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journal or publication title	Japan review : journal of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies
volume	24
page range	85-104
year	2012-01-01
その他の言語のタイトル	「文学的翻訳」から「文化的翻訳」へ : 森?外とイプセン劇
URL	http://doi.org/10.15055/00000185

Japan Review 24 (2012): 85–104

From "Literary Translation" to "Cultural Translation": Mori Ōgai and the Plays of Henrik Ibsen

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Mori Ōgai (1862–1922), one of the most prominent authors and translators in Japan, translated four plays by Henrik Ibsen into Japanese: *Brand* (1866) in 1903, *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896) in 1909, *Ghosts* (1881) in 1911, and finally *A Doll's House* (1879) in 1913. In *Bokushi*, Ōgai's translation of the second act of *Brand*, he wiped away the matters concerning Christianity in such a way that the essence of the original text was distorted and manipulated. In his translation of *John Gabriel Borkman* Ōgai changed his translation strategy. Although the central ideas in the play were somewhat blurred, there was no distinct omission or manipulation in Ōgai's version. His critical comments on the original play, however, were recast and placed outside the translated text, namely in his own novel *Seinen* (1910). Translating *Ghosts* as *Yūrei*, Ōgai used the same translation strategy as in *John Gabriel Borkman*, but this time he narrowed the focus on the concept of 'ghosts'—'*gengangere*' in Norwegian, meaning 'something that comes back,' which corresponded to his evoked interest in 'past' and 'history' in general. My paper elaborates on his challenging way of 'cultural translation' with special reference to the transition from 'literary' to 'cultural' translation.

Keywords: Mori Ōgai, *John Gabriel Borkman*, *Yūrei*, *Seinen*, *AS IF*, *Hyaku monogatari*, Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House, Ghosts*, Cultural Translation

Mori Ōgai 森鷗外 (1862–1922) was one of the most prominent authors and translators in the modern literature of Japan. Not only in his authorship but also in his life as a whole, "translation" played a crucial role. "Translation" was a source of his creativity due to the manipulative power it wields in the process of transformation. This paper analyzes Ōgai's translation of Henrik Ibsen's two plays, *John Gabriel Borkman* and *Ghosts*, to elaborate on his changing translation strategies as reflected in his exercises in "cultural translation." Translation in this paper is conceived as a linguistic and literary process involving a transfer of a text from one context to another through reshaping and rewriting, while "translation" (in inverted commas) is a metaphor for the process of intercultural transformation, including manipulation and hybridization of the original. "Cultural translation" is thus to be understood as a culturally biased "translation," a cultural appropriation or an acculturation of

the original, the process of which necessarily contains interpretations, misunderstandings, prejudices and violence.[1]

Maihime and the Translation of Cultural Experiences

Mori Rintarō, the young Ōgai, was sent to Germany by the Japanese Imperial Army for four years from August 1884 to September 1888 to study hygiene. Upon returning home, he wrote the renowned short story *Maihime* 舞姫 (1890), in which he succeeded discreetly in rendering part of his invaluable experiences in Europe into a fictive short story for Japanese readers. A genuine manipulation took place. Ōgai used his own European experiences as the original text and "translated" it afterwards. The original was rearranged and transformed because of the cultural differences between the locations in which they arose. This process of interpreting and giving expression to the hitherto unheard of experiences of a Japanese young man may be called "cultural translation." The person who once sailed Westward was no longer the same person on his way back to the East. That person too had now been "translated" culturally. *Maihime* represented an innovative and transformative space where the process of the young Ōgai's European experiences was scrutinized and then elaborated on. His encounter with the West was unique and per definition "foreign" in both time and space. The act of "translating" his experiences, moreover, necessitated a renewal of language and style as well as an adjustment of the cultural background of the West to the Japanese environment. The word *maihime*, for example, is very easily rendered as "a dancing girl," but the connotations and the images conjured by the two words draw on different cultural location and times. In writing *Maihime*, Ōgai was trying to examine the translatability of the original "text" of his precious experiences during his stay in Germany. Ōgai must have had his reasons for the manipulation, distortion, and omission of some of the factual parts of his experiences in the fictionalization process but, fact or fiction, he had to invent for Japanese readers a new language, a new voice to survey and articulate the hitherto unknown experiences in Japanese settings. Another kind of adjustment and adaptation was required, and that was deeply affected by Japanese literary and cultural tradition.

At this stage, Ōgai still used the old-fashioned *bungo* 文語 style in his writings, but it was a somewhat modified, refined and updated style of the so-called *gabuntai* 雅文体. As was also the case with the classical *bungo* style, *gabuntai* made no distinction between the voice of the narrator and that of the characters described. The readers get no other impression than that the whole story is told by one voice only, that of the narrator. The author pays no attention at all to the idiosyncratic usage of language by the characters, men or women, young or old, Japanese or German. The characters' original experiences were inevitably recast in the narrator's retelling of the story of *Maihime*. During this process, consciously or unconsciously, manipulation took place.[2]

The Improvisator and Cultural Translation

The afore mentioned *gabuntai* was quite efficient as long as Ōgai used it in order to narrate and recount stories which could be characterized as "romantic" in the sense of remote in time

1 My understanding of "cultural translation" is based on the observations of scholars such as Bassnett and Lefevere 1990; Bassnett 1998; Iser 1996; Iser 2000; Venuti 1992; Venuti 1998.

