

**Mori Ōgai's Translations of Scandinavian Plays:
Brand by Henrik Ibsen and *Creditors* by August Strindberg**

I. '*Christianity*' Disappeared: Translation of *Brand* by Henrik Ibsen

1. At the beginning of the 20th century, the only feasible way to translate Ibsen's (1828-1906) thought into Japanese was to modify it according to the Japanese way of thinking. As we will see in the following, Mori Ōgai (1862-1922), one of the best translators of Western literature in modern Japan, mastered this artifice brilliantly in his translations of Ibsen's plays, but possibly with some detriment to Ibsen's art.

Scholars in Japan have tried to characterize Ōgai's changing attitude towards Ibsen chronologically, with respect to the development of both Ōgai and Ibsen. Ōshima Tahito, Shigematsu Yasuo and Kobori Keiichirō believed firstly that Ōgai, in the beginning, disliked Ibsen, likening him to Émile Zola, one of the most representative naturalist authors, and calling him «that Scandinavian eccentric» (Mori Ōgai 1972e: 295). Secondly they thought that he then absorbed Ibsen's thought when translating two of his plays, *Brand* (1866) and *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896) in the thirties of the Meiji period, 1898-1907. Thirdly, in the following period, Ōshima and Shigematsu thought that Ōgai evaluated Ibsen's works positively, whereas Kobori thought the opposite from Ōgai's translations of *Ghosts* (*Gengangere*, 1881) and *A Doll's House* (*Et Dukkehjem*, 1879) (Ōshima Tahito 1957; 1966; Shigematsu Yasuo 1968; Kobori Keiichirō 1982: 165-76).

On the other hand, Uryū Kenji (1985) maintained that Ōgai reacted differently to Ibsen's works according to their evolution or changes: from Ibsen's romantic plays with their optimistic idealism, written at the beginning of his career, which Ōgai evaluated highly; through Ibsen's so-called problem-oriented plays, written in his best years, to which Ōgai showed his indifference; to Ibsen's symbolic and mythical plays coloured by scepticism and resignation, written in his last years, to which Ōgai showed lukewarm sympathy.

Both theories, however, are so schematic and superficial that they fail to explain convincingly why Ōgai, at his second stage, translated both *Brand* and

John Gabriel Borkman – works from the first and third period of Ibsen's playwriting, respectively. The failure of the theories seems to derive from their insufficient analysis of how Ōgai translated these works; their discussion centres mainly on which plays and in which circumstances Ōgai translated them (Ochi Haruo 1971; Kaneko Sachiyo 1989*b*; Nakamura Toshiko 1997: 3-28). It is worth learning about the background of his translations of Ibsen's works, but this kind of knowledge alone is not able to give a trustworthy account of Ōgai's understanding of Ibsen's plays. It is not enough to refer to Ōgai's words in his writings about Ibsen and his works, as many scholars have done hitherto (Hopper 1974: 388-90; Seita Fumitake 1976*a*; 1976*b*; 1991: 103-10; Bowring 1979: 182-84; Kaneko Sachiyo 1989*a*). What is required is an analysis of Ōgai's translation, *i.e.* the text itself which inevitably discloses the tracing of Ōgai's understanding of Ibsen's works, including his misunderstanding and manipulation of Ibsen's text.¹

2. As is commonly known, Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859-1935) was the person who first introduced Japan to Henrik Ibsen in 1892 (Tsubouchi Shōyō 1892), although Ibsen's name was first mentioned in Japan in an article written by Ōgai in 1889.² In the course of the following ten years or so, several of Ibsen's plays were translated into Japanese, amongst others *A Doll's House* and *An Enemy of the People* (*En Folkefiende*, 1882). In the meantime Ōgai had the opportunity to read Ibsen's works systematically which led to a revision of his views on Ibsen as a naturalist and to the discovery of his idealistic and romantic dramas such as *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* (1867). At the same time Ōgai discovered Ibsen as a dramatist who had mastered the technique of playwriting. Ōgai was, by the way, an admirer of Goethe and Lessing and their dramaturgy. In other words: Ōgai considered Ibsen first of all as a poetical dramatist free of self-indulgence and loose morals which were some of the typical traits of the naturalists.

It is important to note that Ōgai himself chose to translate *Brand* in 1903, in contrast to the other three plays of Ibsen that Ōgai translated – *John Gabriel Borkman*, *Ghosts*, and *A Doll's House*, all of which were done by request. One may suppose that Ōgai chose the play *Brand* because he thought that it was Ibsen's best work; it could have been Ōgai's favourite.

Ibsen's play *Brand* was translated by Ōgai as *Bokushi* («The Priest»). However, he didn't translate the whole of this lengthy play, but only the second act of the original drama, consisting of five acts.

The play unfolds on the background of the grand but severe Norwegian nature. The protagonist is Brand, a priest to be, who attacks people's igno-

¹ Kaneko Sachiyo (1989*b*: 26-30) and Nakamura Toshiko (1997: 113-46) refer to the text in *Nora*, Ōgai's translation of *A Doll's House*, but only a few lines are analyzed and mainly in comparison to another Japanese version made by Shimamura Hōgetsu (1871-1918).

