, and therefore, many critics criticize American cultural imperialism as exploiting other native world cultures. This film, however, is a happy case of balanced cultural exchange because a power relationship between cultures hardly works in the film, and a good example of “grassroots globalization” or “globalization from below,” which is the term coined by Arjun Appadurai and means the globalization of cultural products not by the big power of corporate global capital, such as American global animation companies, or the Japanese government’s political strategies, but by social forms or institutions for minors not related to any nation-state system, such as Japanese animation companies with relatively small commercial influence in the world. Reasons why this film attracts many people world over are its unique mixture of themes that have appeared in many American SF films and novels as well as its unique adaptation and visualization of the concept of cyberspace mixed with Japanese religious perspectives.

The concept of “cyberspace” is applied to various art forms, such as novels, films, and games, and *Ghost in the Shell* is an example in which the

concept of “cyberspace” is well integrated. As Allucquère Roseanne Stone defines the term “cyberspace” as “a physically inhabitable, electronically generated alternate reality, entered by means of direct links to the brain – that is, it is inhabited by refigured human ‘persons’ separated from their physical bodies, which are parked in ‘normal’ space” (609), in this film, people can exchange parts of their bodies for artificial ones, that is, they can become full cyborgs, and besides, their brains are directly connected to a cyber network. In such an environment, nobody can be sure about his/her identity—in the sense that we typically define “identity” today—because characters change their original physical bodies as they wish, and they can change, manipulate, and control memory by hacking brains through the cyber network. This film prompts the viewer to redefine “identity,” “individuality,” and “human” within the high tech cyberspace and cyborg culture with questions, as to whether we can still have our identity or individuality when we can share bodies and memories with others.

Cyberspace and cyborg culture

Michel Foucault says that the nineteenth century was the time to think about history and the twentieth century was the epoch of space in which one of the main currents of thought was Structuralism, which focused on the synchronicity in relationships with others, and offers the term “heterotopia” to categorize a specific space, which is something like a “counter-site” or “a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be

found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and invited” (231). In short, heterotopia is a space of images in which a real world is condensed and reflected like a mirror, and at the same time, the space itself exists as the reality. Foucault gives us many examples of the concept, such as boarding schools, rest homes, psychiatric hospitals, cemeteries, theaters, cinemas, gardens, museums, libraries, fairgrounds, and colonies. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun follows Foucault to define the term “cyberspace” theoretically and says that cyberspace consists of images from the real world and exists as a separate and complete reality at the same time. In cyberspace, Chun says, the border between private and public is obscured, and where our identity lies in such an environment, in a real life, in a virtual reality, or in-between, is also questioned (245). The backdrop of *Ghost in the Shell* is exactly this kind of space that Foucault and Chun present in their articles, in which the cyber network is so highly developed that people can get anything they want and go anywhere they want through the network, and at the same time, people continue to experience anxiety about their personal identities in this world because they cannot even differentiate between a real life and a virtual reality when their brain can be hacked and false memories can be implanted in it.

Ghost in the Shell begins with the image of computer graphics that Motoko Kusanagi, the heroine of this film, looks at through her connection to the cyber network. Then the screen shows the real world where Kusanagi sits on the top of a building, and the audience discovers that her brain is connected to the cyber network with a line that plugs directly into the back of her neck and she is

carrying out a mission to interrupt a corporate crime in progress and assassinate a corrupt diplomat in secret. After she accomplishes the mission and disappears in this opening scene, the film cuts to the title sequence in which Kusanagi's body is being created, and the audience sees that her body is constructed entirely of artificial parts, excepting her brain, that is, she is a full cyborg, and learns that cyborg and cyberspace technology is highly developed in the society of the film. Since this title sequence gives the audience a strong impression of the artificiality of her body, they sympathize with the heroine's anxiety regarding her identity which Kusanagi later confesses in talking with Batou, a male cyborg colleague, after she scuba-dives into the sea on a holiday.⁵¹ She says that the physical and mental factors, such as a face, voice, hand, memories, the feelings of the future, and the expanse of the data net a human's cyber-brain can access, are needed in order to make a human a human, to make an individual what they are, and to establish an identity distinguishable from the identity of others, but in this futuristic world, these factors are interchangeable because people can change their bodies as they wish, manipulate their memories as they wish, and exchange any factor that establishes their identity with others, and the concept of "identity" in such a circumstances comes into question, which causes her anxiety regarding her identity.

Because Kusanagi's anxiety regarding her identity is specific to cyborg

⁵¹ As Susan J. Napier points out in her book (110-11), this diving scene plays a preliminary role for the scene later in the film when she "dives" into the Puppet Master. In both scenes, the film shows Kusanagi's point of view through a camera to let the audience understand how Kusanagi's subjectivity can move beyond her body through the network.

and cyberspace culture, Donna Haraway's cyborg theory is quite applicable to the issues expressed in the film. In her famous article, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," published first in 1985, using the metaphor of cyborg to challenge feminists still bound to dualism of mind and body, animal and machine, and idealism and materialism, and making a great contribution to gender studies today, Haraway says that we all now live in a cyborg culture in the sense that we live with the help of different kinds of mechanical tools, such as prosthetic devices, watches, glasses, and even shoes, playing musical instruments and listening to music, and manipulating computers and reading the figures on the screen, and in such a cyborg culture, "The dichotomies between mind and body, animal and human, organism and machine, public and private, nature and culture, men and women, primitive and civilized are all in question ideologically" (163).

Amelia Johns follows Haraway's theory and says that the development of technology prompts people's subjects to be dispersed, their identity to be lost, and finally, their individuals to be dissipated as we see in some modern or postmodern artworks by body artists that human's bodies are divided, fragmented, and displayed with no coherence as a unity of human beings, and thus no individual sign, such as racial, ethnical, cultural, or sexual. Quoting Mark Poster, Johns says that the technologized body that has replaced the physical body no longer limits the subject, and the definition of identity has been transformed when people can change their subjectivity and identity as well as their body (700-01). This is exactly what Kusanagi feels about her artificial body in the film. In the

scene right after the title sequence, she looks at her hand when she awakens in her bed, not sure that the hand is hers, which implies that her body is not original and is interchangeable with anyone's, and her sense of identity no longer depends on physicality. Interestingly, in this film, the word "ghost" is used rather than "soul" probably because the word "soul" relates too closely to "body" to refer to an identity independent of the physical body, but the word "ghost," which indicates an identity independent of the physical body, is not secure, either, which makes the characters in the story not sure if they possess their own identity without a physical body. In another scene later in the film, Kusanagi refers to herself as "a replicant made with a cyborg body and a computer brain," and confesses that she is obsessed by the idea that "there never was a real 'me' to begin with," and says, "I believe that I exist based only on what my environment tells me." "My environment" means the information that she receives about herself and others, including her own memories. However, memories are also interchangeable in the highly technologized society in the film, and thus, she has no reliable basis for her identity and subjectivity, because her subject can be "dispersed" within the net in the sense that she can live without any specific physical body making her consciousness connected to the net and manipulating someone else's cyborg brain and body anytime anywhere as a ubiquitous human being.