2 See Nagashima 2005, pp. 13–26.

and space, or stories about an exotic culture. Hans Christian Andersen's *The Improvisator* (1835) was a good example of this. Ōgai started to translate the work as *Sokkyō shijin* 即興詩人 in 1892, two years after *Maihime*, and it took him nine years before completing the translation in 1901. He used the same style and the solo narrating voice as in *Maihime*, paying no heed to the original, which was a first-person novel composed in different voices.[3] Translating one variety of foreign literature, however, Ōgai was faced with a new challenge. It was no longer his encounter with European civilization that was to be interpreted and explained—or, as I propose, manipulated and "translated" into Japanese. Ōgai, the translator, was now confronted with European culture and its tradition, inevitably present as an undercurrent in every European work. He was forced to perform a new kind of manipulation. After all, some European cultural phenomena were untranslatable, while others were, according to his judgment, incomprehensible for Japanese readers. This manipulation, for instance, can be seen in his omission of the passages concerning the essence of Christianity; they were simply treated as foreign religious dogma and ritual. The scenes with passionate, erotic overtones were circumscribed and played down. The European atmosphere of the original work was distorted in favor of "Japanizing" the original, the better to render his translation readable. The image of Europe Ōgai had created in his translation was nothing but a quasi Europe, which, fortunately for Japanese readers, was exotic and fascinating. A kind of Occidentalism was thus established by Ōgai in the last decade of the nineteenth century, as Japan pursued a path of relentless modernization.

Cultural Translation of Ibsen's Plays

Around the turn of the century, the latest contemporary European ideas were introduced into Japan. Henrik Ibsen was representative of the European intellectual elite at this time. A wide range of Japanese writers and intellectuals were keenly interested in his works, and Ōgai too translated his romantic play *Brand* (1866) into Japanese as *Bokushi* 牧師. In fact, he only translated the second act, which contains the highlights of the whole play, and is the most dramatic part. As the title of Ōgai's version reveals, he was not ignorant of the fact that the play portrays an idealistic Christian priest named Brand, who struggles with his idealism in trying to establish a truly Christian community in a Norwegian fjord. Brand has a great religious vocation in life; he is a man of "all or nothing." Ōgai's text shows, however, no traces of Christianity at all. Although he refers to *kami* 神, or god, in his translation, this is not specified as the God of Christianity. The essence of the original text is thus distorted and manipulated. Ōgai omits not only matters relating to Christianity, but also sentences, passages, and even whole paragraphs he deems superfluous; he freely adds his own explanations and interpretations. He uses the same kind of translating strategy as in *Sokkyō shijin*, so that, in this translation too, the Christian elements in the original are once again distorted and diluted into a general religious faith. In other words, Ōgai practices cultural "translation" within the frame of "literary" translation.

The original text of Ibsen's *Brand* is written in verse. In order to convey the poetical expression of the original to his Japanese audience, Ōgai employed the *bungo* style using seven

3 For a detailed analysis, see Nagashima 1993, including the abridged English version "Beyond translation: Mori Ōgai's translation or his creative (mis)understanding." See also Nagashima 1997; Nagashima 1999; Nagashima 2008; and Wixted 2009–2010.

and five syllables alternatively, a traditional Japanese device to evoke a poetical mood in a text. This style he also used in his own play from 1902, *Tamakushige futari Urashima* 玉篋両浦嶼. He deploys the approach again in *Nichiren shōnin tsujizeppō* 日蓮聖人辻説法 (1904), which can be considered a natural extension of the strategy he used in translating *Brand* in a Japanese setting. Here he locates Nichiren (1222–1282), an equally uncompromising, strong, militant priest from the Kamakura period, as protagonist.[4]

Ōgai thus translates the central part of *Brand* into Japanese using the same language and style as in *Maihime* and *Sokkyō shijin*, and succeeds in conveying Ibsen's ideas to a greater or lesser extent. But the very newest ideas such as individualism, New Women and women's liberation were hard to explain and express using the *bungo* or *gabun* styles. Individual voices, especially those of women, required a new style and a new language. Ōgai had not yet found the colloquial *kōgo* 口語 style of the modern Japanese language. He seemed to be aware of the problem he faced, and he too, along with other writers of the time, began to experiment in writing in *kōgo* style in order to create a new literary language inspired by colloquial Japanese.

After the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, Ōgai gradually changed his *bungo* style into the colloquial *kōgo*. This process took place slowly from 1902 to 1909, and from 1909 he writes both his own works and his translations exclusively in *kōgo*. By adapting the *kōgo* style, Ōgai changed his narrative stance. He could now have as many distinct voices in his story as he wanted, enabling him to present and depict individual characters with all their idiosyncrasies. Accordingly, his translations attained a new quality, especially the translations of plays, which per definition consist of speeches. Furthermore, the use of *kōgo* style enabled him to keep pace with the latest Western ideas, discuss and comment on them without rewriting them, as had been the case while he had been using *bungo* style. In sum, *kōgo* made him contemporary.[5]

John Gabriel Borkman

Ibsen died in 1906, which evoked, or rather revived, much interest in his works in Japan. Japanese writers and critics of the naturalistic school established an Ibsen Society in 1907, where they read Ibsen's plays and discussed his thoughts on the new age. Not only the naturalists but also Tsubouchi Shōyō 坪内逍遥 (1859–1935) and Ōgai were deeply involved in the Ibsen boom. 1909 was the year when Osanai Kaoru 小山内薫 (1881–1928) launched the *jiyū gekijo* 自由劇場 theatre as one of the first modern theatres to perform Western plays in Japanese translation. For the opening performance, he selected Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896), and Ōgai was requested to translate it. The performance at the Yūrakuza 有楽座 theater in Tokyo was in many respects a sensation.

Without knowing much about the visual representation of the play such as the appearance of the characters, their costumes and the interior of a Norwegian home, the Japanese actors, almost all of them *kabuki* actors, played both the male and the female roles. Actresses were yet to appear because of the conventions of the time. What the audience saw on the stage of the Yūrakuza was thus far removed from the scene Ibsen had created. Still, the

4 Nagashima 2004, pp. 197–206.

5 See Nagashima 2000 and 2001. For a more general discussion of translation in the period of Japan's modernization, see Levy 2011, pp. 1–12.

audience could at least listen to Ibsen's ideas through the speeches of the characters (when the actors remembered the lines), and the audiences responded with excitement.[6] Although the performance was clumsy and the audience misunderstood some of the messages in the play, as I will elaborate later, their excitement was real.[7] The performance of *John Gabriel Borkman* ジョン・ガブリエル・ボルクマン, one of Ibsen's last plays, became a starting signal for modern Japanese theatre. Ōgai's translation was itself, in my view, a sensation.

