

Translating Murakami

(1) Translation and Globalization

Murakami's status as a world literary figure came in for some unusual attention in 2000, raising important questions about translation, re-translation, commercialism and the effect of globalization on literature. The story gives us a glimpse into the issues that confront a serious author with broad appeal, especially when his work crosses linguistic boundaries.⁴⁸³

Two of Murakami's novels, *South of the Border, West of the Sun* and *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, caused an uproar in Germany beginning on 30 June 2000 when *South of the Border, West of the Sun* was the subject of a popular book discussion programme on television (broadcast simultaneously in Germany, Austria and Switzerland). The influential octogenarian critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki praised the book, but a critic from Austria, Sigrid Löffler, called it literary fast food unworthy of their attention. She regarded the sex scenes as pornographic and sexist, and accused Reich-Ranicki of being a dirty old man. He accused her of being a prude unable to deal with eroticism in literature. The debate grew heated and personal, and most people agree it was less about Murakami's novel than a long-standing personal hostility on both sides.

The German press picked up the spectacular quarrel, and suddenly the name Haruki Murakami was a household word. Six of his books were already available in German translation, but this televised debate raised his profile and people rushed out to buy *South of the Border, West of the*

Sun – the inevitable reaction when any work of literature is accused of being pornographic.

Soon a professor of Japanese Language and Culture from Hamburg named Dr Herbert Worm joined the fray, declaring that there were many problems with the German text owing to the fact that it was a re-translation from the English. He also pointed out that Murakami's German publisher, DuMont, had now issued two Murakami novels by re-translation from English: not only *South of the Border, West of the Sun*, but *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*.

Dr Worm wrote to me asking for my views on the matter as the translator of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*. He noted that the English translation of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* was described as having been "translated and adapted from the Japanese by Jay Rubin with the participation of the author", while the German edition bore no such disclaimer. He wanted to know if "adapted" was a euphemism for "abridged", and he alluded to "the growing discontent with the quality of the German translation", as part of a larger issue:

Gradually people have come to realize the fact that with the last two Murakami publications in Germany – treating your and Professor Gabriel's American versions as the "authentic original" – standards for translating belles lettres have been kind of ruined; we are actually back again to pre-romantic times, when Cervantes was translated from its awful elegant French version.

No one had ever consulted me about the re-translation of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* into other languages, so all this was news to me. I agreed with him that re-translation is an absurd procedure, and that I couldn't imagine why it was even considered in light of the fact that there were surely enough people qualified to translate Japanese literature into German. With regard to abridging the translation, I wrote to him that I would never have considered cutting it if the US publisher, Knopf, had not stipulated in Murakami's contract that the book should not exceed a certain length. Concerned at what an editor might do to the

took the initiative to make cuts based on my knowledge of the novel, leaving in more than the specified number of words. Knopf accepted my edited version without a whimper (which suggested to me that I probably could have left more in).

In the end, I gave the US publisher two versions, an entirely uncut translation and my edited version. Why did Knopf insist on having cuts in the first place? Murakami's US editor, Gary Fisketjon, writing on Knopf's website, said simply: "My reaction was that it couldn't be published successfully at such length, which indeed would do harm to Haruki's cause in this country."

The cuts occur primarily at the end of Book Two and the beginning of Book Three. Books One and Two were published in Japanese as a single unit and were accepted as complete by many Japanese readers. Much of the end of Book Two, however, involving Tōru's indecisiveness about whether or not to go to Crete with Creta Kanō, was rendered almost irrelevant by Book Three, so I did not feel too bad about leaving that out. I still think the translation is tighter and cleaner than the original, but I suppose that very tightness can be viewed as a distortion of the original, an Americanization of a Japanese work of art. I had a great time doing it, though it turned out to be a *much* more complex process than I had imagined. Some of the footnotes in Chapter 11 of this book indicate specific differences between the original and the translation.