When we are connected to each other like the characters in the film, we cannot differentiate ourselves from others, and thus, we lose our individual identities. N. Katherine Hayles also anticipates a situation in which our bodies become disposable once we are able to transfer the information in our brains

through the cyber network (173). Making use of Lacan's theory, she discusses the diffusion of subjects in the cyber network, and says that the reason why we feel anxiety about identity in the cyborg culture is because we lose a coherent pattern of information with which to construct our subjectivity while in cyberspace (186). As the many critics mentioned above argue, when we get both a highly developed cyborg culture and a highly developed cyberspace culture, the definition of identity or subjectivity becomes blurred, just as Kusanagi experiences in *Ghost in the Shell*. Being "dispersed" in the net is, in fact, Kusanagi's unconscious desire because she feels anxiety about her identity and, at the same time, feels frustration that she is limited by the conventional concept of identity, and thinks that the physical and mental factors constructing her identity are insecure, yet these factors nevertheless limit her. She is afraid that her identity will vanish, but desires to free from the limitations of activity as a person in a normal space and wants to not only *be in* but also *belong to* the network of cyberspace, which means that she wants to become part of the network so that she can completely dismiss the physical body—and even the brain—that exists in a normal space.

The recognition of cyberspace is one of the big differences between *Ghost in the Shell* and *Matrix* (1999), which also uses cyberspace as the background of the story and in which people are connected to cyberspace and living in a virtual reality created by a host computer Matrix. The hero of *Matrix*, too, discovers the unreliability of his existence and the world he is living in. After he recognizes that his reality is actually cyberspace controlled by a computer, he tries to escape from the network, and never wants to return to cyberspace or to be

a part of the network. The big difference from Kusanagi is that the hero in *Matrix* never doubts that the normal space that he thinks he has escaped to is a really normal space and it never occurs to him that this space may also have been created by someone. Even though it is well known that *Matrix* is inspired by *Ghost in the Shell*, the focus on action scenes in the *Matrix* does not allow the film to question the complex issue of cyberspace as expertly as *Ghost in the Shell* does. The world of *Matrix* is an earlier stage of cyberspace, in which identity remains bound to a physical body in a normal space, so that “if the ‘person’ in cyberspace dies, the body in normal space dies, and vice versa,” as Stone says (609). In *Ghost in the Shell*, Kusanagi seeks the next stage in which she can live and gain identity in cyberspace independently of a physical body in a normal space, which prepares the audience for the possibility of identity in cyberspace without the physical body.

The image of identity in cyberspace without the physical body is represented in the figure of a character in *Ghost in the Shell*, the Puppet Master, who is a notorious cyber criminal hacker and thought to be a human by detectives at first but later turned out to be a computer program created by an American governmental institution. When he is caught, however, he is no longer simply a computer program, but insists that he is a life form and requests “political asylum as an autonomous life-form.” When the detectives deny the Puppet Master’s identity as a life form, he questions them about what “life” is and says, “life is like a node which is born within the flow of information.” As he says, if a man can gain individuality from the memories that he carries as a species of life that in

turn carry DNA as its memory system, there is no reason the Puppet Master cannot obtain a life form. When he is told “you have no proof that you’re a life-form” by a detective, he replies, “it is impossible to prove such a thing; especially since modern science cannot define what life is,” with which he reveals the vulnerability of the definition of human identity. The Puppet Master has no physical body, and is not an A.I., but, he says, “I am a life-form that was born in the sea of information.” This is a perfect example of the subject independent of a physical body in cyberspace, and such an examination of “life” would not have been possible without the development of today’s computer network.

We need to consider the relation between identity and a physical body in cyberspace, and we need alternative definitions of “identity,” “subject,” and “human” as technology continues to develop, as the Puppet Master warns us, “When computers made it possible to externalize memory, you should have considered all the implications that held.” Allucquère Roseanne Stone’s discussion over the theoretical definition of cyberspace and the relationship between cyberspace and human’s body could support the concept of identity in cyberspace without the physical body, such as the Puppet Master. Stone says, “The cyborg, the multiple personality, the cyberspace cowboy suggest radical rewritings in the technosocial space ... of the definition of the body, the cultural meaning of bodies, and of the bounded individual as the standard social unit and validated social actant” (611), and says that in a new environment of the highly technologized society, we need to redefine body, individuality, and subjectivity because the subject in cyberspace, the “online persona,” totally changes the

relationships between communities and individuals (612). Stone argues that, because our body in a normal space is socially constructed through our experiences in a normal space, we can also construct our subjectivity independent of the physical body through our experiences within the cyber network, and as examples of subjects independent of the physical body, she cites phone sex workers and computer scientists, engineers working on Virtual Reality systems (616). In *Ghost in the Shell*, we can clearly see another example of such an alternative subject as the emergence of a new life form without a physical body in cyberspace, which is the Puppet Master.

The controversial issue regarding the human's alternative subjectivity and identity in cyberspace and cyborg culture expressed in *Ghost in the Shell* has drawn the attention of many critics in the United States. For example, Livia Monnet discusses how the image of cyberspace and the agents in the space are represented in *Ghost in the Shell* under the term "intermediality," and she compares the film with two American cyberpunk films: *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Matrix*. Monnet says that "intermediality" is the process in which different kinds of media merge and interfere with each other and, as a result, an alternative medium is produced,⁵² which happens between *Blade Runner*, *Ghost in the Shell*, and *Matrix*. For example, in *Ghost in the Shell*, the image of Section 9 (a government counter-terrorist institution that the heroine belongs to), street scenes

⁵² Monnet defines the term exactly as follows: "In this paper I propose a notion of intermediality that can account simultaneously for the interactions, mutual remediations or transformations, and the conceptual convergence between various media in a particular medium or (media) culture, as well as for the mutations in the discursive, representational and cultural practices produced by such (inter)media relations" (230).

in the futuristic city, mannequins in the display, and battle scenes are either intentional homage to or subtly influenced by *Blade Runner*, and the digital title sequence of *Ghost in the Shell*, the heroine's jump from a helicopter, the characters' ability to move freely within the net, and a chase scene in a market influenced *Matrix* (231-33). Monnet also explains the roles of optical camouflage in *Ghost in the Shell*, with which the heroine can be transparent, and Agents, who can transform their bodies into anything, in *Matrix* as the expression of the same desire to probe the fourth dimension with the conception of "tesseract:" the specific figure for the fourth dimension (241). Monnet says that special effects in *Ghost in the Shell* and *Matrix* are the results of intermediality of the films and *mise-en-scènes* for the embodiment of conceptual fusions, and in that sense, *Ghost in the Shell* can be regarded as an accumulative film of two-dimensional animation works and *Matrix* can be regarded as an accumulative film of media and technologies representing any kind of moving image (241-42).