² Published in *Shigaramizōshi*, no. 2; Mori Ōgai 1972*c*: 71.

rance, stupidity and meanness, and tries eagerly to build an ideal society in accordance with the spirit of the Bible. Brand is an idealist *par excellence*. His motto is 'All or Nothing'. In spite of his endeavours he fails to achieve his goal. No doubt that Ōgai was fascinated by Brand and his absorption in his project, his lifework (*værk*) on which he staked his life. As the title of Ōgai's own version reveals, Ōgai was not ignorant of the fact that Brand's project was his vocation or calling, his religious mission in life. The play is a drama about an idealistic priest who struggled for his idealism. Ōgai's text shows, however, no traces of Christianity at all. This and other modifications made by Ōgai will be elaborated in the following. It is my view that scholars, talking of Ōgai's *Bokushi*, have only focused on the general idea of Ibsen's original play *Brand* and believed that Ōgai just translated the second act of the same play. Nobody has questioned why the second act was chosen. Nobody has compared Ōgai's translation with the original Norwegian text, not even with the German edition published by Reclam and translated by L. Passarge, which Ōgai used for his translation.³

3. To begin with it must be emphasized that Ōgai did not publish *Bokushi* as the second act of *Brand*. For Ōgai the second act of *Brand* was a drama which could, with certain modifications, be presented as an independent play consisting of two scenes. In this connection it should also be pointed out that only the Reclam version has headings for the first and second scene in the second act of the original play (*Zweiter Aufzug: Erster Auftritt, Zweiter Auftritt*; Ibsen 1938: 24-48). The dividing into the two scenes is not seen in the original, either. The idea of dividing the second act is not Ōgai's but of the translator of the German version, published by Reclam.

Brand is a large-scale drama; it is a play rather to be read than to be performed. Ōgai was obviously aware of that and it was probably one of the reasons why Ōgai selected the second act, the most dramatic of the play as the highlight of the whole drama.

The protagonist Brand, who appears in Ōgai's version just as *bokushi*, a priest, without name, is a difficult and importunate man. Like a devastating angel he has come down from the mountain in order to stir up the spiritless villagers who are living like slaves in the cold valley below. They are now starving, and the provost and his helper give grain out to the hungry villagers. The provost is a practical man with a simple soul; he makes compromises. He knows how to cope with the situation in an ingenious way. But Brand, the priest who plays the role of the punishing god on earth, requires 'All or Nothing' from the villagers. With his uncompromising steadiness Brand tries to carry out a revolution of the villagers' soul. The corrector Brand immerses

³ Following citations in German are taken from Ibsen 1938. Page numbers are given after the citations.

himself in arousing the people from their lethargy; he wants to make them think great profound thoughts. His implacability seems to be victorious, but he is crushed in the end by an avalanche and thus comes to suffer disgrace. At the same moment one hears a resounding voice which announces that God is also a god of mercy.

Ōgai's *Bokushi* starts with a scene described in the original text with the exception of a few boats to be seen on the shore. This may be a simple omission, or could be considered as one of Ōgai's attempts to erase any typical Norwegian traces of the fiord. Likewise he has removed two Norwegian names from the original text at the beginning of the scene – Nils Snemyr and his wife Ragnhild; they are just called *dai ni no otoko* («the second man») and *nyōbō* («wife»). At first sight, both modifications seem to be minor adjustments in order to fit the Japanese frame. But they are more than that, as we will see in the following. They are already from the start intended by Ōgai to give the play a universal (*i.e.* not specifically Norwegian) content.

Ibsen's original text is written in verse. In order to convey the poetical expressions of the original to the Japanese version, Ōgai utilized *bungo*-style with seven and five syllables in alternation – a traditional Japanese device to evoke a poetical mood in a text. It must be mentioned in this connection that Ōgai's own play from 1902 *Tamakushige futari Urashima* («Two Urashimas in a treasure box») was written in a similar style – *bungo* with seven and five syllables in alternation.

After the introductory scene, an artist and his fiancée, who have been standing amongst villagers, come forth. Both the artist Ejnar, a friend of Brand, and Ejnar's fiancée Agnes have already been introduced in the first act of the original play. In Ōgai's version these two characters are nameless like the others, and just called *gakō* («the artist») and *musume* («the young woman»), respectively. They are presented for the audience by the artist's introduction of himself and his fiancée in his first speech in *Bokushi*, when he says that he is travelling in the district to delineate the surrounding landscape, and that he has painted a portrait of his bride-to-be (Mori Ōgai 1972a: 223-24). In his second speech, the artist further explains his relation to Brand, saying that he comes from the warm south and his temperament is quite different to Brand's, because Brand is living in a dark and remote area (*ibid.*: 225-26). In *Bokushi*, Ōgai has thus condensed the main content of the first act of the original play into two speeches by the artist, just ten lines in all.

After these explanatory speeches, the artist asks Brand why he is not participating in the help action taken by the provost and the others. The artist is a man of common sense and belongs to the group of men who are content with moderate solutions. By contrast, Brand is a steady, strong-willed and uncompromising man; in his opinion the famine and the whole misery of the village is Heaven's judgement given to the villagers who have forgotten the Bible's

precepts. The name of the Bible («Herren's bog», p. 41)⁴ in the original text, however, is not mentioned in Ōgai's version. Although Ōgai refers to *kami* («god») in his translation, it is not specified as the god of Christianity. In a way, god is universalized in his text in order to make the message of the play understandable for the Japanese audience. By the same token, Ōgai's consideration is in harmony with his omission of the first act of the original play where Brand talks with exaltation about his god, Jesus Christ, who is stormy, unyielding, all-loving and young («Min [Gud] er en storm ... ubøjelig ... alkærlig ... og han er ung», p. 27).