i) Changing Strategy of Translation

In the process of translating *John Gabriel Borkman*, Ōgai changed his strategy. The translation generally speaking was rather good. He tried to be as faithful as possible to the original (German) version, and this time he only made a few mistakes. One of them was the fault of the German version he had used. Of what sort of errors was Ōgai, then, guilty? What follows is a selection. In the first act, for example, he translated a line of Ella Rentheim's as follows: "*Ano hito no tegami ni wa ano hito no hara ga sokkuri utsutte iru*."[8] "*Ano hito*" should be translated here as "*anata*" since it is a reference to Mrs. Borkman. Again, in a stage direction in the second act, Ōgai has Borkman place his hand on Foldal's knee instead of his arm. In the same scene, Borkman says: "*Mō yokka no hi ga areba.*"[9] The original eight days are here reduced to "*yokka*," four days. Ella Rentheim's expression in the original Norwegian version "*før jeg går bort* " means "before I pass away."[10] It is mistranslated in the German version as "*eh'ich von hinnen gehe*."[11] Ōgai reproduces the mistake in writing "*koko o tatō to omotte imasu*."[12] In the third act, Ōgai has Mrs. Borkman raise her elbow instead of her hand. Ōgai also interprets "*sie*" wrongly in the following example: "*Erhard. Ja, siehst Du denn nicht, wie herrlich sie ist!* "[13] The feminine "*sie*" cannot refer to "life," which in German is the neuter, *das Leben*; it refers to Mrs. Wilton. Note that the English version reads: "Erhart. Yes. Don't you see how lovely she is!"[14]

Compared with Ōgai's previous translations of, say, *Bokushi*, which was more or less arbitrary, his *John Gabriel Borkman* was faithful. He did not explicitly eliminate Western elements like Christianity; he did not implement a simple Japanization of the original text, either. In brief, Ōgai did not strive to make the original his own; nor did he borrow the ideas from the play in order to write his own play, as was the case of *Nichiren shōnin tsujizeppō*.

Ōgai, the translator, was ever faithful to Ibsen's original in trying repeatedly to explain the meaning of each of the characters' speeches. In his version of *John Gabriel Borkman*,

6 See Akiba 1956, pp. 140–60; Ochi 1971, pp. 480–92.
7 This can easily be compared to the excitement and the tremendous influence which *Sokkyō shijin*, Ōgai's translation of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Improvisator*, had created and extended over young writers and poets in Japan, even though his translation was more an adaptation, if not a mistranslation. See Nagashima 1993, pp. 203–272; Nagashima 2005, pp. 41–79.
8 *Ōgai zenshū* 1972a, p. 206. Ōgai's translation was first serialized in *Kokumin shinbun* 国民新聞 from July to September 1901, and then published as a book by Gahōsha in November 1909. *Ōgai zenshū* 鷗外全集 is based on this version.
9 *Ōgai zenshū* 1972a, p. 234.
10 Ibsen 1914b, p. 207.
11 Ibsen 1903b, p. 139.
12 *Ōgai zenshū* 1972a, p. 262.
13 Ibsen 1903b, p. 157.
14 *Oxford Ibsen* 1977, p. 218.

there is an abundance of words, which makes it much longer than the original. He appears here more like a serious, but straightforward translator whose primary aim is to convey with accuracy the meaning of the original. Kobori Keiichirō 小堀桂一郎, an authority on Ōgai, maintains that Ōgai's role in the historical and sensational performance of *John Gabriel Borkman* was merely that of translator and that Ōgai, both at the time of his translation and afterwards, was not as absorbed in Ibsen's plays as when he had been working on *Brand*.[15] Certainly, Ōgai did not use his "red pen" while translating *John Gabriel Borkman*, but he extracted stimulating themes from the original, and further developed them in his own works, placing different emphases on different elements. And Ōgai did it more or less with discretion. Those typical Ibsenian themes, such as the free individual, "the individual of autonomy," and the new woman, were reorganized in a new context and discussed in a new light outside of the translated text; not by Ōgai the translator, but by Ōgai the writer. Ōgai assumed the mask of a new type of translator, and, as a result, he became a new type of writer.

In using the *bungo* style, Ōgai the translator had previously been able to control the voices of all the characters in the Western piece he had been working on. But now, using the *kōgo* style as his medium of expression, Ōgai merged his role as a fully controlling translator with that of omnipresent narrator. As the new *kōgo*-deploying translator, he allowed all his characters their own individual voices while he hid himself behind the narrator. In this way, Ōgai, the translator, lost his dominant position in the course of the narrative. Instead, he was now able to play as many roles as there were characters.

ii) Transforming the Original

Many scholars have already examined how Ōgai utilized the performance of *John Gabriel Borkman* on 27 and 28 November 1909 in his novel *Seinen* 青年 (1910–1911).[16] In the novel, Ibsen's thoughts are transmitted through a writer called Fuseki 拊石, Ōgai's fictional recreation of Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 (1867–1916). Fuseki's lecture on Ibsen is attended by Koizumi Jun'ichi 小泉純一, the protagonist of the novel, and one of Ōgai's alter egos in a much younger version of himself. Ōgai thus presented his own view of Ibsen and his ideas in multiple ways, as he introduced Fuseki, Jun'ichi, and even Ōson 鷗村, a parody of himself. Behind all of these characters stands Ōgai. The characters never disagree with each other but, owing to this intriguing arrangement, Ōgai's view deepens and becomes multifaceted.[17]

In fact, Ōgai attended the performance of *John Gabriel Borkman* on the second day at the Yūrakuza theatre. It was Osanai Kaoru who staged it.[18] In Ōgai's novel, however, it is Jun'ichi who depicts and narrates his observations and impressions of the performance; Ibsen's ideas of individualism are discussed widely by Ōgai's alter egos elsewhere in the novel. In Ōgai's case, this is not a simple literary technique; it should rather be considered a result of the sophisticated change of his translation strategy. In the process of writing *Seinen*, Ōgai

15 Kobori 1982, p. 183.

16 Amongst others, Kobori 1982, pp. 178–85; Rimer 1997, pp. 253–62; Kaneko 1989a, pp. 135–37; Auestad 2006, pp. 44–67.

17 Discussing Ōgai's masks in *Seinen*, Rimer writes: "Ōgai uses a clever technique of multiple reinforcement, by means of masks behind which Ōgai can project his own voice, thereby reinforcing his deepest concerns." Rimer 1997, p. 259.