Cyborgs represented in *Ghost in the Shell* are, Monnet argues, the fusion of different kinds of media, such as digitization in live-action films, cel animated films, and computer graphics, and therefore, we can say that cyborgs in the film themselves are media or intermedia accompanied by the images of "referential hypermediacy," such as internet, holography, three-dimensional simulation, and brain voice, as well as the images of "non-referential hypermediacy," such as diving into the net and the mergence of the heroine with the Puppet Master (242). On the other hand, comparing Lacan's dystopian conception of "desire" and Deleuze and Guattari's utopian conception of "desire," Gerald Miller discusses

the themes of “desire” and “human evolution” shared between three epoch-making Japanese SF animated films, *AKIRA* (1988), *Ghost in the Shell*, and *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995-1996, 1997). Miller argues that human’s fusion with machine in *AKIRA*, human consciousness’s fusion with A.I. in *Ghost in the Shell*, and the fusion of all humanity into one entity in *Evangelion* show the possible process of future human evolution (147-62), and *Ghost in the Shell* offers the possibility of transcending the controlled world behind the utopian network of society by abandoning the body and becoming dispersed in the net (152). Miller says that Kusanagi in *Ghost in the Shell*, who desires to be connected to everything on the net and rejects “unity” but still keeps “multiplicity” in the end, is a representation of “Body without Organs “ or “rhizome” in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms (154-56). Miller concludes that the three films question whether an individual can really have multiplicity, whether we recognize that the feeling of “lack” has been inscribed by society, and whether we can become alternative ethical subjects free from social morals, and enlighten us regarding the possibility that we can recognize our lives and identities at any time and in any society, no matter how oppressive or dystopian (163-164). The number of the articles about *Ghost in the Shell*, like Miller’s, exclusively focusing on the examination of metaphysical or conceptual issues regarding cyberspace and cyborg culture, is very small, while most articles on *Ghost in the Shell* focus on two major subjects: gender and techno-Orientalism.

The image of woman in cyberspace and cyborg culture

Because it is so applicable to the case of *Ghost in the Shell*, many articles about the film quote Donna Haraway's famous cyborg theory and develop her ideas in different ways, focusing on the gender issue in the film. For example, Carl Silvio first points out that Haraway's cyborg theory has two contradictory visions of future, and says that one is that information technology can remove the differences of gender and race and the accompanying oppressive structures, that is, information technology or cyberspace is a "utopian space" free from any race, gender, or age biases, and the contradictory vision is that high technology reinforces power relations among individuals and "rearticulates" old race and gender identities (54-55). Silvio agrees with Haraway's visions, saying that information technology seems to emancipate us from any kind of gender bias, but in fact it could emphasize old stereotypical, conservative concepts, and pop-culture is no exception (55). Silvio argues that cyberpunk, which is a genre of science fiction set in a society dominated by computer technology and networks, as a genre is itself basically conservative, with few female protagonists and many stereotypical images of woman, and *Ghost in the Shell* is conservative enough to reinforce conventional gender codes rather than to subvert them, even though at first sight it gives the impression of challenging (56). Silvio says that *Ghost in the Shell* appears challenging because Kusanagi, the heroine of this story, is a powerful main character and narrative subject, subverting traditional gender roles with cyborg technology. Additionally, the background of post-human or post-gender society in the film challenges patriarchy, the Puppet Master is a genderless vision of future cyber technology, and Kusanagi's "masculine" actions match

those of other male heroes and do not create gender discrepancies as far as her physical strength. However, Silvio says, *Ghost in the Shell* is actually conservative because the frequent scenes depicting Kusanagi's nudity expose her as "a passive and eroticized object" of the male gaze, and make her position as a narrative subject vulnerable, and the scene in which the Puppet Master approaches Kusanagi and persuades her to unify with him to be a perfect life form by intruding into her body suggests a conventional image of reproduction and associates the Puppet Master with a masculine and paternal (in the sense that they are going to make a new life form) image and Kusanagi with a feminine and maternal image, which produces the audience's visual consumption with the eroticized spectacle as a result (57-69). After all, Silvio concludes, *Ghost in the Shell* starts with Haraway's feminist cyborg theory but lands in a conservative film that retreats from Haraway's position.

Despina Kakoudaki shows a different perspective on the gender issues in *Ghost in the Shell*, first emphasizing a positive aspect of the representation of woman in *Ghost in the Shell*, saying, "In this film, cyborg existential dilemmas, the excessively feminized cyborg body, and the freedom of animation to represent the unseen blend to offer a vision for the emergence of a new 'New Woman'" (165), but never neglecting to notice the conservative aspect of the representation of the heroine in *Ghost in the Shell*. As Silvio points out, Kakoudaki also admits that Kusanagi has both femininity and masculinity, and this dual image challenges traditional images of cyborgs as docile or passive, but at the same time, she is represented by stereotypical descriptions of gender (182). Kakoudaki, however,

explains that this ambivalent image of Kusanagi represents anxiety about identity or gender within the online society—a society that is meant to emancipate us from conventional gender roles or sexual biases, yet in which the representations of aggressively acting cyborgs with visually exaggerated sexuality nevertheless remain fetishistic objects (182-83). The ending scene of *Ghost in the Shell* clearly proves Kakoudaki's argument, in which the film deliberately avoids the possibility of lesbian relationship between Kusanagi and the Puppet Master, who has obtained a female cyborg body, by giving the Puppet Master a male voice⁵³ and giving Kusanagi the asexual body of a little girl once her “original” body is destroyed in the final battle scene against a heavy tank operated by another unit of the Japanese National Public Safety Commission trying to steal the body of the Puppet Master. By doing so, Kakoudaki argues, the film represents the sexually complicated concept of artificial female cyborg and at the same time, shows our anxiety about a radically positive image of women (185). Kakoudaki says, “The tradition and historical precedent of ‘New Women’ who face representational and technological challenges—and the affinity of women’s representational tropes to transparency and fetishism—affect the contemporary science fiction landscape. Faced with a space that may make consciousness disappear, the ability of women to ‘appear’ is thus used as a means to escape the existential dilemmas of new technology” (186), that is, *Ghost in the Shell* cannot help but be conservative

⁵³ In *Ghost in the Shell 2.0* (2008), a reproduced version of the original 1995 counterpart, however, the voice of the Puppet Master is changed to a female voice, which complicates this issue. It is very likely that Oshii is completely aware of critics’ discussion over gender issues in his film. He even gives the name “Haraway” to a female medical examiner performing postmortem in his *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* (2004).

unless we reach a stage in society totally free from stereotypical gender prejudice or gender code.

Some critics argue that the excessive sexuality of the figure of the heroine in *Ghost in the Shell*, which both Silvio and Kakoudaki problematize, is, in fact, not as sexual as we imagine. For example, Wong Kin Yuen argues that, even though the figure of Kusanagi is often criticized because she has a “perfect” female body and the film often exposes her female nudity, the film as a whole actually reduces sexuality to a minimum and the image of a strong female cyborg heroine generates anxiety in a male-dominated society. Yuen says, in the title sequence, in which Kusanagi’s cyborg body is being assembled, and in the battle scene against a heavy tank, in which Kusanagi’s body is being destroyed, the audience’s attention is drawn not to sexual or gender issues but to cyborg issues, though she is completely naked in both scenes, and points out that except for a few people with sexually perverse tendencies, it is hard to imagine that the scenes gives the audience any erotic charge because her body is represented as machine (16).