In his attempt to generalize and impersonalize Brand's god, Ōgai makes a rather free translation of Brand's words and even uses the word 'freedom' (*jiyū*) instead of 'salvation' (Mori Ōgai 1972a: 229). In this case, however, Ōgai should not be blamed, because the mistake, or the creative misunderstanding, was made in the German version on which Ōgai's translation was based. The original text reads «men avler nød ej adelsfærd, / er flokken ej sin frelse værd!» (p. 42), while the German version reads «Wenn Not sie Tatkraft nicht entfacht, Ist nicht ein Volk der *Freiheit* wert» (p. 27) [italics mine].

In Ōgai's endeavour to wipe out the Christian elements from his translation of Ibsen's play, one gets the impression that he was, while translating *Brand* as *Bokushi* in 1903, already preparing for his own original play *The Preaching Nichiren* (*Nichiren shōnin tsujizeppō*) which he published in the following spring of 1904. Nichiren (1222-1282) was a well-known militant priest from the Kamakura period, as uncompromising and strong-willed as Brand. It would have been natural for Ōgai to write the play on Nichiren as a result of, or rather, as a continuation of his effort to make a modified translation of Ibsen's play in a Japanese setting.

It is true that the German version in the Reclam edition is not quite 'faithful' to Ibsen's original, but it can still be called a translation. In Ōgai's *Bokushi*, however, many lines of the original text have disappeared, while other lines are interpreted very freely and simply by Ōgai. In fact Ōgai was a master of this kind 'comprehensive' translation, demonstrated superbly in *Sokkyō shijin* (1892-1901, published as a book in 1902), his 'translation' of Hans Christian Andersen's *Improvisator* (Nagashima Yōichi 1993: 203-88).

While Brand is arguing with the villagers, a woman rushes onto the scene and asks for help. She relates that she and her family live on the other shore of the fiord, but, due to the famine, her husband lost his temper in despair and killed one of their children. He is about to kill himself and maybe two other children as well, the woman continues. Hearing her desperate appeal, the provost says that he is relieved and fortunate, because the woman and her family do not belong to his parish. Consequently, he means that he does not need to

⁴ Citations from the original text are taken from Ibsen (1916). Page numbers are given after the citations. In German: «Got strich uns aus seinem Buch», p. 26.

help her. But Brand will help her. He is already standing in a boat ready to sail over the fiord, but he needs a man to help him in the boat with bailer and foresail. Nobody volunteers to join Brand because of the storm and the high waves in the fiord. At this juncture Agnes, the fiancée, steps forth and asks Ejnar, her bridegroom-to-be, to help Brand. But he hesitates and confesses that he doesn't dare. To that Agnes declares in great disappointment: «There is an ocean between you and me» (Mori Ōgai 1972a: 236).⁵ Then she turns towards Brand and tells him that she will go with him.

Before the villagers' eyes, Brand succeeds in crossing the fiord in spite of the storm. The villagers are very impressed with his courage and say to each other that they want him as their new priest.

The scene now changes to the opposite side of the fiord. The water is calm now. Both in the German version and in Ōgai's *Bokushi*, the second scene starts hereby. Brand comes out of the woman's house and contemplates the husband's suicide, and what kind of impact his violent action might have had on his children who have witnessed the bloodshed. Translating Brand's long monologue about the sin of the pitiful man, Ōgai uses the Buddhist term of *inga* (karmic cause and effect; *ibid.*: 239). Matters concerning the Christianity are wiped out again in Ōgai's text and rewritten in such a way that the Japanese version is easier to understand for the Japanese audience.

To a man who talks about how to help the remaining three people in the family, Brand says: «If you give everything but your life/ you should know that you haven't given anything» (*ibid.*: 243).⁶ Brand is still uncompromising. He thinks of how to rescue their soul and not of material help. Anyhow the man, on behalf of the villagers, asks Brand to become the new priest for the village. They now acknowledge him as a man of action and hope that he will give them spiritual guidance. But Brand refuses their request. He says that he has his work to do, his vocation. The man asks him the price of the work. The answer is: «My whole life» (*ibid.*: 247).⁷ Brand's ambition is great. He wishes to create a new man who is whole and pure (*ibid.*: 250).⁸

In this connection Brand mentions the following:

There is one thing you cannot give.
It's your inner life.
You cannot bind or change it.
You cannot stem the river of your vocation;

⁵ «Et verdenshav imellem os» (p. 47); «Ein Weltmeer trennt uns, mich und dich!» (p. 29). All translations from Japanese version, as well as from Ibsen's original text into English are mine.

⁶ «Hvis alt du gav foruden livet, / da vid, at du har intet givet» (p. 52). According to the Reclam edition: «Gibst alles du, doch nicht dein Leben, / So wisse, du hast nichts gegeben» (p. 32).

⁷ «Mit liv / i et og alt det er!» (p. 55). In the Reclam edition: «Wie mein Leben!» (p. 34).