18 See Kobori 1982, p. 183.

still continued to “translate” *John Gabriel Borkman*; no longer the text, of course, but its central themes. For Ōgai, translation becomes both presentation and introduction of a given source material, which is to be commented on critically by him afterwards and outside of the translated text.

It is worth noting that just three years after the performance of *John Gabriel Borkman*, Ōgai replaces the source texts of his translation, which had originally been Western literary works, with Japanese historical archives. He begins now to transform the chosen historical materials in his stories, and again three years later his act of “translation” comes to consist of direct citations from historical materials, and their rearrangement in his own stories.[19]

iii) The Plot of *John Gabriel Borkman*

John Gabriel Borkman is a play about disillusioned adults’ mutual struggle to make the next generation redeem their failures in life. The entire life of John Gabriel Borkman, born the son of a miner, was dominated by gold. He tried to realize his dreams during the 1870s, when capitalism developed rapidly, but he failed scandalously. His failure was due not to his abilities as a businessman or his financial disposition, but to the tragi-comical failure of his human nature. He was a betrayer. In order to reach the summit of power as director of a bank, with free access to his customers’ assets, he abandoned his love for Ella and married her twin sister, Gunhild. His subsequent abuse of customers’ accounts was disclosed by the very lawyer to whom Borkman had offered Ella. Borkman was duly tried in a criminal court and sent to prison. Thereupon, the court ordered the sale of his house, which was bought by Ella. Ella took into her home Erhart, the son of Borkman treating him as if he were her own child, while she let Gunhild, Erhart’s mother, stay in her house in the country. Released after five years’ imprisonment, Borkman comes back to Ella’s country house, where Gunhild lives, only to move in on the first floor. The couple are still married and, though they live in the same house, they never talk to each other again, nor even set eyes upon each other. Erhart visits each of them occasionally, but only separately. In the meantime, Erhart, now a young man in his twenties, has fallen in love with Mrs. Wilton, a divorced woman in her thirties living in the neighborhood.

The play opens eight years after Borkman’s release from prison with Ella visiting Gunhild. As the twin sisters talk to each other on the ground floor, Borkman can be heard pacing the floor above, a prisoner in his own room. Ella’s purpose is to propose she adopt Erhart. But Gunhild also needs Erhart to restore the family, the house and the name of Borkman.

The second act unfolds on the first floor. Foldal, a former bank colleague of Borkman who has remained loyal, appears. He is Borkman’s only visitor. They share the conviction that one day they will be rehabilitated. After a while, Ella comes in and talks to Borkman for the first time in many years. Examining their past, she tells him the truth: “You have killed love in me. [. . .] The great sin for which there is no forgiveness is to murder love in a human soul.”[20] Ella insists on her plan to adopt Erhart.

The third act returns to the ground floor. Every attempt to repair the situation between the adults fails. Ella, suffering from cancer, wants Erhart to come back to her home before

19 See Nagashima 2000, pp. 115–29. At the end of *Seinen*, Jun’ichi predicts that he will in the future deal with “legends,” by which he means historical narratives.

20 *Oxford Ibsen* 1977, p. 197.

she dies, but his mother needs him. Erhart liberates himself from both of them and chooses Mrs. Wilton. He tells the parents again and again that he wants to live his own life, and find happiness. The young Erhart and Mrs. Wilton then leave to go abroad. In the final act, the dark inner landscape of the second act is transformed into a white outdoor world where snow is falling. Borkman comes staggering out of the house for the first time in eight years. Talking to Ella, he still is obsessed with his old illusions. In the chill of the real world, however, he dies of heart failure.

Borkman tells Ella of his dream of gaining political power. He talks about building an empire for the people. The only weak point in this dreamy plan is Ella, the one person who has authority over him. He cannot ignore her judgment, since she is his only link to human society. When Ella talks of her incurable disease and her wish to adopt Erhart, Borkman erupts in anger at first, because he senses he is being accused. Then, he weakens, as she claims a kind of compensation, and abandons his son Erhart, whom he does not need to fulfill his dream. In spite of everything, Ella forgives him his unforgivable sin. Gunhild then rushes in to lay claim to him, too, and so Erhart is called in order to let him decide his own fate. Borkman tries to inspire him with talk of his own plans. Ella even asks Erhart earnestly to help the unforgivable sinner again. With Ella as a reconciling woman in the play, Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman* shows itself to be overwhelmingly religious and existential.

iv) Ōgai's Interpretation and Rewrite

Borkman's desire for power and his dubious insistence on his own altruism are given a somewhat different context in Ōgai's translation. Talking to Ella about Erhart's future in the first act, Gunhild says: "Erhart's first duty is to shine so brilliantly that people no longer see the shadow his father cast over me ... and over my son."[21] Here Ōgai uses expressions like *risshin* 立身 (success in life), *takai ichi ni noboru* 高い位置に昇る (rise high in the world), *meiyo o kunijū ni kagayakasu* 名誉を国中に輝かす (have honor shine brilliantly throughout the land).[22] These expressions re-locate Borkman's desire for power and his ambitions for his son in the context of *risshin shusse*, a common aspiration for Japanese men in the period of rapidly modernizing Meiji Japan.

The word "altruism" is not used in Ibsen's play, but there is every reason to believe that Ōgai was aware of this type of individualism. The theme of altruism was developed in his novel *Seinen*, where Ōmura 大村, another alter ego of Ōgai, elaborates on the theme. Ōmura sees individualism as having two faces, altruism and egoism, and maintains that "Nietzsche's egoism represents the dark side of individualism, that is, will to power. Its basic idea is to become great by defeating others."[23] Ōmura continues: "But altruistic individualism does not work that way. Even as you stoutly defend the cast of your ego without budging an inch from that principle, you try to find significance in every aspect of life. You remain loyal to your master as a citizen (. . .). You are loyal to your parents."[24] Emphasizing loyalty of the individual both to master and to parents, Ōgai counters the selfish utilitarianism expressed in the figure of Borkman with his own altruistic individualism.