In her article discussing the image of female characters in two Japanese animated films, *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (1986) by Hayao Miyazaki and *Ghost in the Shell*, Rebecca Johnson also argues that Kusanagi’s naked cyborg body is not the sexual object for the male gaze, but that rather the heroine achieves an alternative identity by renewing old concepts of woman such as “cuteness” or “beauty,” saying that Miyazaki’s *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* represents the concept and style of *kawaii* (‘cute’ in Japanese), and Oshii’s *Ghost in the Shell* represents

the concept and style of *kirei* ('beautiful' in Japanese), but neither of them provide the stereotypes of the concepts, showing some contradictions in the concepts and avoiding the representation of the female characters just as someone to be protected or someone maternal (par. 2). According to Johnson, *Ghost in the Shell* depicts an alternative female identity in a highly technologized society, and Kusanagi is represented as a mature and masculine figure who is not maternal but sexual and powerful (pars. 30-35). Johnson admits that the title sequence, in which Kusanagi's cyborg body is being constructed, is sexual and fetishized, as if a sex-toy were being produced, and Kusanagi's body is not an image of mother body but an image of sexual object, and the ending scene also suggests that body is more important than mind for women because the contrast between Kusanagi and the Puppet Master is associated with the contrast between body and mind (par. 36, 39). However, Johnson argues, once Kusanagi enters "masculine territory" in the action and battle scenes, her naked body is no longer a "victim" or "sexual," and therefore, not just a sexual object of the male gaze, and Kusanagi achieves the alternative identity of an asexual object (par. 40).

When Kusanagi obtains the body of a little girl in the end, Johnson says, she becomes the representation of ultimate male fantasy, which is not "cute" or "beautiful," but both "cute" and "beautiful." In this sense, Johnson concludes, Japanese animation and pop-culture offers an alternative third option for female identity, and it proceeds to mass-produces this new stereotype of woman in many animation films and even influences Japanese female culture (pars. 42-46). Johnson does not say that *Ghost in the Shell* is a conservative or male-chauvinistic

film, but this third option for female identity, which many Japanese pop-cultural products offer today, should be criticized from a feminist point of view because, despite what Johnson argues, beautiful and cute female characters even with much masculinity still can be sexual and fetishized for male gaze in Japanese Lolita culture.⁵⁴

Contrary to expectation, a number of critics argue favorably that *Ghost in the Shell* creates an alternative image of woman in cyberspace and cyborg culture. Livia Monnet, for example, argues that the fantasy of the feminine sublime of *Ghost in the Shell* produces female creativity, which is libidinal, technological, and aesthetic, and it is quite indispensable for twentieth century visual culture (226-27). Monnet claims that the unification of Kusanagi with the Puppet Master in the end is exactly the representation of Virginia Woolf's notion of "the creative androgynous mind," which means that creativity appears through the collaboration or exchange between masculinity and femininity in the mind and anticipates the diversity of gender today. Therefore, Monnet concludes, the image of woman in *Ghost in the Shell* is a complex fusion that renews old cultural values and media and integrates several feminist perspectives, including Woolf's androgynous creativity and Donna Haraway's cyborg theory (250-51).

Sharalyn Orbaugh also argues that *Ghost in the Shell* has not reached a post-gender world yet, but is a first step toward the post-gender world theorized by Haraway and Judith Butler. According to Orbaugh, *Ghost in the Shell* is a narrative about Japanese cyborgs that offers alternative subjectivity, subverting

⁵⁴ See Gagné.

conventional concepts of “sexuality” and “singularity” (436). Orbaugh quotes Donna Haraway, who says the fear and hope in the cyborg narrative upsets central myths of Western culture, such as false innocence and apocalypse, and says that Japanese pop-culture, which is often more complicated than North American culture, also includes motifs of an apocalyptic world, survival, and the impossibility of innocence. Besides, Orbaugh continues, the concept of robot is familiar in Japan and is not as fearful or hostile an object in Japanese society as it is in the United States, and the familiarity of robots and androids is now shared worldwide. Cyborg culture actually, Orbaugh says, along with conjoined twins and intersexed people, overturns conventional concepts of singularity and sexuality in the postmodern or post-human society, and there have been many female or neutral figures of cyborgs in Japanese culture, possibly because Japanese culture was feminized by Western culture in the nineteenth century.

Based on the historical background of cyborg culture, Orbaugh says, *Ghost in the Shell* makes room for an alternative form of cyborg and cybernetics reproduction, and only the first five minutes of the film, in which the audience sees the composition of Kusanagi’s body and hears her joking about the impossibility of a period with her cyborg body, makes the audience notice the problematic theme of reproduction or sexuality for post-human subjects, and that Kusanagi, who has a perfect cyborg body, is no longer a “woman” but a “man” in the sense that she does not have any specific vulnerability usually accompanied with a female body. Orbaugh argues that *Ghost in the Shell* makes us rethink the concepts of gender and reproduction and represents an alternative form of

reproduction and an alternative subject in cyborg culture, which is realistic as to the extent that each individual desires such alternatives. Quoting Haraway's phrase, "the cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world," Orbaugh claims that *Ghost in the Shell* has not reached this post-gender world yet because gender and sexual differences are still clearly shown in the film, but it does not have a "heterosexual matrix" in Butler's terms, either, and the representations of the exaggerated sexuality in the film are the reflection of fear or anxiety against the breakdown of the "heterosexual matrix". Orbaugh says, "I have yet to see an anime narrative that explicitly approaches cyborg sexuality in this pleasurable, fully post-gendered way, but I think this vision is suggested in the reluctance of cyborg narrative to depict sexually in the modernist terms of the meeting of sexual organs attached to sexed/gendered bodies," and the unification of Kusanagi with the Puppet Master is also not depicted as sexual intercourse. Therefore, Orbaugh argues that the futuristic representation of human evolution in *Ghost in the Shell*, which entails abandoning the body, is an effective suggestion in examining the possibility of alternative subjects in cyborg culture (448-49).

Diane Treon also examines the alternative subjectivity in cyberspace expressed in *Ghost in the Shell*, and she argues that the film even transcends Butler's post-gender world and steps into the next stage. Treon says that Japanese animation, as a representative cultural product of postmodern culture and "visual/textual hybrids," basically has vague gender boundaries and that the audience enjoys the "transgressed/transgressive" boundaries in the works (243-44). According to Treon, one of the most important motifs in Japanese animation

and comics is the complex subject free from fixed conceptions of material, gender, identity, or human, and another common motif is a subject who is located in a space where all kinds of data accumulates and is accessible immediately, which is one step further than Butler's post-gender world, and Treon calls this place the "multiverse" (246). Treon says that these alternative subjects and multipersonas in Japanese animation represent contemporary society as a ubiquitous hyperreality flooded with information, and the subject is dispersed in the network, completely free from identity, gender, or even ego. The ending of *Ghost in the Shell*, in which the heroine decides to leave for the unlimited cyber network, therefore, does not only express "dissolution" but also emphasizes the strength of woman "transformed" into the environment of city itself, and by doing so, the film represents the trope of "female transformation" in a positive way, rather than the typical negative depictions of transformation as female irrationality (257). Treon interprets the film as a Bildungsroman for human beings and concludes that what the film most emphasizes is not the supremacy of each individual's intelligence in cyberspace but the potential of collective intelligence in the cyber network and the externalization of memory (259).

As shown above, there are two opposing arguments on the gender issue in *Ghost in the Shell*: one is critical of the way the film represents a female body or identity and the other celebrates the potential of alternative female sexuality and identity. It is true that in many scenes Kusanagi's nudity and sexually exaggerated cyborg body render her a passive erotic or sexual object of the male gaze, and it is also true that conventional gender roles are articulated in many scenes, such as in

the unification of Kusanagi with the Puppet Master. As Silvio points out, these representations persist no matter how violent, powerful, or masculine Kusanagi becomes. However, as Orbaugh and Treon argue, there are many indications that the film offers alternative images of female identity, subjectivity, or sexuality free from conventional heterosexual gender codes. The question here is, though, why many critics do not specify that the film falls into the genre of animation in their discussion, but instead examine the film as a Sci-Fi film and compare it with other live-action Sci-Fi films, such as *Blade Runner* and *Matrix*. If they had focused on the film as animation, they might have caught another aspect of the film.