⁸ «Mennesket jeg kækt har villet / skabe nyt og helt og rent; – / det er værket» (p. 57). In German: «Menschen hab' ich schaffen wollen, / Neu und ganz, nach Gottes Vildnis» (p. 35).

it just continues its way to the 'vault' of the sea (Ibsen 1916: 55).⁹

Here Ōgai uses the expression *makoto no ware* for «the inner life»; it seems a good solution. But for «the 'vault' of the sea», meaning 'the vast and blue sea', he chooses the expression *shōga no umi* («righteous karmic effect», «reward»), again a Buddhist term (Mori Ōgai 1972a: 248).

Brand is about to go, but he stops when he notices Agnes on the shore. She confesses that she heard the voice of God say: «Whether you would be saved or not / Do your work, the heavily responsible work / to populate this world» (*ibid.*: 252).¹⁰ But these lines are transformed in the Reclam edition as follows: the first line, «Whether you would be saved or not», is modified as «Whether you would win or shudder», and the keyword 'work' ('to do the heavily responsible work') is changed poetically to «vigorously to push forward towards the light». ¹¹ In this process of textual transformation one can witness a Nietzschean interpretation and paraphrasing of Ibsen's original text. The religious question is substituted by a Nietzschean philosophy of the strong. It would be problematic, if Ōgai's fascination of Ibsen's plays had been influenced by this kind of manipulation.

Brand is deeply moved by Agnes' sincere words. He answers as follows:

Inward, inward! That's the word!
The way goes thereto. That's the trace.
One's own heart, – that's the world,
newly created and ready for God's life:
There must die the vulture of one's own will,
there must the new Adam be born (Ibsen 1916: 59).¹²

«That's the word» is transformed to «it will win» in the German version, in a similar way as the previous example, as though what matters is a struggle between the strong and the weak. Likewise «ready for God's life» is changed to «the world with which we are confronted»; and «the new Adam» to «the new man». The cited six lines, however, are omitted by Ōgai. He hasn't even

⁹ «Ét ejes, som du ej kan skænke; / det er dit eget indre selv. / Du tør ej binde, tør ej lænke, / du tør ej stemme kaldets elv; – / den vil sin vej til havets hvælv» (p. 55). According to the Reclam edition: «Doch eines kannst du nie verschenken: / Dein Selbst, dein Ich, den heil'gen Dom; / Du darfst's nicht binden, nicht es lenken, / Nicht dämmen deines Lebens Strom. / Er schäuemt dahin und rauscht und schwillt, / Bis er im Meer die Sehnsucht stillt» (p. 34).

¹⁰ «Nu du frelses eller tabes; gør dit værk, det ansvarstunge; – / denne jord skal du befolke!» (p. 58).

¹¹ «Ob du siegest, ob du bedest, / Wag' es nur zum Licht zu dringen, / Dass du diese Welt belebst» (p. 36).

¹² «Indad; Indad! det er ordet! / Did går vejen. Det er sporet. / Eget hjerte, – det er kloden, / nyskabt og for Gudsliv moden; / der skal viljegribben dødes, / der den nye Adam fødes» (p. 59). In German: «Ja im innern, – da, da siegt es, / Wer dort kämpfet, der besiegt es; / Eignes Herz, das ist die Welt, / Die sich uns entgegenstellt. / Da soll Selbstsucht untergehn, / Da der neue Mensch erstehn» (p. 36).

tried to rewrite the lines. The last glint of Christianity symbolized by words like «God» and «Adam» is thus extinguished in Ōgai's *Bokushi*.

Ibsen's play was diluted and modified, not to say misunderstood, in this way, and Ōgai missed the opportunity to acquaint himself of Søren Kierkegaard's philosophy through Ibsen's text, because of the German edition which, in my opinion, was under the strong influence of the Nietzschean philosophy of 'Superhuman'.

In the meanwhile, Brand's mother arrives to visit him. They haven't seen each other for many years. The mother is now old and lonely; she wants to give her savings to her son, because he is the only heir she has. But he is leaving the country in order to pursue his heavenly vocation. She insists and tries to persuade him to take the money. Brand then reveals, in a rather naturalistic way, that he knows how his mother removed money from under her husband's deathbed, murmuring: «Well, that's all?!» (Mori Ōgai 1972a: 261).¹³ Brand maintains that his mother lost her son's heart and her own soul by acquiring the money. The mother says that her soul can be saved by Brand who has become a priest.

In this part of the original play, as well as in the German version, there is a long passage about soul-debt and the sin of Brand's mother. Brand is willing to pay for her soul-debt, but he in turn claims that she should atone for her sin by herself.¹⁴

Ōgai has reduced this passage to a minimum by ignoring the above-mentioned discussion about soul-debt and sin, as well as by omitting those underplots which play important roles in the following acts in the original drama. For Ōgai *Bokushi* is an independent play, so it should be concluded in a reasonable and understandable way within the frame of the second act of the original play.

After this scene Ōgai translates very freely, almost rewriting the following passage: Brand imposes the condition that his mother should abandon the whole fortune for the benefit of God. But she rejects this. The uncompromising Brand declares that he can no longer consider her as his mother. Due to the lack of the discussion of soul-debt, sin and salvation in Ōgai's *Bokushi*, this scene ends up in a very melodramatic way. Ōgai makes the mother say that she will go home in order to weep while holding her fortune in arms, like a weeping mother embracing her sick child (*ibid.*: 262).