21 *Oxford Ibsen* 1977, p. 161.
22 *Ōgai zenshū* 1972a, p. 194.
23 Rimer 1994a, pp. 481–82.
24 Rimer 1994a, p. 482. On Ōgai's altruism, see Hopper 1974, pp. 388–89.

Moreover, Ōgai does not see Borkman's unforgivable sin in a Christian context. Ella's forgiveness is not considered a religious act, either. Still, Ōgai is very much interested in the character of Ella, as can be seen by the fact that he accords to her speeches ample explanations. Her long speech in the second act, where she happily talks about her love for the young boy Erhart as though she were his mother, is translated by Ōgai impressively and movingly. However, Ōgai's sympathy for Ella does not come from the fact that she is one of the Ibsenian "new women," as some scholars stubbornly believe.[25] For Ōgai, Ella is rather a traditional woman. She is the incarnation of motherly altruism and ready for self-sacrifice. Ōgai's search for the ideal woman comes to constitute one of his conspicuous motives in such historical stories as *Yasui fujin* 安井夫人, *Sanshōdayū* 山椒大夫, *Gyogenki* 魚玄機, *Jīsan bāsan* ぢいさんばあさん, and *Saigo no ikku* 最後の一句, which appear several years later.

At the Yūrakuza theatre in Tokyo in November 1909, the younger generation applauded Erhart excitedly for his decision to leave the adults behind in the country in order to live his life with Mrs. Wilton. It was a spontaneous reaction as well as an expression of their thirst for freedom and need for emotional independence.[26] Ōgai's description of the performance is given in Section 9 of *Seinen*, told by Jun'ichi. Jun'ichi's tone is restrained and sober without any sign of exultation, as the focus moves from the relationship between Erhart and Mrs. Wilton on the stage to Jun'ichi and Mrs. Sakai, a beautiful, mature and coquettish widow, whom the young Jun'ichi meets at the theatre. It is obvious that Jun'ichi and Mrs. Sakai correspond to Erhart and Mrs. Wilton, and this too is an intriguing displacement that unfolds outside Ōgai's translation.[27] Ōgai does not give any emotional stress to the speeches of Erhart or Mrs. Wilton in his translation. Yet his novel *Seinen* intimates his attitude towards their relationship. It predicts their fate by articulating Jun'ichi's disillusioned relationship to Mrs. Sakai, which is soon to be dissolved. There is no way out for this type of freedom and independence.

Ōgai could not change the fact that his translation of *John Gabriel Borkman* was, when performed under Osanai Kaoru's direction, experienced by many young people at the theatre as a hymn to Erhart who had abandoned Borkman, the symbol of the capitalistic system, nation and modernization. Although the play is about Borkman's fall, the younger generation in Japan applauded Erhart for his quest for freedom and his absorption in a passionate life. This was indeed ironical. Ōgai spurred on the young men of Meiji Japan, who were expected to build a new society and a strong nation through modernization of the country, to be free and altruistic individuals. The younger generation, however, was inspired by Erhart, who abandoned the adults to be free and live his own life with no intention of ever working.

Ōgai both creates and describes this paradoxical situation by firstly translating *John Gabriel Borkman* and then by writing his own novel *Seinen*. The process corresponds to the fact that his introduction to the "autonomous" individual inspired by Ibsen develops into his idea of altruistic individualism against egoism. In a similar way, Ōgai's translation, the text, received a status of "autonomy." Ōgai's critical comments on the original play are recast

25 Cf. Bowring 1979, p. 184; Kaneko 1989a, p. 137.
26 See Rimer 1994a, p. 254 ff.; Kaneko 1989b, pp. 15–18.
27 This kind of displacement can imply little more than adaptation, but I prefer to see here a creative reconstruction. For adaptations of Western literature in Meiji Japan, see Miller 2001. For the creation of "difference" through translation, see Venuti 1998.

and placed outside the translated text in contrast to his previous practices of modification, adaptation and even manipulation of the original work within the framework of the translated text. As a result, his translation of *John Gabriel Borkman* can be read as a reproduction of Ibsen's ideas, that obviates the readers' need to focus on Ōgai's interpretations.[28]

Ōgai's change of translation strategy illustrates this very process. He has moved from "translation" of culture within the framework of literary translation to an act of cultural translation; that is, from a passive interpretation to an active re-creation. Literary translation always contains "translation" of culture, conscious or unconscious manipulation of the original text, while cultural translation, in the context of this paper, is an activity of rewriting, retelling, commenting and/or criticizing the original text by a translator, and it takes place beyond the literary translation.

Ghosts

While translating Ibsen's *Ghosts* (*Gengangere*, 1881) as *Yūrei* 幽霊 in 1911, Ōgai used the same strategy as with *John Gabriel Borkman*, but this time he placed his critical comments not in a single work, as in *Seinen*, but scattered them rather across several works. In so doing, he did not attempt to reproduce Ibsen's ideas in the original play. When he referred to *Ibusen no yūrei* イブセンの幽霊, he did not necessarily mean Ibsen's play itself, but ghosts as a symbol of inheritance, or just ghosts in general. This subtle differentiation seems to be reflected in his main concern from the time of translation of the play, as well as in his interest in the past and in history in general. In the following, we survey the circumstances in which Ōgai translated the play, and see how his use of the word "ghost" became ambiguous in his own works around 1911. The main purpose here is to clarify the process that shapes his "cultural" translation, by means of an examination of his literary translation of *Ghosts*.

i) Ōgai's Literary Translation

Ōgai translated the original play through a German version, and the quality of his translation was as good as that of *John Gabriel Borkman*.[29] It contains, however, some careless mistakes such as missing lines,[30] as well as a few more substantial ones, including omissions and misunderstandings. Some of these are given here only to show that they do not affect the result of Ōgai's literary translation of the play, which is otherwise faithful and reliable. For example, he describes the Norwegian landscape unfortunately as "gloomy stairs" in the opening scene.[31] In the first act, Ōgai has Priest Mander stand before Mrs. Alving as her husband's friend, although this relationship is not suggested in the original.[32] In the second act, Oswald is busy opening the bottle of champagne and proposes a glass . . . or two,[33] but

28 Ōgai was indifferent to how performers and audience received his highly literary texts. His translation was made to be read rather than to be performed. See Ōshima 1957, pp. 32–39 and Kobayashi 1973 (1961), pp. 263–75.