Christopher Bolton adds a third perspective to the discussion and offers another reading of the issue. Quoting Haraway's argument that cyborg culture denies the dichotomy between nature and art, which suggests both emancipation from conventional gender and social concepts as well as the fear of dehumanization, Bolton says that it is applicable to Japanese animation, which sometimes boldly deviates from stereotypical gender codes and sometimes articulates or exaggerates them, and which objectifies, commodifies, and victimizes strong female protagonists—a typical example of which is the heroine in *Ghost in the Shell*. Bolton criticizes articles written about the application of Haraway's theory to *Ghost in the Shell* because they tend to focus only on the representation of the cyborg in terms of the dichotomy of technology and gender, saying, "The virtual or artificial nature of animated 'actors,' who are always already technological bodies, complicates any effort by the film or the critic to draw or blur the line between natural and artificial or human and machine"

("From Wooden" 730). Bolton investigates on a meta-level the complexity of and the implications of drawing a line between human and machine or natural and artificial in an animated film, in which everything is fundamentally artificial. Bolton admits that, in *Ghost in the Shell*, Haraway's ambivalence between nostalgia for a physical body and desire for a world of pure language or data becomes apparent, and this ambivalence manifests itself in the disdain or hatred for female embodiment and leads to the climactic scene of violence inflicted upon Kusanagi's body.

As Bolton claims, *Ghost in the Shell* surely represents Haraway's aggressive and controversial attitude toward the transformation of the individual into the cyborg and the online network, and the ambiguous violence inflicted on Kusanagi's cyborg body, which is a metaphor for both the transcendence of a physical body and the victimization of a female body, quite follows Haraway's prediction that technology will invade our bodies and minds. Bolton says that the ambivalence in *Ghost in the Shell* rests in the fact that it shows the possibility of transcending a physical body, on one hand, and visually exaggerates, objectifies and commodifies a female body, on the other hand, and in that sense, we can call Kusanagi "a high-tech pinup girl" possessed by both Section 9 inside the film and the technology of animation outside the film ("From Wooden" 735-36). Bolton, however, objects to Carl Silvio's argument that the feminist possibilities are undermined by the male gaze in the film because it oversimplifies the ambiguity of the film, and argues that *Ghost in the Shell* is an animated film and Kusanagi's body is not real in the first place, and therefore, we should not project the

categories of gender in the real society onto the animated body, but instead, we should examine the issue of discourse unique to animation, and he offers another reading by comparing Kusanagi's body with a puppet's body in *Bunraku*, the traditional Japanese puppet theater.

According to Bolton, two representative characteristics of *Bunraku*, which have attracted many Western critics such as Roland Barthes, are applicable to both Japanese animation and the heroine in *Ghost in the Shell*. The first characteristic which Bolton mentions is the unique relationship between the puppet's body and the puppet's voice, which oscillates between union and separation because the puppet's voice and actions are derived from both inside and outside, and the second characteristic is the specific nature of the puppet, which possesses a parallel independence and dependence. Bolton also points out other similarities between animation and *Bunraku*, saying that *Bunraku* was pop-culture for people in the eighteenth century Japan as animation is pop-culture for contemporary Japan, they both draw the audience's attention using melodrama and violence, or human drama in the disguise of violence, and they both use special effects, such as automated mechanisms for *Bunraku* and computer graphics for animation. Furthermore, Bolton says, *Ghost in the Shell* shares the famous motif of love suicide (*shinju*) with Japanese playwright Monzaemon Chikamatsu's seventeenth and eighteenth century dramas, which feature sex, death, and rebirth, symbolizing emancipation from social restraints and eternal unification of the lovers. Quoting Barthes's argument that the conception of puppets in *Bunraku*, whose bodies, voices, and movements are divided yet coexist, overturns the singularity of the

Western subjects as well as the dichotomy of body and soul, Bolton compares *Bunraku* to *Ghost in the Shell*, because cyborgs' bodies and voices are often separated in the sense that they communicate with each other through the network in their brains without moving their lips inside the film, and of course their voices are dubbed in by voice actors in the studio. Bolton also claims that the audiences of *Bunraku* and animation have similar reactions that they are initially mesmerized by the "actors'" movements and then focus on acting and story.

Based on the similarities between *Bunraku* and *Ghost in the Shell*, Bolton says, the effect of violence similarly works in *Bunraku* and *Ghost in the Shell*, because both Kusanagi and the puppets oscillate between physicality and non-physicality, and consequently, the extent of the violence increases and decreases throughout the narrative, and the exaggerated violence in animation does not shock the audience as in *Bunraku* because the protagonists are characters drawn on celluloid. From this comparative perspective, Bolton interprets the ending of the film, in which Kusanagi sees the image of an angel falling from the sky when she merges with the Puppet Master and expresses her feelings later to her colleague citing phrases from the New Testament, claiming that the image of the angel and the Biblical quotations suggest rebirth, transcendence of the body, alternative existence on the net, and Kusanagi's liberation from gender roles. Bolton points out that Kusanagi and the puppets in *Bunraku* are operated by men, which ironically makes it possible for her to be free from conventional gender roles while a living actress may yet remain bound to them. Kusanagi's new body, Bolton says, can be interpreted in two opposing ways: 1) the emancipation from a

sexual body and gender roles, and 2) the restriction within the femininity as a girl (*shojo*) with the achievement of multiple voices (“From Wooden” 764-65). In any case, Bolton argues, the ending scene, in which Kusanagi stands on the edge of a cliff and looks down on the city lights, symbolizes her independence, autonomy, and lack of victimhood, and says, “It is tempting to see anime as a clear window on culture or a map of the popular imagination, but a reading that neglects anime’s slippery layers of language and representation will have difficulty seeing beyond the exploitation that characterizes these titles on their surface” (“From Wooden” 766).

Bolton emphasizes that we should always take account of the specificity of the medium itself on a meta-level when we examine any expression or representation of animation, and concludes that the animated characters’ bodies as well as the puppets’ bodies are removed from our real physical bodies, and, as Haraway predicts, we have already become cyborgs when we watch those artificial bodies on screen (“From Wooden” 766-67). Depending on the viewer, *Ghost in the Shell* can look either conservative or challenging gender norms, and of course this debate does not have one solution or even a consensus born of compromise because of the film’s complex aspects, which can be interpreted in various ways. Among the many arguments, though, Bolton’s meta-level perspective suggests a possibility for the study of animated films as differentiated from conventional films, and his analysis of violence on a female body in *Ghost in the Shell* offers an insightful approach to analysis of any animated film.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ In his article about another of Oshii’s films, *Patlabor 2: The Movie* (1993), Bolton asserts the

East and West in *Ghost in the Shell*

It is obvious that *Ghost in the Shell* is greatly influenced by many American Sci-Fi films and novels such as *Blade Runner*⁵⁶ and *Neuromancer* (1980), as Napier says, “*Ghost in the Shell*’s dystopian vision of an alienated, near-future world, shadowy government agencies and a dark, urban setting of rain-lashed skyscrapers all evoke *Blade Runner*, while its image of a tough weapon-toting heroine dealing with sinister computer hackers is evocative of *Neuromancer* and other cyberpunk works” (105). Among the many similarities in the settings of these stories, such as dark atmosphere and the mixture of modern high rises and disordered slums, the taste of the Orient is the most remarkable. For example, *Neuromancer* starts the story in Chiba City, which is a city next to Tokyo, and in *Blade Runner*, oriental pictures appear on the advertisement screen and the hero eats something like Chinese noodles in a stand run by an Asian man, and the location of *Ghost in the Shell* is also somewhere in Asia, likely Hong Kong, and the heroine’s name is Japanese.⁵⁷

In her article discussing the relationship between cyberspace and Orientalism, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun says that in Sci-Fi films and novels, the

necessity of examining the animated film by taking account of the specificity of the medium itself as a meta-film. Criticizing Michael Fisch’s political analysis on the film, Bolton says, “But this kind of reading is somewhat unsatisfying in its efforts to see the film as a more or less straightforward media representation of an outside political reality, without any attention to the issues of representation and mediation itself, issues that the film raises over and over in its imagery and plot” (“The Mecha’s” 458).