After having seen his mother leave, Brand approaches Agnes. This final scene is shortened so remarkably in Ōgai's *Bokushi* that it can no longer be called a translation but a synopsis, if not a manipulation. The sequence of lines are changed drastically, too. Brand says to Agnes who wishes to follow him

¹³ «Så det var alt!» (p. 65); «Was! Nicht mehr?» (p. 41).

¹⁴ «Din sjælegæld din søn skal klare; / men for din synd må selv du svare» (p. 69); «Ich löse dich von Schuld ... / Für deine Sünde stehst selbst» (p. 43).

that the will – the strong will is the only thing that counts; the will makes one free (*ibid.*: 263).¹⁵

It is getting darker in the meanwhile. Ejnar, the artist appears on the scene and tries to win back Agnes' heart. But Agnes is firmly convinced in her decision. She repeats the words: «Between you and me there is an ocean». Hearing this, Brand warns her by saying: «Remember, I make a very harsh demand. I require All or Nothing» (*ibid.*: 264-65).¹⁶ Ejnar tries to persuade Agnes to stay away from Brand who has just told her to choose and has left the scene. Ejnar urges her to choose between storm and calmness, between go and stay, between joy and grief, between night and morning, and between death and life. Agnes chooses night because she can thus expect the dawn to break through the night and the death. With these words Agnes follows Brand, leaving Ejnar alone.

Ōgai's play *Bokushi* ends here, after Agnes has made her free and existential choice as an independent person.

4. The original play continues as follows: Brand's mother soon dies without receiving the last sacraments from her son. Brand decides to stay in the village. Agnes becomes Brand's wife and gives birth to a baby who, unfortunately, succumbs to the harsh climate and dies. Completely exhausted, both physically and mentally, Agnes follows the baby into death. No matter what happens, Brand keeps his uncompromising attitude. For him the choice is between either to get everything thanks to God's will or to lose everything in this world. Shortly after the sad event of losing Agnes and the baby, he builds a church in the village spending all the money he has inherited from his mother. On the very day of the dedication ceremony, he conceives a grave doubt and comes to the conclusion that the salvation of one's soul doesn't come from the beautifully built church, but from the temple of one's own heart. Brand throws the key to the new church into a river, and, after having proclaimed that the real church is to be found in the great nature, climbs up the mountain covered by snow and ice in order to see an ice-church.¹⁷ In the end he vanishes in an avalanche of snow. Through a crash of thunder one hears a voice announce: «He is the god of benevolence».¹⁸ The voice is in fact an answer to Brand's question of whether the god is a judge of one's sin.

Ibsen's play *Brand* is a grand poetical drama, too grand and long to be performed often. To my knowledge the most recent performance of the play was staged by the National Theatre in London in 1978, but never in Japan. As seen from the above, Ōgai was fascinated by Brand's uncompromising spirit

¹⁵ «Det er viljen, som det gælder!» (p. 73); «Nein der Wille ist's, dem gilt es» (p. 46).

¹⁶ «Husk, at jeg er streng i kravet, / fordrer intet eller alt» (p. 75); «Doch ich bin im Fordern strenge, / Alles oder nichts verlang' ich» (p. 47).

¹⁷ «Iskirken» (p. 238); «Eiskirche» (p. 157).

¹⁸ «Han er *deus caritatis*» (p. 256); «Er ist *deus caritatis*» (p. 159).

and everlasting search for his ideals, not as a Christian priest, but as a strong-willed priest, a man with religious convictions, a kind of superhuman in a Nietzschean sense. We must not forget, however, that Ōgai was fascinated by Agnes too. Her decision to follow Brand was made by herself. It was a free, unconventional and brave choice made at a decisive moment of her life. Ōgai might have been moved deeply by her independent and existential choice. For that reason it was quite natural for Ōgai to end the play at the very moment of her decision. But in both cases Ōgai was only interested in the psychology of the strong will and not in Christian faith and theology.

5. In the beginning Ōgai misunderstood Ibsen by considering him to be a naturalist. But the encounter with Brand and Agnes changed his views on Ibsen. *Bokushi*, his version of Ibsen's *Brand*, however, was made in the same way as *Sokkyō shijin*, his translation of Hans Christian Andersen's *Improvisator*. *Sokkyō shijin* is usually called 'translation', but the original work is modified and even manipulated to such a degree that it should rather be called an 'adaptation' or 'adapted translation'. So is *Bokushi*.

Bokushi is a good example of one of the assertions Walter Benjamin has made with regard to translation. Explaining Benjamin's assertion, Paul de Man (1986: 82) writes: «You cannot translate the translation; once you have a translation you cannot translate it any more. You can translate only an original».¹⁹ Ōgai translated Ibsen's *Brand* from the German-edition into *Bokushi*. But this work has not, as we have seen, much to do with Ibsen's original play. It can, at the utmost, be considered as a model, or a preliminary study and a source of inspiration for Ōgai's own play *The Preaching Nichiren*.