29 Ōgai's translation was published as a book by Kin'yōsha in December 2012. *Ōgai zenshū* is based on this version.

30 *Ōgai zenshū* 1972b, pp. 93 and 101.

31 *Ōgai zenshū* 1972b, p. 3.

32 *Ōgai zenshū* 1972b, p. 39.

33 *Oxford Ibsen* 1961, p. 399.

in Ōgai's translation Osvald simply asks for two glasses for the champagne.[34] Again, in the closing scene of the third act, Osvald says: ". . . and meanwhile the sun will be rising. And then you'll know. And then I'll no longer have this feeling of dread." To this Mrs. Alving answers: "What am I to know, did you say?"[35] Ōgai, however, has Osvald say: "Maybe you'll *not* know," to which Mrs. Alving replies "What am I *not* to know, did you say?"[36]

ii) The Plot and the Structure of *Ghosts*

At the beginning of Ibsen's play *Ghosts*, Mrs. Alving is poised to argue with Manders, criticizing society for its double standards of morality. While Manders preaches moral duty, Mrs. Alving unfolds the radical view that love and "joie de vivre" should be the pillars of marriage. At this point, she resembles Nora in Ibsen's play *A Doll's House*,[37] but she is a new Nora, as she is now a bitter housewife and a strong and passionate mother. She wishes to live with her son Osvald, who has just returned home from Paris with the newest ideas of the time, but Osvald—suffering from an incurable disease—wants to die in her house. *Ghosts* tries to analyze the motives behind Mrs. Alving's idealism and her ghost-like nature.

In the play, the aspirations and ideals of progressive people are confronted with life as it prevails in a conservative society. Crushed by the depressing and tenacious conviction of the traditionalists, they prove to be a mere illusion. Real life turns out to consist of nothing but money, power, property and sexual desire. Both Mrs. Alving and the priest, Manders, have obtained their high position in society by suppressing their sexual desire and their free will. They have suffocated their love and deceived themselves. Their idealism has been false, and their suppressed desire emerges on the surface together with Osvald's return and inflicts a cruel revenge on them.

The title of the original play *Gengangere* means "something that comes back," which might be interpreted as "trauma"—wounds that visit the soul as a result of a pent-up past. The characters in the play behave just like "ghosts," which restlessly haunt graves, because something in life has been left undone and unsettled. Mrs. Alving used to be a conscientious woman and devoted to her duties, while her husband, a captain, was debauched. Twenty years later, she realizes that she had made mistakes in her relationship to her son, when Osvald closed the door and asked her to kill him and abandon her project to build a sanctuary. He is dying of syphilis, probably transmitted from his father. Osvald may also have inherited his father's characteristics.

The carpenter Engstrand, a friend of the family, also wishes to build a sanctuary for seamen, but his sanctuary is intended to be a brothel in disguise. For this purpose, he needs help from his daughter, Regine, a maid in Mrs. Alving's house. Osvald wishes to marry Regine, not because he loves her, but because he needs her help, as he wants to die abroad. Hearing of his plan to marry Regine, Mrs. Alving is appalled, because Regine is the daughter of another maid in the house, whom Mrs. Alving's husband had made pregnant. If they were to marry, Osvald and Regine would have the same father.

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34 *Ōgai zenshū* 1972b, p. 89.
35 *Oxford Ibsen* 1961, p. 417.
36 *Ōgai zenshū* 1972b, p. 118.
37 Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* (*Et Dukkehjem*, 1879) with the heroine Nora was written two years before *Ghosts*. Mrs. Alving is seen as the Nora who, instead of leaving, has chosen to stay at home after the breakdown of her marriage.

The play *Ghosts* discloses the psychological world of all these characters and their weaknesses, and it depicts their fall from an ideal world of illusion down to the earthly world of flesh and blood. Mrs. Alving is the only person to change in the course of the drama. All the action has already taken place many years ago, and the past of the family is presented so that Mrs. Alving has to take a new decision on present matters. She has to reevaluate the past in the light of her concrete plans for the future, her wish to live with the dying Osvald. Meanwhile, Alving has risen from the grave in the figure of Osvald and makes advances on Regine. A ghost has emerged.

But Mrs. Alving is a ghost, too, as she has kept her double moral standards for twenty years. The same kind of duplicity is to be found elsewhere in the play. Behind every utterance lie two motives: an official, apparently unselfish one, and a private, selfish one. In the Christian civil society of Ibsen's time, it was the norm for everyone to seem unselfish, even as they lived selfishly. Ibsen was fighting against this kind of Victorian ideal of "niceness." Accordingly, all the messages in the play have the double structure of "to be" and "to seem to be." Ghosts of meaning are buried here.