⁵⁶ On how innovative and influential *Blade Runner* is as a postmodern film, and the relationship between Sci-Fi films and cities see, for example, Bukatman.

⁵⁷ On the influence of Hong Kong films on international film culture see, for example, Bordwell.

setting of cyberspace, which is supposed to erase “otherness” and give people equal rights to join, rather emphasizes the “otherness” in order to get readability or entertainment value, and Sci-Fi writers and creators label something not easily recognized, such as cyberspace, as an “other,” in many cases, represented as the Orient. Furthermore, Chun says, the reduction of American power and the development of the Japanese economy in the 1980s brought high-tech Orientalism into the Sci-Fi genre, and therefore, it is natural for American Sci-Fi films and novels, such as *Blade Runner* and *Neuromancer*, to have an Oriental atmosphere (250-51). Orientalism, however, can have a different implication in *Ghost in the Shell* from American Sci-Fi novels and films because the film was made in 1990s Japan, and thus its Orientalism could be interpreted as a parody or homage. From a postmodern perspective, the stereotypical images of Orientalism can be a tool to make a meta-film out of the film and to blur the existence of the film itself as a suitable device for the theme of the film, in which the audience can have a sense of *dé-jà vu* and feel anxiety about the action of watching film itself.

In *Ghost in the Shell*, we can see the echo of Japanese religions, Buddhism or Shintoism. Unlike *Matrix*, in which there is a main host computer that controls cyberspace in a godlike fashion, there is no single dominator in cyberspace in *Ghost in the Shell*, which is, probably, derived from the difference between the monotheism of Christianity and polytheism of Buddhism or Shintoism. Even inside the film we can see the conflict between Christianity and Buddhism or Shintoism, as Napier says, “The Puppet Master himself has certain godlike aspects in his vision of creating a new world. But Kusanagi is obviously not

searching for a Christian notion of transcendence” (113). In short, in the sense of creating a new world, the Puppet Master is a metaphor for the Christian God and Kusanagi’s desire to be dispersed in the net originates from a Buddhist ethos. In Buddhism, in order to attain enlightenment, or *satori*, you have to achieve nothingness or emptiness of mind, reducing one’s existence to nothingness and getting rid of personal desire as if dispersing your subjectivity throughout the world or melting into a part of the world. Kusanagi does not want to create a world, but she rather wants to be a world, and therefore, Kusanagi and the Puppet Master’s wedding is a metaphor for the merging or unification of Eastern and Western religions, as the director of the film himself says, “the ‘net’ can be equated with the myriad gods of the Shinto religion” (quoted in Napier *Anime* 113). While *Matrix* still needs an absolute existence to create and control the world, in *Ghost in the Shell* God is no longer necessary, and new life forms are not created but are spontaneously born within the sea of information, or cyberspace. In other words, there are gods everywhere in *Ghost in the Shell*, and characters can take part in the fields of gods, and without Shintoism, this conception of cyberspace would not be possible.

Oshii had worked on the issue of the vulnerability of subjects in another film, *Urusei Yatsura Movie 2: Beautiful Dreamer* (1984), which brought him fame. In the film, the protagonist and people in his town enter someone’s dream, and they relive the same day over and over again without realizing it. With this film Oshii shows the insecurity of the border between dream and reality because if we all share the same dream and believe that the dream is real, we can never

differentiate between dream and reality, in which sense, cyberspace is similar to dream. In *Matrix*, the protagonist believes that cyberspace is real before he is removed from the space and cannot differentiate between cyberspace and reality until he escapes from the space, but, once he escapes to reality, he never doubts the authenticity of this new world. In Oshii's *Urusei Yatsura*, the ending suggests to the audience that the real life the protagonist believes he has come back to may still be a dream, and that is why the film can be interpreted in different ways. Although Oshii's two films use different modes—dream and cyberspace—both films question the security of identity, and *Ghost in the Shell* is another version of *Urusei Yatsura* that reflects the development of technology.⁵⁸

Before *Ghost in the Shell*, films such as *Total Recall* (1990) included the theme of lost identity by tampering with memory, in which people's memories can be changed, manipulated, or exchanged, and thus they cannot maintain a secure identity. What is innovative about *Ghost in the Shell* in this regard is that the film connects the theme of lost identity with cyberspace, and by setting the story in a highly developed cyberspace society, the theme of exchanging memories becomes more complicated and realistic, because humanity now exists in the process of the developing of a cyber network. The theme of new life forms is also found in many Sci-Fi films and novels, such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *Childhood's End* (1953), and additionally, the sorrow of replicants with cyborg bodies and computer brains is a theme that appears in other works,

⁵⁸ Bolton also points out that the motif of a vulnerable reality confused with dream is found in Oshii's *Patlabor 2*, as well ("The Mecha's" 471).

such as *Blade Runner*. Thus, *Ghost in the Shell* borrows many motifs, even including Orientalism, from Western Science Fiction, but by showing these motifs—the electronic brain, the new life form, and the cyborg body—in relation to cyberspace, this film manages to have originality. Besides, the film's more salient originality is the depiction of cyberspace from a Buddhist or Shintoist point of view, with which the conception of cyberspace can be easier to understand, and the images can be easier to embody, and in this sense, *Ghost in the Shell* is regarded as a mixture of Japanese religions and American Sci-Fi, or a mixture of Eastern and Western culture.

Other critics besides Napier pay attention to Orientalism in *Ghost in the Shell*. For example, Yuen discusses why Hong Kong is often chosen for a vision of a futuristic city quoting Antony King's argument that colonized cities are pioneering forms for contemporary capitalistic societies, and says that the crowded, noisy and chaotic atmosphere of Hong Kong's cityscape coincides with the image of a futuristic city with a highly developed network as metaphor for the sea of information. Therefore, Yuen argues, it is natural that many cyberpunk writers and directors choose Hong Kong, which has a great diversity of race and culture, for their settings (18). As for the Orientals in *Ghost in the Shell*, Livia Monnet and Madeline Malan show quite opposite viewpoints. Monnet says that the fantasy of the feminine sublime, which impacts the film greatly, is unfortunately undermined by the stereotypical and nationalistic "technonativist" of Japanese Shintoism with the image of *Amaterasu*, the goddess of the sun and the universe (227). On the other hand, Malan says that *Ghost in the Shell* shows a

vision of humanity's possible future, and it is important for us to carefully examine the robotic technology and futuristic visions drawn in Japanese novels, TV dramas, and films in order to predict our future (13). From our postmodern or postcolonial point of view, however, none of these critics identifies a specific aspect of the film as a meta-film. Yuen simply articulates cyberpunk writers or filmmakers' Orientalistic ideas about Asian cities, Monnet criticizes nationalistic elements of the film related to Japanese native religion, and Molan simply searches for a hopeful vision of the future in Japanese animation, which could be called "techno-Orientalism." Each argument, of course, applies to the film, but none stands up to a postmodern interpretation of the film, in which each expression and representation includes a critical connotation behind the surface meaning.