II. 'Eros' Disappeared: Translation of *Creditors* by August Strindberg

1. Ōgai's Translation

As I had once made many translations, I was given the title of 'translator'. By giving me this title, some people, consciously or unconsciously, tried to suggest that I was unable to create an original work, while others said openly that I couldn't. And then I began to publish my own works, but they were criticized and labelled as amateurish due to the fact that I didn't confess myself in them or rather that I hadn't a self to confess at all. Amongst the reviews of my works, there were of course a few which contained detailed criticism. When I wrote a philosophical religious dialogue, I was told that it was a work without excitement. When I described a crime realistically, I was then told that it was a mere detective story. In short, none of my works were regarded as worthy. To my relief, however, they said that my translations, exceptionally, were good enough. But the other day a fearless critic declared that Kimura's (*i.e.* my) translations were full of mistakes. His criticism was a great hit. Even those who

¹⁹ Cf. Walter Benjamin (1969: 75): «Thus translation, ironically, transplants the original into a more definitive linguistic realm since it can no longer be displaced by a secondary rendering».

tried to defend me said that my translations obviously weren't mistranslations, but they were still poor and unskillful. In the end none of my writings appeared worthy any longer. Now, I have got a new title. The title of 'mistranslator'. Since last summer one critic after another made a mock of 'mistranslator' Kimura in various newspapers (Mori Ōgai 1972b: 545-46).

Mori Ōgai's translation was a highly intellectual act. He tried to pierce into the depth of Western culture using the language as a pipeline. Through this pipeline he led new energy into the Japanese culture in order to activate (or 'modernize') it.

Since the time of *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*, the keynote of Japanese culture has always been 'translation' in a broad sense; especially in the beginning of every new epoch in Japanese cultural history, a new cultural era has inevitably been accompanied by 'translation'.

In the Meiji period, however, the object of 'translation' became the very field of the Western civilization, and our Mori Ōgai, the child of the epoch, was sent abroad to Germany, riding on the wave of 'translation' called 'Civilization and Enlightenment'. While studying hygienics, Ōgai learned about Western literature, philosophy and aesthetics, and thus made a profound study of the essence of Western civilization. On returning home in 1888 after four years' stay in Germany, he introduced to Japan some important aspects of Western culture, but his greatest achievement, in my opinion, was his effort to perfect the translation of literary works as an art of language, and at the same time his contribution to the innovation of the modern Japanese language.

Strictly speaking, the renowned translator Ōgai in fact was a kind of mistranslator. The word 'mistranslation', however, should not be taken literally here but in terms of a theory of translation stating that no translation can be equivalent to the original; it can at most be similar to the original.

We know that even Ōgai made simple mistakes in his translations. He makes Kimura, the protagonist of the above-mentioned short story *Dengakudōfu* (1912), boastfully say: «I never make those mistakes which the 'frogs' [*i.e.* noisy critics] are able to find». Although Ōgai could have made small mistakes, he was at the same time quite confident that he never made any essential mistakes at the crucial points. The 'frogs' certainly could point out his careless mistakes as many as they cared to find, but Ōgai nevertheless remained unhurt. He didn't care about trivial details, because his main concern lays somewhere else.

Translating Western literature, Ōgai was living in 'Another world' called 'the West' where he could find his own identity. He was staring at 'the imaginative figure' of himself through a mirror called 'the West'. Translating a literary work, 'the imaginative figure' might appear to Ōgai not only as a protagonist of the work, but also as a narrator, even as an author of the work. It wouldn't necessarily be a figure, either. It might be some imaginative scenery in 'the West'. Every detail that passed across his consciousness and thus

touched upon his senses bore some visible traces in his translations as well as in his own writings. These traces themselves were nothing but imagery, but for Ōgai they did exist as real figures and sceneries. At this point it was impossible for him to make any mistakes in his translations.

Roughly speaking, one can't make mistake in a translation, accepting the fact that every translation is an interpretation. This is true due to the fact that a 'misunderstanding' is a kind of understanding, too.

Ōgai's translations, however, were not merely a conscious or unconscious manipulation of the original work, they were also an adaptation of the original work by using the tool called the Japanese language. They were in reality products of acculturation. In this process, besides those conspicuous mistakes due to the translator's carelessness and his insufficient knowledge of the Western language, one can inevitably observe certain 'distortion' of the original work necessitated by his eagerness to find as adequate as possible expressions and by his search for the equivalent of the original work.

'Distortion' in the process of translation is often caused and determined partly by the translator's cultural background, and partly by the possibility and the limitations of expressions in the target language, *i.e.* the language into which the work is translated. These problems are obviously beyond the ability of a translator.

A translator cannot be free of his own 'prejudices', either. We can be sure, that the translator at work is not aware of them. Or rather, we are only able to notice those of the translator's prejudices which he himself is unconscious of.

We can say that it is in 'misunderstanding', 'distortion', and 'prejudices' that idiosyncrasies of the target language with its cultural background, as well as with the translator's own personal idiosyncrasies are clearly reflected as a concentrated expression of the sense of 'divergence'. The translator's 'misunderstanding', 'distortion', and 'prejudices' expose how the works in foreign language and their cultural background are interpreted, how the differences between the two cultures are recognized and/or conceived, what his reaction has been when confronted with a foreign culture, and finally, how he has handled these differences.