I did a lot of rearranging at the beginning of Book Three because I found several chronological inconsistencies which were not deliberately placed there by the author. I undoubtedly destroyed the chaotic, fragmented impression of the original Book Three, but I was not persuaded it was meant to be as chaotic as I had found it to be. I can be blamed for having rendered that section of the novel more conventional, but I'm not convinced that that was a great artistic loss. (If this sounds arrogant, you should have been inside my head just after I had finished the translation and I felt I knew every word of the book inside out – better than the author himself! This kind of megalomania is a form of temporary insanity.)

To further complicate the textual picture, Murakami contributed many

minor cuts that have since been incorporated into the Japanese paperback edition of the novel (mostly in Book One). He read and approved my final edit, though he was admittedly uneasy that so much had been eliminated.

In an article on the debate raging in Germany, Professor Irmela Hijiya-Kirschner asks: "Where is the original?" She goes on to say:

German readers and critics had absolutely no idea that the German translation, which was based *not* on the Japanese original but on the modified American version, was different from the Japanese original. Which version, then, should the reader now take to be the original? For there now exist two versions, Japanese and English, both of which have been authorized by the author.⁴⁴

Actually, the textual situation is even more complicated. The more you look into it and into the question of revision, the more you realize there is no single authoritative version of *any* Murakami work: he reserves the right to tinker with everything long after it has found its way into print. I once heard that Willem de Kooning would occasionally follow a painting of his to the gallery and revise it on the wall. Murakami is the literary equivalent. There are many versions of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*: the serialized version of Book One; the published hardback editions of Books One, Two, and Three; my unpublished complete translation of that edition (with likely inconsistencies since I may have missed something in revising the version based on the serialized chapters); the American version; the British version from Harvill; and finally the paperback (*bunkoban*) version in Japanese, which incorporates some – but not all – of the cuts Murakami recommended for the American translation and possibly others he decided upon afterwards.

In her article, Professor Hijiya-Kirschner quotes a "joint declaration" by DuMont and Murakami on the DuMont website recognizing that the "ideal" in translation of his work would be for it to go directly from the Japanese to the German, but that in the interest of speed Murakami was willing to accept translation into other languages from the English. The emphasis here is on English as the starting point for the journey of

his works around the world, for which reason Murakami takes special care with the English translations. DuMont insists that

In the case of the English edition of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, which he participated in the completion of, with the cooperation of the publisher and the translator, a chronological leap between Books Two and Three was done away with, as a result of which an entirely new work was created.⁴⁸⁵

Professor Hijjiya-Kirschnerit asks: "Is the *timing* of a translation more important to Murakami than accuracy and quality?" She also points out an entirely practical matter here: surely it would be faster to go straight from the Japanese to the German rather than waiting for the English translation. She continues:

What status does the modified American version have vis-a-vis the Japanese? Is it indeed a new work? . . . If Murakami believes that the English version, which he helped to modify, is superior to the Japanese original, will this supposed 'new work' someday be translated back into Japanese (perhaps by Murakami himself)?⁴⁸⁶

DuMont's claims in favour of a "new work" are an overstatement. We are *not* talking about huge textual differences between the Japanese original and the English translation. For example, there is no reference to the "famous" illustrator Tony Takitani, the central character in the Murakami story of that title, in either the English translation or the Japanese paperback.⁴⁸⁷ Murakami threw the name in as an in joke when he first wrote the book, then thought better of it during the process of revision for the edited translation, which he then carried over into the Japanese paperback. He did not, however, adopt the large cuts made for the English translation into the Japanese paperback. Another different text is the British edition from the Harvill Press, which has British spellings and idioms and a useful table of contents missing from the American version. The amount of "adapting" I did was small in the

overall context. All the great scenes – especially those set in Mongolia and Manchuria – are uncut.