What many critics, such as Yuen, Monnet, and Malan, are missing is that Orientalism in *Ghost in the Shell* could be a parody or homage to other American Sci-Fi films and novels, and therefore, the film could work as a meta-film that is critical of Japan and Orientalistic fantasies. Inuhiko Yomota says that there is always a sense of nostalgia behind the image of Tokyo in Oshii's films, which we can clearly notice when we watch his three films, *Patlabor: The Movie* (1989), *Patlabor 2: The Movie*, and *Ghost in the Shell*, in a row. *Patlabor* includes a nostalgic and exotic image of Tokyo with disappearing old townscapes and a typical Asian cityscape similar to Hong Kong's, *Patlabor 2* has a contemporary image of Tokyo as a metropolis with old canals and crisscrossed highways, and *Ghost in the Shell* has a cosmopolitan image of Tokyo combined with the images

of Hong Kong, Venice, and Amsterdam. Yomota argues that these three films of Oshii's are critical of rapidly developing contemporary Tokyo, which consequently exposes a nationalistic or conservative vein in his films that denies contemporary Tokyo as a multi-lingual and multi-cultural city, whether he is conscious of this or not (88).

Jane Chi Hyun Park also points out aspects of the film that are critical of Orientalism. Introducing an episode in which a Japanese guide admitted that contemporary Tokyo was cyberpunk and that he was happy about the image when he showed William Gibson around Tokyo, Park says that we should not simply label this attitude of Japanese people as "colonized consciousness" or "self-orientalization," otherwise we would miss the complex power dynamics in cultural exchanges between East and West (60). Park argues that *Ghost in the Shell*, which is influenced by American cyberpunk novels and films and influences American novels and films in turn, emphasizes the power dynamics of techno-Orientalism by setting a non-Japanese *mise-en-scène*, pushing a female protagonist in front, and representing an ambivalent relationship between the protagonist and technology. Park and Chun both say that in American cyberpunk, women, East Asian cultures, and cyberpunk are all equally and always "others" and exist only as decorations of the *mise-en-scène*. However, quoting Kumiko Sato's argument that Japanese cyberpunk has subverted this techno-Orientalism by placing Japanese settings and images center stage and making female or transgender characters central protagonists in the story, Park argues that the setting of *Ghost in the Shell* is not just a reproduction of Hollywood's

Orientalistic vision of the future, because the film shows a specific image of the Asian city Hong Kong rather than a combined image of Eastern and Western cities, such as New York, Los Angeles, and Tokyo, as in *Blade Runner*, and besides, the cityscape is replete with Shinto-inspired music and Japanese dialogues, which produces its original topos not contributing to the tourist perspective of the city common in Hollywood films, and, along with the shared image of post-industrial Tokyo and Hong Kong, calls attention to cultural affinities between Japan and China.

In *Ghost in the Shell* or other Japanese Sci-Fi animation, Park says, “others” are not “others” at all but always already exist within it, which is the most significant difference between Japanese cyberpunk and American cyberpunk, and in this difference Park sees the potential that Japanese animation subverts the techno-Orientalistic fantasies of American cyberpunk and offers an alternative conception of Orientalism, as follows: “The difference is a rather significant one, and points as much to how Japan is changing the terms of orientalism as it does to how the United States keeps trying to reproduce them” (63). Even though Yomota and Park disagree on how to look at the cosmopolitanism of the city—in Yomota’s view the city consists of images of Tokyo, Hong Kong, Venice, and Amsterdam, and in Park’s view the city consists of images of Hong Kong and sounds from Japan—they both explore postmodernism or post-colonialism in *Ghost in the Shell* by showing how the film criticizes contemporary Japan and techno-Orientalism, and they succeed in showing us an alternative perspective to the film.

It is difficult for us living in a world which still clearly differentiates between cyberspace and the real world to concretely illustrate a new identity and understand the concept of subject independent of the physical body. In cyberspace, we can be free from our physical bodies, recreate our subjectivities, erase boundaries between ourselves and others, and become new forms of life, as Hayles says, “Cyberspace represents a powerful challenge to the customary construction of the body’s boundaries, opening them to transformative configurations that always bear the trace of the Other” (187). *Ghost in the Shell* offers one possible image for such a subject. In the film, Kusanagi feels anxiety for her identity because of her cyborg body and cyber brain, and at the same time, she wants to emancipate her subjectivity in cyberspace by dispersing its shape throughout the net. In front of her, the Puppet Master, a new-life form that was born in cyberspace without a physical body, appears, and Kusanagi and the Puppet Master unify into a new life form in the end of the film. As Napier points out, Kusanagi, who wants to belong to and be a part of the net of cyberspace, can be regarded as a symbol of Japanese Buddhist and Shintoist religions, and the Puppet Master, who tries to create a new world and a new generation of humankind, can be a symbol of Christian God. Therefore, the wedding of Kusanagi and the Puppet Master in the end of the film could be understood as a metaphor for the unification of East and West, and this unified subject is one possible definition of “human” in this age of cyberspace.

Regarding the image of cyberspace and the image of alternative subjectivity and woman in cyberspace and cyborg culture in *Ghost in the Shell*,

American critics have generated various arguments. Some of them have discussed the conception of cyberspace and cyborg culture represented in the film, many of them have tried to determine if the film is conservative or challenging regarding gender issues, and many others have examined the meaning of Orientalism in the film. The reason why this film attracted many American critics is because it shows alternative images of cyberspace, cyborgs, women, and Orientalism by providing stereotypes, quotations, and mimetic motifs from American cyberpunk in the purposely exaggerated manner of the postmodern meta-film, which is possible because the film is categorized as “Japanese” and “animation,” neither of which is a mainstream for American audiences. As a marketing strategy, whether intentional or not, the film’s sub-culture appeal has worked well and has succeeded in attracting the attention of American critics and moving the discussion of the film into academic fields. In a sense, this film serves as a typical example of the American audience’s expectations regarding Japanese high-tech pop culture, exposing their Orientalism both on superficial and profound levels, and in particular, the image of a female cyborg is attractive to critics who wish to apply Haraway’s feminist cyborg theory to a work of art. Of course, Japanese animation may be at its peak in terms of attracting large audiences by using postmodern devices because such devices may be familiar and boring to the audience for the second time, but then it may find other ways of attracting people through cultural exchanges in this globalized world. In any case, what remains significant is the manner in which we approach our study of animated films, and a meta-level perspective, focusing on the specificity of the medium itself, just as

Bolton and Park advocate, is necessary to reveal how the film could function in different kinds of cultural backgrounds.