2. *Creditors* by A. Strindberg

Creditors is one of the most exciting of Strindberg's short plays. It was written in 1888, the same year as *Miss Julie*, and the same year as Mori Ōgai returned home from Europe. At the time of writing it Strindberg was 39, and Ōgai 28. Strindberg's first marriage – to Siri von Essen, whom he had once adored – had finally crashed. They were still living under the same roof in a house just outside Copenhagen, but Strindberg no longer considered her his wife. Before writing *Creditors* he had finished his autobiographical novel *A Fool's Defense*, based on his relations with Siri and her former husband, Baron Carl Gustav Wrangel. Both in the novel and in *Creditors* he called the

former husband Gustav, Baron Wrangel's second name, and it is obvious that the play grew directly out of this book.

The substance of *Creditors* is serious, but the tone is ironical and the whole work reflects the cynicism of Strindberg's outlook at this time. The dialogue is sharp but on occasions comical, too. Strindberg satirizes people not from cruelty, but out of his despair of mankind's wickedness and folly. He caricatures the tragedy of life itself. *Creditors* is thus called a tragi-comedy, but Ōgai removed this characterization from his translation. Needless to say, Ōgai's translation is too serious and not at all comical.

Gustav, a schoolmaster, travelling under an assumed name and thus concealing his identity, befriends Adolf, the husband of his former wife, Tekla, while she is away. Adolf is somewhat weak and has to use crutches. Gustav decides to confuse Adolf psychologically. He eloquently convinces his victim that Tekla has devoured his creativity as an artist, his talent and his manhood. Gustav who has the intention of revenging himself on Tekla, manipulates Adolf and advises him not to indulge in amorous excesses in six months, because he has the first symptoms of epilepsy. Gustav systematically undermines Adolf's self-confidence. He even tries to make Adolf jealous by telling him a rumour that Tekla is keeping company with young fellows. Adolf makes up his mind to confront her. Meanwhile Tekla comes back to the hotel where they are staying, and converses with Adolf while Gustav overhears them at the door. Brainwashed by Gustav, Adolf misunderstands everything Tekla says. Later, the scene changes and now it is Adolf who overhears a conversation between Gustav and Tekla, in which she scorns Adolf and finally agrees to carry on an affair with Gustav. Adolf who has been jealous and on the verge of suffering a nervous breakdown, dies from the shock of the betrayal. Gustav's revenge on the amorous woman is successfully carried out, and the creditor has cancelled his note of hand by regaining his lost honour.

3. *Saiki*: Ōgai's Translation of *Creditors*

Saiki was published in 1909 when Ōgai was 47 years old. He had then been married for seven years to his second wife Shige who was 19 years younger than him. *Saiki* is a good example of Ōgai's method of translation. As is the case of most of his other translations of Western literature, Ōgai made the original play *Creditors* into his own work. The content and idea itself in the play is certainly Strindberg's, but its form and language is unmistakably Ōgai's. Without regard to what kind of works or whose works Ōgai translated, his translations always became his own due to his highly stylized language. But in *Saiki*, in addition to these common features, there are some peculiar aspects of his way of translation. As already mentioned before, they are a product of his (mis)understanding in general, and to some extent a result of his effort to acculturate Western ideas by making the content of the play understandable and ac-

ceptable in a Japanese setting. In the following, I would like to mention only a few examples of his peculiar way of translation.²⁰

Adolf has abandoned painting and is now working on a sculpture modelling a female nude. Looking at it, Gustav notices immediately that the sculpture resembles Tekla. Adolf metaphorically explains as follows: «It's like someone. It's extraordinary how that woman is in my body, just as I'm in hers» (Strindberg 1960: 13-14). Gustav, however, interprets his explanation concretely, even obscenely, saying (in my translation) that: «The fact of the latter (*i.e.* Adolf is in her body) is not so extraordinary». But Ōgai has translated these passages quite extra-ordinarily as follows: «Adolf: 'It resembles someone. It's extraordinary that my body not only is imbued with her, but also is in her body'. Gustav: 'It's not extraordinary that your wife's body is in your belly'» (Mori Ōgai 1972*d*: 11).²¹ Ōgai's translation is very interesting here. First of all, neither Adolf nor Gustav mentioned Adolf's wife, but Ōgai makes Gustav say «your wife» with the result that Gustav's allusion is spoiled. Furthermore, ignoring the word «the latter» in the original, «my body» and «her body» are exchanged by mistake (or maybe on purpose?). Although Ōgai uses the word «belly» in his translation, he seems not to have caught the obscene tone in Gustav's expression. But I believe that Ōgai has manipulated the expression, precisely because he has understood its point.

Gustav explains what he means with «the latter» by asking Adolf whether he knows what transfusion is, and addresses him as follows: «Well, you seem to have bled yourself. But looking at this figure I understand several things I only suspected before. You have made love to her passionately» (Strindberg 1960: 14). Gustav's explanation, however, doesn't convey any meaning according to Ōgai's translation. So Ōgai has to add an explanatory sentence which of course is not to be found in the original. It reads as follows: «You have poured all your blood into your wife, and in exchange, the shadow of your wife is now in your hollow belly» (Mori Ōgai 1972*d*: 11).

This is a typical example of Ōgai's 'distortion'. Gustav talks about blood transfusion as a preparation for the subject 'amorous excesses between Adolf and Tekla'. He is talking about 'blood', but, in reality, he is suggesting 'sperm'. But Adolf, so naïve as he is, boasting tells Gustav the following episode (in my translation): «When she (Tekla) was giving birth to our child, I felt the pains in my own belly». After having talked about 'Adolf being in his

²⁰ As for a detailed analysis of the subject, see the second chapter of Nagashima Yōichi (1993).