Regarding the question of translation into German by way of English, Professor Hijjiya-Kirschnerit says

One would like to think that [Murakami], himself a translator, would not readily approve of re-translation. If this declaration [on the DuMont website] does accurately convey Murakami's intention, however, then by promoting the translation of the English version of his works into other languages, he himself comes to embody that English-language-centred cultural imperialism that we continue to deplore and resist. By taking American tastes as a model, what he is helping to bring about is nothing less than the globalization – indeed, the Hollywoodization – of his own works. The Japanese versions, in that case, are reduced to the status of mere regional editions.⁴⁸⁸

This is an excellent point. Translation is an interpretive art, which means that a re-translation is an interpretation of an interpretation. We would be rightly shocked to learn that a new pianist's performance of a Beethoven sonata was based on his hearing an older recording and that he had never looked at the score himself. I might point out here, too, that translations age in ways that original works do not. Translation is a form of close reading, an act of criticism, not creation, and the need for new interpretation becomes apparent when new ideas arise with the passage of time.

Murakami told me that he was not sufficiently consulted regarding the supposed "joint" statement from DuMont, but fortunately a new book of his on translation helps to clarify his position. *Hon'yaku yawa*, or *Night Talks on Translation* (basically, an "after-hours" chat on translating) features three forums, with audience participation, involving Murakami and his collaborator/consultant in American literary translation, Motoyuki Shibata, a Tokyo University professor specializing in American Literature. The book was published in October 2000, but here I would

like to quote from Forum #2, which took place in Tokyo in November 1999, seven months before the broadcast that started the commotion in Germany.

Asked what he thought about re-translation of literary works into Japanese, which often results in drastic changes in meaning, Murakami replied:

To tell you the truth, I kind of like re-translation. My tastes are a little weird anyway, but I'm interested in things like re-translations or novelizations of movies, so my views might be a little one-sided where this is concerned, but I think that with globalization and one thing or another, we're going to see a lot more of the kinds of problems you just mentioned. For example, four of my novels have been translated into Norwegian. Norway has a population of some 4,000,000, so there aren't many people who can translate from Japanese, and sales are small, which is why half the four have been translated from English.

And let's face it: New York is the hub of the publishing world. Like it or not, the rest of the world revolves around New York. And English is the lingua franca of the industry, a tendency that is almost certain to increase . . .

Properly speaking, of course, direct translation from the Japanese is the most accurate and desirable way to go, but I think there will be more and more instances in which it is impossible to demand the most proper, desirable thing.⁴⁸⁹

Joining the debate, Professor Shibata pointed out that translations between European languages are bound to produce fewer differences between texts than translations between European languages and Japanese. If you translated a text from English into French and then into Japanese, you would end up with far fewer differences than if you went from English to Japanese to French. Murakami then picked up on the idea of re-translation:

Given that my novels are being re-translated that way, what I think, as the one who wrote them, is "So what?" (*Laughter*): I'm not going so far as to say it's OK if there are a few translation errors or some of the factual connections are wrong, just that there are more important things to think about. I'm not so worried about the details at the level of linguistic expression; as long as the big things on the story level get through, that's pretty much going to do the job. If the work itself has power, it will get past a few mistakes. Rather than worrying about the details, I'm just happy to have my work translated.

(Murakami has said to me that this view applies more to a storyteller like himself than to a writer like 1968 Nobel prizewinner Yasunari Kawabata, whose works depend more for their effect on microscopically modulated poetic imagery.)⁴⁹⁰

"And then *speed* is important," continued Murakami on the forum.

Say I'm writing a book, and 15 years later it shows up translated into Norwegian, I would be glad for that, of course, but I would be *really* pleased if it came out just two or three years after I wrote it, even if the translation were a little off. This is important. Of course, accuracy is important, but speed is another thing you can't ignore.

He went on to say that Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions* was great when it first came out, but that by the time it appeared in Japan ten years later, it had lost much of its punch. "Novels have an impact in their own time," he explained. "There are works, I think, that have to be read in their own time." He cited John Irving's *A Prayer for Owen Meany* as another novel that suffered in Japan because ten years went by before it was translated.⁴⁹¹

I knew that Murakami was already feeling frustrated by this kind of time-lag when he began working on *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, which is why he asked me to start translating it into English while Book One was

still being serialized. Of course, as a scholar, it would have made sense for me to have waited to see how the book turned out, to judge whether it was an important part of Murakami's oeuvre, to decide whether Murakami was superior to his contemporaries, or if he was genuinely a spokesman for his time or his generation and the work was sure to enter the canon, but by then I'd be dead, and so would Murakami. You can't tell a 45-year-old author "This will be translated 60 years from now, and then you'll be famous in Hungary"; and you can't tell a translator who loves a work of literature "Wait a few decades to see if this work survives."