Conclusion

One of the most important questions in Translation Studies is whether other cultures can really be understood in the face of something incoherent or untranslatable in the language and culture. Talal Asad says that we must try to make other cultures coherent in our language by exploring “cultural translation.” A good translator must doubt his/her own language and try to reshape it when he/she faces the difficulty of translation, even when relationships between languages are based on an unequal political-economic balance of power. Kevin Robins also says that we have to be open to “others” through cultural translation by learning to listen to “others” and learning to speak to, rather than for or about, “others.” From a feminist point of view, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak also says that translators should “surrender” to and respect the original text, trying to understand the specificity and the rhetoricity of the text without pushing their own domestic cultural values. With these conceptions of cultural translation, Anna Wierzbicka considers how we can explain some Japanese culture-laden words that seem untranslatable, such as *amae*, *enryo*, *wa*, *on*, *giri*, *seishin*, and *omoiyari*, and argues that we can explain them via English words that have semantic counterparts in Japanese, that is, via lexical universals.⁵⁹ Disagreeing with those

⁵⁹ For example, to explain the word *amae* (reliance or dependence on others), Wierzbicka denies other people’s definitions including pejorative terms and proposes some formulae for the word as follows:

who say that there are no universalistic cross-cultural concepts but only cultural specific concepts, Wierzbicka claims that the cultural specific concepts of Japanese culture can be translated and described in terms of universal concepts.

As I have pointed out in the first chapter of this dissertation, the English translations of Haruki Murakami's novels have replaced conventional images of Japanese literature and culture and created alternative images of them. Each translation has played a different role in the process of the formation of the images of Murakami's works. Alfred Birnbaum's unique translation has succeeded in "trans-creating" Murakami's light and pop writing style and creating his "rebel," "Westernized," and "new Japanese" images, at the expense of the faithfulness to the original text. Jay Rubin's strict translation has featured Murakami's "historical," and "political" images with its formal and rigid translating style. Philip Gabriel seems to have failed to create his own translating style and to have transferred Murakami's specific writing style in the original text, considering the reactions of American reviewers and critics to his translation. Among the three translators of Murakami's works, only Birnbaum could meet the requirements as a good translator according to the standards set by Asad, Robins, and Spivak. Even though Birnbaum changes many of Murakami's original

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- (a) X thinks something like this about someone (Y):
I know:
(b) when Y thinks about me, Y feels something good
(c) Y wants to do good things for me
(d) Y can do good things for me
(e) when I am with Y nothing bad happens to me
(f) I don't have to do anything because of this
(g) I want to be with Y
(h) X feels something good because of this (Wierzbicka 241)

sentences, his own voice is sufficiently powerful to attract the attention of American reviewers and critics. If Birnbaum was still translating Murakami now, readers in the world would no longer be describing his writing with terms such as “postmodern,” “Magic Realism,” and “puzzle.”

In the case of Banana Yoshimoto’s novels, “the politics of translation” have not been overcome as I demonstrated in the second chapter. Four translators have translated her novels into English, and none of them seems to “surrender” to the original text or to understand the rhetoricity of Yoshimoto’s writing style, which challenges patriarchal Japanese society. Nor have they succeeded in transferring the style specific to Japanese *shojo* culture into a target language culture because they have not found equivalent styles in English in spite of the many American novels representing specific American female language and culture with large female readerships. As a result, the translations of Yoshimoto’s novels in English end up exposing her conservatism and invite American reviewers and critics to find stereotypical views of Japanese women as a “geisha girl,” or “devoted woman.” Japanese *shojo* culture has a big market in contemporary Japanese consumer capitalism in different styles of art, such as comics, novels, films, animation, music, and fashion, and it always has both challenging and conservative representations of Japanese female voices to survive in male-dominated Japanese society. Yoshimoto’s novels lose the challenging aspect in the English translations. They should be “put on hold” until they find a feminist translator who catches the feminist aspects of the original text and recreates them in translation with some specific strategies as a creative writer in

order to make women visible,⁶⁰ and thus, can render contemporary Japanese female voices.

Like Banana Yoshimoto's novels in the Japanese original, Hayao Miyazaki's animated films also have progressive and conservative aspects, but these aspects are more apparent to American audiences. Miyazaki's films have always offered alternative views of relationships between humans and nature as well as complex and diverse images of traditional and contemporary Japanese culture and history, replacing conventional views by means of a unique *mise-en-scène* of characters, places, and plots. On the one hand, his *mise-en-scène* is very different from Disney's. On the other hand, his films keep on representing very limited types of female characters, such as a cute and pure infant, a cute and beautiful princess, and a beautiful adult woman, even though they are often very strong and independent and seem to subvert conventional gender roles. In addition, the West in his films is always represented as beautiful and dreamy with stereotypical images of an old and good Europe. As a result, Miyazaki's films provide Western audiences with different images of Japanese culture and history to help them understand complex "others" with few prejudices. But the films can be criticized for their insensitivity to the stereotypical images of both women and Western culture. In the terms of cultural exchange, therefore, Miyazaki's films could play an important role in revealing the complexity of Japanese culture to Western audience. Audiences must also be conscious, however, about the possibilities that the films can oppress other "others," such as women and the

⁶⁰ On feminist approaches to translation see, for example, Von Flotow, Simon, Wallmach.

West.

Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* cleverly uses stereotypical images of women and techno-Orientalism, both subverting and reinforcing them in the purposely exaggerated manner of the postmodern meta-film. Influenced by American Sci-Fi films and novels, Oshii mixes together all "others," such as women, Western and Eastern cultures and religions, and cyberpunk, and shows them as either parody or homage in the format of a Japanese animated film. Because Oshii's world represents a sub-culture for American audience, they provide a good example of "grassroots globalization" in Arjun Appadurai's terms. After realizing that Japanese anime and comics have achieved a large popularity worldwide, the Japanese government is now trying to expand the market for anime and comics as one of their most profitable products. Whether this "globalization from above" will work or not, alternative images of Japanese culture and identity established in Japanese animated films and comics are now promoted by the Japanese people themselves with the help of the nation state.

The reason for Murakami's worldwide success can be logically explained by Emily Apter's translation theory. Apter says that non-Western writers and artists are selected to be translated and transported internationally not because of the excellence of their works but because translations of their works are readily available. A global market always looks for something exotic but not too exotic and then sorts each non-Western writer or artist into stereotypical subcategories such as "international," "postcolonial," "multiculti," "native," or "minority"(2). Murakami's works fit perfectly into this model, offering the global market

familiar images of contemporary Japanese language and culture such as “Westernized,” “postmodern,” or “universal.” Apter has expressed concern that the growth of information technology and machine translation only serves to promote English imperialism and the extinction of minor languages. So long as the global market drives the selections of what will be translated and exported, preferences for the easily translatable will prevent readers from experiencing the complex local and native characteristics of international art (11-12).

Murakami’s novels in translation have achieved a large readership in the global market; Yoshimoto’s novels have failed to open an alternative market in translation; Miyazaki’s films have offered some artistic values in both East and West; and Oshii’s films have taught Japanese people how to use stereotypical images for their benefit. In translating contemporary Japanese culture or any culture, we cannot help but reconfirm or create different kinds of conventional or alternative images of the culture. We must remember, however, that these images are always arbitrary or artificial and motivated by various kinds of power dynamics. Not only must we seek not to be deceived by these images. We must look for the complex layers of images behind the “translatable” representations of “others.”

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