The whole drama of *Ghosts* is structured as Mrs. Alving's finding of the inner coherence of her life. This process runs parallel to the disclosure of her past. The disclosure demands that all the subordinate characters are formed as parallel and mirror figures of Mrs. Alving. They are her conscious or unconscious imposters, her ghosts. The words uttered by each of them are ambiguous: they are at once passionate and manipulative; misunderstood and misjudged.

iii) The Literary Background to Ōgai's Translation

Ōgai finished his translation of *Ghosts* in September 1911. It was then staged in January 1912 at the Yūrakuza theater by the Engei Dōshikai 演芸同志会 under the leadership of Kitamura Sueharu 北村季晴 (1872–1932). This performance, with Mrs. Alving in the central role, was thought to offer a contrast to the successful performance of *A Doll's House* with the heroine Nora, staged first in September 1911 by Bungei Kyōkai 文芸協会 in Shimamura Hōgetsu's 島村抱月 (1871–1918) translation and under his direction. The actress Matsui Sumako 松井須磨子 (1886–1919) had enjoyed great success in the role of Nora.[38] It was also in September 1911, when the epoch-making journal *Seitō* 青鞜 was published, and the term "New Woman" was on everybody's lips. There was now a general Ibsen boom in Japan. Ōgai did not miss the chance to present his version of *Ghosts*, although Hashimoto Seiu 橋本青雨 had already translated the play into Japanese in 1907.[39]

The year 1911 was disastrous for free thinkers in Japan. The anarchist Kōtoku Shūsui 幸徳秋水 (1871–1911), accused of high treason in 1910, was sentenced to death and executed in January. Japan annexed Korea in the same year and Japanese colonial policy continued to unfold. The years of suppression had just begun, while the ghost of communism was still haunting Japan. In his position of surgeon general of the Japanese Imperial Army, Ōgai belonged to the elite. Ōgai the writer, however, had the bitter experience of having his novel *Vita Sexualis* キタ・セクスアリス banned in 1909. Ōgai was critical of the government's conducting the high treason trial.[40] His general attitudes to the authorities from this time

38 On Matsui Sumako and her background, as well as conditions for actresses, see Kano 2001.

39 See Takemori 1972, p. 150.

40 On Ōgai's activities during the years of suppression, see Hopper 1974, pp. 381–413.

can be traced in his short stories written in 1910: *Chinmoku no tō* 沈黙の塔 and *Shokudō* 食堂.[41] In the former story, Ōgai delineated the government's concern about "dangerous books," and tried to distinguish between an intellectual knowledge of a belief system and beliefs themselves. In the latter story, sensing the tensions between the authorities and intellectuals, he makes a distinction between "good" and "bad" socialism. Ōgai claimed a rational understanding of "dangerous beliefs," whatever they might be.

The theme of the clash of ideas was further developed in his story *Ka no yō ni* かのやうに, written in December 1911 and published in January 1912.[42] On the surface, this story consists of a discussion between two Japanese who had lived abroad and experienced the Western way of living and thinking. The real issue was, however, a confrontation between European-trained rationally thinking intellectuals represented by the protagonist Hidemaro 秀麿 (and for that matter Ōgai himself) and the reactionary statesmen represented by Hidemaro's father. The reactionaries were suspicious of these intellectuals who opposed the government's attempt to combine myth and history in order to establish a solid nationalistic source of emotion for the Japanese people.

Hidemaro is a historian; he is about to write a history of Japan, but he finds difficulty in drawing a clear line between myth and history. In his opinion, not only myth but liberty and duty as well as religion do not exist in reality; they are established on something which cannot be proven to be real. "'As if' lies at their foundation."[43] His friend Ayakōji 綾小路 finds "as if" to be a "monster." Hidemaro responds by saying: ". . . 'as if' . . . isn't a monster at all. Without it, there would be no science, no art, no religion."[44] Continuing this argument, Hidemaro refers to Ibsen: "I grow indignant whenever I see such plays as Ibsen's that treat duty as a monster, a ghost, knowing that this cannot be proved as fact. A certain destruction of duty may be inevitable, but does nothing remain? At the foundation is 'as if,' indisputable though intangible and very slight of form. Man should act as if duty existed."[45]

iv) Ōgai's Interpretation of the Play

Scholars disagree over whether Hidemaro represents Ōgai's own attitude to Ibsen's play. Takemori Ten'yū 竹盛天雄 hesitates to identify Hidemaro directly with Ōgai, but notices in Hidemaro's words Ōgai's critical stance towards Ibsen expressed in *Ghosts*.[46] According to Kobori Kei'ichirō, Ibsen was for Ōgai the same kind of radical thinker as Nietzsche, who was obsessed with destruction. But Ōgai, in Kobori's opinion, hated destruction without an accompanying vision of new construction to follow; Ōgai was against any kind of barrenness and irresponsibility. The "ghosts" in Ibsen's play are Osvald's inheritance from his father, as well as Mrs. Alving's duties and her vanity. Cursed by her own ghosts, she lives a false life. Ibsen condemns not only her life and her project but also Osvald's life, thus pointing a finger at the degenerated upper classes in Norway. Kobori is of the opinion,

41 Both short stories have been translated by Helen Hopper and are included in Rimer 1994a, pp. 216–22 and pp. 224–30, respectively.
42 The title stems from *Die Philosophie des Als Ob* (1911) by Hans Vaihinger. *AS IF* is included in Rimer 1994a, pp. 233–54.
43 Rimer 1994a, p. 250.
44 Rimer 1994a, p. 252.
45 Rimer 1994a, p. 252.
46 See Takemori 1972, pp. 147–48.

however, that Ōgai agrees with Ibsen on this point, maintaining that Hidemaro's discontent with Ibsen is not directed towards the ghost-like habits and social order in the play *Ghosts,* but towards the blind, destructive impulses observed in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*.[47]

Uryū Kenji 瓜生研二 finds Hidemaro's words a reflection of Ōgai's thoughts. He writes that Ōgai, through Hidemaro's words, expresses his indignation not only at *Ghosts*, in which Ibsen only impeaches the existing social order without suggesting a new construction or redemption, but also at *A Doll's House*, in which Ibsen literally narrates the destruction of a family.[48]

Nakamura Toshiko 中村都史子 deepens the interpretations made by Kobori and Uryū. She cites other words of Hidemaro's: "God isn't a fact; duty isn't a fact. We cannot but admit that now. But if we glory in that discovery and blaspheme, if we trample upon duty, then real danger begins for the first time."[49] According to Nakamura, Ōgai admits that Ibsenian individualism and freedom are basic attitudes of modern society, but Ōgai expresses his doubt, dislike and uneasiness about the rule of that principle. Nakamura does not see a direct connection between the word "ghost" in Hidemaro's words and Ibsen's play *Ghosts*, the theme of which does not consider duty a ghost. Ōgai's point is that, though the freedom of the individual and respect for one's person are indispensable, human life cannot be lived if duty is a mere ghost. As Hidemaro says: "Whatever has worth in life is centered around 'as if'."[50] Duty is respectable and must be respected. That was Ōgai's message, and Nakamura concludes that Ōgai, through Hidemaro's words, is bidding farewell to Ibsenian freedom.[51]