I make these points as a translator of contemporary literature, not as a scholar. Authors and publishers are not – and should not be – scholars. Publishers are thinking about sales, about deadlines, about "shaping" and "pacing" an author's career, about the timing and rhythm of releasing an author's work, about keeping the author in the public eye without flooding the market – about selling books. There are people in the industry who think about nothing but commercial matters, but there are also many people who want the books they produce to be important, and somewhere in the backs of their minds they are hoping they are promoting the career of the next Henry James or Hemingway. Nevertheless, in the end, they have to *sell* their books to keep the next Henry James or Hemingway fed so that he will keep writing and keep the publishing company in business. There are literary agents involved in the mix, too, and they have their own ideas about how best to manage their clients' careers. A lot of decisions have to be made to a deadline. Scholars have the luxury of time, and their most authoritative writings are concerned with authors who are safely dead and buried (or in the Japanese case, cremated).

I suppose I might be accused of having betrayed my responsibilities as a scholar by involving myself in "the industry", but it has been an adventure I'm glad I didn't miss. I never got to talk with Sōseki about his works (though I tried once), and I never went cross-country skiing or played squash with him either. I have been tremendously excited to find themes and patterns in Sōseki's works, but I never got to test any of my ideas out on him. It was a great kick to argue with Murakami in

a Harvard classroom about the symbolic meaning of an undersea volcano in one of his stories, and to be told by him at the University of Washington, "You think too much."

As a translator and a scholar, I share Professor Hijiya-Kirschner's sense of outrage at an author's willingness to compromise on the quality of a translation in the interest of speed, but I also sympathize with Murakami's desire to witness the fate of his work in his lifetime. Books that last into succeeding generations will be translated again and again, and later translators will inevitably benefit from the long-range scholarly perspective.

When I translate the great Meiji novelist Sōseki Natsume, for example, I treat the text more as an untouchable artifact. If I find authorial inconsistencies, I remark on them in an appended commentary rather than attempt to fix them on the spot. When translating Haruki Murakami, however, I see myself as part of the ongoing global process of creation and dissemination (some might argue a cog in the machinery of the publishing industry). I am aware, too, of Japanese editorial practice, which is far less demanding than that of English-speaking countries, so if I find errors that Japanese editors have missed I usually fix them.

No one reads a book as closely as a translator, which is why the bracketed part of the following sentence was removed from the first page of the translation of Murakami's bestseller: "Once the plane was on the ground, [the NO SMOKING sign went out, and] soft music began to flow from the ceiling speakers: a sweet orchestral cover version of The Beatles' 'Norwegian Wood'." This may help prove Murakami's point that the details are less important than the story.

(2) Translators, Editors, and Publishers

At this point, there are three translators working in English on Haruki Murakami's major writings: Alfred Birnbaum, Philip Gabriel, and me. In the academic world of Japanese literary studies, Alfred was something of a mystery man when he translated *A Wild Sheep Chase* in 1989. He was a

freelance translator and journalist who had no connections with the academic network, just a young guy who had grown up in Japan, knew the language and could write English with a certain flair. The story of how he "discovered" Murakami and came to translate his work is discussed in Chapter 10.

Having translated all the long works up to *Dance Dance Dance*, Alfred was feeling justifiably burnt out by the time Murakami started writing *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*. In the meantime, I had translated some of the short stories and was eager to do more when Haruki said he needed a translator for his next novel. The timing of Alfred's fatigue couldn't have been better for me. Alfred not only stopped translating Murakami for a while, he left Japan to live and work in Myanmar, marrying a Burmese woman.