²¹ According to the Swedish original (Strindberg 1954: 89): «Adolf (slött). Ja, men den liknar någon! Det är märkvärdigt att denna kvinna finns i min kropp, liksom jag i hennes! / Gustav. Det senare är inte märkvärdigt». According to the German translation (*Id.* 1902: 56): «Adolf [stumpf]. Ja, aber sie gleicht jemandem! Es ist merkwürdig, dass dieses Weib in meinem Körper ist, wie ich in ihrem! Gustav. Das letztere ist nicht merkwürdig». According to the English translation (*Id.* 1960: 13-14): «Adolf, *flatly*. Yes, but all the same it's like someone. It's extraordinary how that woman is in my body, just as I'm in hers. / Gustav. Not really so extraordinary».

wife's body', 'transfusion', and 'Tekla's giving birth', Gustav finally condemns Adolf saying that Adolf has the first symptom of epilepsy, because he indulges in amorous excesses, so he should practise completely sexual abstinence for six months at least (*ibid.*: 12).

All these erotic but at the same time grotesque and black-humoured lines are translated stoically, colourlessly, and too seriously by Ōgai, as if he had established a censorship. But this doesn't mean that Ōgai was indifferent to voluptuousness. On the contrary, he was interested in it and aware of it all the time. In the scene where Gustav tries to seduce Tekla by telling her that the sculpture Adolf is working on is «just like her», Tekla answers him «(cynically) In your view». But Ōgai translates the word «cynically» as «imagining something obscene»!²²

To illustrate Ōgai's efforts to Japanize the original, a few more examples should be pointed out:

– At present Tekla is an author, but in the beginning it was Adolf who had to teach her how «to spell». And now – Adolf says – he's forgotten bits of «grammar». Ōgai translates «to spell» as *kanazukai* (lit.: «using of *kana*»), and «grammar» as *te-ni-wo-ha* (lit.: «using of particles»).

– As it was almost impossible to find an equivalent colloquial style in Japanese suitable for 'the New Women' in Scandinavia, Ōgai chose a geisha-like style for Tekla: *Ma sokoe chotto okakenasaiyo. Nanno kanjō nanka gaisuru monokane* («Sit down for a moment. You won't offend me»; Mori Ōgai 1972d: 61).

– Likewise, Gustav at times talks like a samurai in Ōgai's translation: *Korewa itamiiru* («You flatter me»; *ibid.*).

– Ōgai even uses a *kambun*-expression, *hitoshiku ryōnin wo omou koi* («to love two men at the same time»; *ibid.*: 49), or a genuine idiom like *gishin anki o shōzuru* («Your imagination is so distraught by fear that you see what has never existed»; *ibid.*: 43).²³ An idiom is by definition a compact and precise expression, but at the same time it has a vast cultural background behind it so that the original meaning, no matter how universal it may be, will inevitably be modified. The Adolf who says the line in Japanese is no longer the Adolf created by Strindberg.

– Adolf and Tekla are quarrelling over whether they should leave the hotel right now and go home. Commanding her to come with him, Adolf tells her: «Are you aware that you are my wife?». Tekla answers him: «Are you aware that you are my husband?». Then Adolf replies: «Yes, there's a difference between the one and the other» (Strindberg 1960: 36). The last sentence, however, is translated by Ōgai very explanatorily and didactically as follows:

²² «Cyniskt» in the Swedish original, and «cynisch» in the German translation by Emil Schering.

²³ This idiom originally is a citation from *Liezi*.

«A wife should do as her husband says; it should not be so that a husband does as his wife says» (Mori Ōgai 1972*d*: 51).

– Tekla says that «to love is to give», but Ōgai translates the same line as follows: «to love is to make a concession in order to satisfy your partner» (*ibidem*). Ōgai's philosophy of love is expressed in this sentence. It is superfluous to comment that this is quite different from Strindberg's view on 'love as a struggle'.

4. Instead of a Conclusion

A translated work is always biased and manipulated more or less from the start. It can be compared with the well-known phenomenon: you are standing in front of a mirror; you can see your own figure in it; you raise your, say, right hand. The figure in the mirror does the same movement, but it raises his left hand, always.

Ōgai's translation of Strindberg's play is also biased and manipulated as we have already seen. Inevitably Ōgai misunderstood some important aspects of the play, but he did more than that; he practised a censorship of his own. It was so masterly carried out, *i.e.* his translation was so fluent and understandable for Japanese readers and concordant with Japanese cultural tradition that Strindberg's authorship was distorted considerably. Strindberg in Ōgai's translation is no longer Strindberg as we know him. Ōgai's peculiar way of retelling the original work can possibly be regarded as 'Japanization', but is it still an act of translation?

The question sounds very naive, but it is very important, too. In our age of 'internationalization', attention has often been focussed on the problems of misunderstanding and prejudice between different cultures. And these problems are, in my opinion, tightly connected with the phenomenon of 'translation' in a broader sense. 'Translation' can be a cultural policy, even a political action. But 'translation' can also be a solution just like a struggle with an idiom in a foreign language; knowing that it is impossible to translate, one cannot help but be provoked into translating it.

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