Phil Gabriel was briefly a junior colleague of mine at the University of Washington, and is now a professor of Japanese Literature at the University of Arizona in Tucson. He did his academic work on post-war literature, particularly that of the writer Toshio Shimao, about whom he wrote a book entitled *Mad Wives and Island Dreams: Toshio Shimao and the Margins of Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999). He came across Murakami's works in a Nagasaki bookshop in 1986 and hurried to read all of the stories then available: "I was really bowled over by them," he said in a Knopf Internet roundtable discussion on translation. "I loved his light touch, his humour, his often quirky take on life, as well as the touch of nostalgia for the past that often appeared in these early works."

Phil's translation of "The Kangaroo Communiqué" was the first Murakami story published in the United States. It appeared in *ZYZZYVA*, a literary journal based in Berkeley, California, in autumn 1988. Since then he has translated *South of the Border, West of the Sun* and *Sputnik Sweetheart*, as well as the parts of *The Place That Was Promised: Underground 2* that became Part Two of the English translation *Underground: the Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche* (in 2001, this book won Alfred and Phil the Sasakawa Prize for Japanese Translation).

The importance of editors in the publication of literature cannot be

overestimated. Without an editor who believes in a writer, there is no way for a publisher to promote that writer's career. The strategic role of Elmer Luke at Kodansha International has been outlined in Chapter 10.

When the US publishing industry began to take notice of Murakami, Robert Gottlieb and Linda Asher were his strongest editorial backers at *The New Yorker*. The magazine's receptivity to Murakami, their very first Japanese short story writer, has continued to this day under the regime of Bill Buford and Deborah Treisman, with eleven stories in print so far (including two excerpts from *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*). This has to put Murakami among the most-published writers in *The New Yorker* of any nationality. The publication of this book, I think, demonstrates the devotion of Christopher MacLehose and Ian Pindar at the Harvill Press to Murakami's work.

Gary Fisketjon, who had been Raymond Carver's editor at Knopf, is the one who assembled the stories in *The Elephant Vanishes* for publication in 1993. Gary's interest in Japanese literature began with his reading of the so-called Big Three – Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, Yasunari Kawabata and Yukio Mishima – as an undergraduate at Williams College in the mid-1970s. The Kodansha International translations convinced him that Murakami "properly belongs next in that hugely distinguished line of writers", so when Murakami decided to make the move to Knopf, Gary was the most obvious choice as his editor.

As for me, my own work had been on writers who flourished in the early twentieth century, and I had little interest in contemporary Japanese writing. Whenever I sampled any, it seemed thin and immature in comparison with the early twentieth-century giant Sōseki Natsume, on whom I continue to work.

Then, in 1989, I read Haruki Murakami for the first time. I had only been vaguely aware of his existence – as some kind of pop writer, mounds of whose stuff were to be seen filling up the front counters in Tokyo bookstores – but I hadn't deigned to read what was sure to be silly fluff about teenagers getting drunk and bed-hopping. Some months before *A Wild Sheep Chase* came out in English, an American publisher asked me to read a Murakami novel to see if it was worth translating; they had

been evaluating a translation but wanted an opinion on the original. I figured it wouldn't hurt me to discover what kind of junk was being read out there, so I took the job, but with some misgivings. The book was *Sekai no owari to hādoiborudo wandārando*, later translated as *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, and it absolutely blew me away – so much so that I hardly worked on anything besides Murakami for the next decade.

After years of concentrating on muted grey Japanese realism, I could hardly believe a Japanese writer could be so bold and wildly imaginative as I found Murakami to be. I can still see the colours of the dreams escaping into the atmosphere from the unicorn skulls near the end of the book. When I think back to that first reading of *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, I remember how much I regretted closing the last page and realizing that I couldn't live in Murakami's world any more. I told the publisher that they should by all means publish a translation and that if, by any chance, they were not satisfied with the translation they were considering, they should let me do it. They ignored my advice on both counts, and Alfred Birnbaum's translation came out a few years later from Kodansha International.

I think I would not have liked Murakami's writing so much if I had first read anything else, including *Norwegian Wood*. I've been able to enjoy almost everything of Murakami's knowing that he was the creator of that incredible mind trip *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, echoes of which are to be found in everything he has written since.

I hadn't responded to a writer so strongly since becoming obsessed by Dostoevsky as an undergraduate. I got everything of Murakami's I could lay my hands on and started reading him – and teaching him – to the exclusion of anyone else, as my students can attest. I especially loved the stories. I found Murakami's Tokyo address and wrote for permission to translate any of half a dozen stories I had in mind. His agent at the time got back to me from Tokyo saying I could go ahead. I sent her one of my favourites, "The Second Bakery Attack", and the next thing I knew Murakami himself was on the phone asking me if I minded publishing

it in *Playboy*. Used to publishing my academic stuff for audiences of twelve, I leaped at the chance, whatever scruples I might have had regarding the so-called *Playboy* "philosophy". The illustration for that first story was a masterpiece: the McDonald's robbery scene done in the style of an eighteenth-century Japanese *ukiyo-e* woodblock print. *The New Yorker* took "The Elephant Vanishes" around the same time.

Murakami surprised me that first day on the phone when he said he was calling from Princeton. I was probably the only professor of modern Japanese literature in the country who didn't know he was there. In fact, he was going to be running in the 1991 Boston marathon that April, and we met in Cambridge the day afterwards when he attended a class of Howard Hibbett's that was discussing my still-unpublished translation of "The Second Bakery Attack". Later we were neighbours in Cambridge, and saw a lot of each other. I drove Murakami crazy more than a few times asking him to explain some obscure passages and finding inconsistencies that his Japanese editors had missed.

Let me turn to a few problems of translation from Japanese to English. As I point out in *Making Sense of Japanese* (Kodansha International, 1992/1998/2002; the original edition bore the title *Gone Fishin'*), the Japanese language is very different from English, but it is still just a language, and one should be on one's guard against the mystical nonsense that continues to cling to the image of Japanese both at home and abroad. The Japanese language is so different from English – even when used by a writer as Americanized as Murakami – that true literal translation is impossible, and the translator's subjective processing is inevitably going to play a large part. That processing is a *good thing*; it involves a continual critical questioning of the meaning of the text. The last thing you want is a translator who believes he or she is a *totally* passive medium for transferring one set of grammatical structures into another: then you're going to get mindless garbage, not literature.

Let me give a more concrete example of what I mean here. ~~Take this~~ unremarkable paragraph from "The 1963/1982 Girl from Ipanema":

When I think of my high school's corridor, I think of combination salads: lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, green peppers, asparagus, onion rings, and pink Thousand Island dressing. Not that there was a salad shop at the end of the corridor. No, there was just a door, and beyond the door a drab 25-metre pool.

Now, here is the same paragraph in a style that might look familiar if you have read a lot of Japanese literature in translation:

When one says high school corridor, I recall combination salads. Lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, green peppers, asparagus, onion rings, and pink Thousand Island dressing. Of course, it is not to say that at the end of the high school corridor there is a salad specialty shop. At the end of the high school corridor, there is a door, and outside the door there is only a 25-metre pool that is not very attractive.

Those without experience in translating literature will probably assume the second version is more "literal" or "faithful" simply because it is more awkward. In fact, the second one is no closer to the Japanese than the first; it is just closer to the usage found in language-learning textbooks, which gives it an *illusion* of literalness.

A great deal more would have to be done even to the "literal"-seeming paragraph before it began to approach the Japanese original. Japanese doesn't have any definite or indefinite articles – no equivalents to "the" or "a" – and no simple distinctions between singular and plural: *hako* means either "box" or "boxes" depending on the context. Subordinate clauses come before the nouns they modify, not after, and there are no relative pronouns. Instead of saying "the man who arrived yesterday", a Japanese will say "yesterday arrived man". Subjects and objects disappear from a Japanese sentence when they are clear from the context, so people routinely say "Went" (this is a complete sentence) rather than "I went", or "Ate" (again, a complete sentence) rather than "I ate it", and verbs come at the ends of sentences, with negative endings and tense markers

coming last of all. "I didn't see *Monty Python* last night" would come out looking like "Last night *Monty Python* see-not-did."

If you *really* wanted a literal translation of that salad paragraph, it would have to look more like this, with English loan words in italics:

High school's corridor say-if, I *combination salad* think-up. *Lettuce* and *tomato* and cucumber and green pepper and *asparagus*, ring-cut bulb onion, and pink-colour's *Thousand Island dressing*. No argument high school corridor's hit-end in *salad* specialty shop exists meaning is-not. High school corridor's hit-end in, *door* existing, *door's* outside in, too-much flash-do-not *25-metre pool* exists only is.

Now, this is a simple paragraph written by a novelist whose writing has been heavily influenced by his reading of American literature. Murakami's style strikes the Japanese reader as fresh and new because it often reads like a translation from English. You would think that this sort of Japanese would be easy to translate. It should slip right back into its English skin with no strain. And to some extent that is true. But Japanese and English are so very different as languages that nothing is automatic.

Even in something so apparently straightforward as our example, much of which consists of a list of salad ingredients, there is no question of doing anything that could remotely be called a "literal" translation. Written in a special syllabary used for foreign words, some of the ingredients have a tantalizingly foreign sound and *look* in the Japanese text, but they inevitably lose this quality when they are translated "back" into English and are surrounded by other English words.

Translating Murakami into traditional clunky translationese might be one answer to the problem of accurately conveying his style, but his Japanese is not clunky. Its American flavour is subtle and feels both foreign and natural at the same time. This is largely due to the fact that Japanese readers are more tolerant of translationese than we are. A Japanese writer can bend his language more than a writer using English

can without being accused of stylistic clumsiness. Paradoxically, then, the *closeness* of Murakami's style to English can itself pose problems for a translator trying to translate it "back" into English: the single most important quality that makes his style fresh and enjoyable in Japanese is what is lost in translation.

I suspect that Alfred Birnbaum (and to a lesser extent Phil Gabriel) is trying to compensate for this loss by introducing a certain exaggerated hipness of expression into the English text. My own approach is to try to reproduce the clean rhythmicity that gives Murakami's style its propulsive force. Of course I prefer my own approach, but there is no doubt that Alfred's jazzy translation of *A Wild Sheep Chase* is what caught the attention of English-speaking readers.

Whether in Japanese or translation, Murakami has proven he has the power to attract a broad readership. Certainly his sense of humour is one of the most important elements that helps him leap national boundaries. But finally, I think that Murakami succeeds by getting inside your brain and doing weird things to it. I remember one Murakami moment I had after translating the passage in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* where little Nutmeg climbs on to her veterinarian father's lap and smells all the animal smells he brings home on his clothes from the zoo. Later in the day, all of a sudden, I found myself singing "Oh, My Papa, To Me He Was So Wonderful", a song I hadn't thought of in years.

Gary Fisketjon probably came as close as anyone to explaining Murakami's attraction when he characterized Murakami as "the breakthrough Japanese writer in the West . . . because he continues to grow and change and mystify, probably surprising himself as much as his readers en route."

A Murakami Bibliography

Note

- 1 Murakami's works are listed under their Japanese titles in order of publication, with translated sources numbered in the left margin.
- 2 All Japanese names in citations of Japanese publications and of scholarly English-language publications are given in the Japanese order, surname first, and that includes the name "Murakami Haruki". In the body of this book, and in expository passages in the notes, all Japanese names have been given in the Western order.
- 3 All Japanese books cited have been published in Tokyo.
- 4 "Also" = Translations have been made into the languages of these additional countries, with year of publication. Subsequent editions not listed. Given in the order listed on the CD-ROM in *CD-ROM-ban Murakami Asahidō: Sumerujakofu tai Oda Nobunaga kashindan* (Asahi Shinbunsha, 2001).

WORKS BY MURAKAMI

Key to English Translations

Numbers in brackets refer to numbers in the margin below

after the quake (20)

"Airplane" (12)

"All God's Children Can Dance" (20)

"Another Way to Die" (17)

"Barn Burning" (6/16)