Ōgai's *Hyaku monogatari*

Hyaku monogatari 百物語, another short story by Ōgai, is like *Ka no yō ni* related to his translation of *Ghosts*. It was written in October 1911, and preceded his translation. The protagonist Boku 僕 participates in a childish party revolving around the *Hyaku monogatari*, "a hundred tales." The story is introduced with an explanation: "The 'telling of a hundred tales' requires that a large group of persons be gathered together. A hundred candles are set up and lit. Each person in turn tells a ghost story, at which time one candle is extinguished. Then, just as the hundredth candle is put out, a real ghost will actually appear. Or so it is said."[52]

In this story, Ibsen's "ghost" is mentioned twice, initially as a legacy from another age. The English version by Thomas Rimer reads as follows: "Tales of a hundred ghosts such as those were now replaced with the *Ghosts* of Ibsen."[53] This is an inadequate translation, if not a mistranslation. Ōgai writes in the original: "*Ibusen no iwayuru yūrei* イブセンの所謂幽霊,"[54] and he does not specifically refer to the play itself. Secondly, in the description of Tarō 太郎, who is the most beautiful geisha in Tokyo and the most intimate friend of Shikamaya 飾磨屋, the rich host of the evening, Boku states: "From the moment I observed the pair, I had the sense that her presence at the side of this man was like that of a nurse at the side

47 Kobori 1982, pp. 185–86.
48 Uryū 1985, pp. 35–36.
49 Cited from *AS IF*, in Rimer 1994a, p. 252.
50 Rimer 1994a, p. 252.
51 Nakamura 1997, pp. 20–21.
52 *Ghost Stories* is translated by J. Thomas Rimer, and included in Rimer 1994a, pp. 183–96.
53 Rimer 1994a, pp. 185–86.
54 *Ōgai zenshū* 1972b, p. 132.

of her patient."[55] Tarō is no more geisha-like. She now appears more like a wife. She has a melancholy appearance and bloodshot eyes. Boku then speculates:

> Still, if this woman were to give her life as a nurse who might expect no reward, while all the time placing at the center of her own existence the care that she provided, then she could only be seen herself as a victim. If she were linked to him by any chains of duty as a wife, then she would be bound up in the kind of curse described in Ibsen's *Ghosts*. Such would constitute a different issue. (But it wasn't the case with Tarō.)[56]

Also here Ōgai writes in the original "*Ibusen no iu yūrei* イブセンの謂ふ幽霊" with no specific reference to the play itself,[57] but the English version makes sense this time. Already at this point, before the completion of his translation of Ibsen's play, Ōgai clearly expresses his aversion to considering "duty" as "ghost." More interesting, perhaps, is the fact that Shikamaya, having inherited huge wealth and become intimate with the world of geisha—thus experiencing every kind of physical pleasure in life—now looks like a living ghost. Boku thinks that he "must somehow or other have received some sort of intangible wound, one which could not be cured."[58] The wound must be a result of the life he had led bound up with old habits and customs, as well as troublesome human relations. Shikamaya has, in the opinion of Boku, become a ghost in the form of a bystander. Boku, a born bystander, recognized another bystander in Shikamaya. He feels "as though he has met an old friend in a strange land."[59] This recognition gives the reader a chilling feeling, and constitutes the only real ghost encountered that evening. That ghost, however, has nothing to do with Ibsen's ghosts. As a born bystander, Boku recalls his own ghost-like life:

> From the time when I first began to play with other children, and even when I grew to adulthood and made my way in the world, and with every kind of person in society, I have never been able to throw myself into the whirlpool and enjoy myself to the depths of my being, no matter what kind of excitement may have been stirred in me.[60]

Shikamaya is in fact a mirror image of Boku, the bystander. Contemplating Shikamaya's life until now and his arrangement of the party that evening, Boku goes so far as to say: "Perhaps his hosting a party of this kind represented some force of habit that remained from his prideful former way of life (…) Perhaps he observed the traces of his former glory through the eyes of a bystander just in the same way as a writer, for example, observes the work he has created through the eyes of a critic."[61]

In his mind, Shikamaya was recalling his "past" and fighting with his "ghosts." It might be safe to say that there is a certain co-relation between Ōgai's *Ghost Stories*, *Hyaku monogatari*, and his translation of Ibsen's *Ghosts*. But there is, for good reason, no trace of the Christian idea of original sin in Ōgai's works.

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55 Cited from Rimer 1994b, p. 190.
56 Rimer 1994b, p. 195. The last sentence is missing in Rimer's English translation.
57 *Ōgai zenshū* 1972b, p. 144.
58 Rimer 1994b, p. 194.
59 Rimer 1994b, p. 194.
60 Rimer 1994b, p. 194.
61 Rimer 1994b, pp. 194–95.

Ōgai was opposed to Ibsen's negative conception of "duty" as well as his merciless treatment of the female characters. Ibsen does not give them any kind of relief. In his own stories, Ōgai transformed Ibsen's ghosts into Japanese bystanders, extracting from Ibsen's play only the idea of the "past," that dreadful "ghost." Ōgai's criticism of Ibsen's play was thus placed outside his translation of it; he practiced his "cultural translation" in the realm of *Ka no yō ni*, and its surroundings. Ōgai made his own literary translation in order to present the ideas in the original works by Ibsen, but he continued the act of translation by appraising them critically in his own writings, as well as by transforming the source ideas. His purpose was to create his own visions, pertinent to the Japanese cultural environment of his time.

Conclusion

With *Brand* Ōgai practiced cultural "translation" within the frame of literary translation, but he changed his translation strategy when he took on *John Gabriel Borkman* and *Ghosts*. He extracted stimulating themes from the original, such as the free individual, the New Woman, as well as changing attitudes to duty and to history, and chose to develop them further in his own works, thus continuing his practice of "cultural translation." His critical comments on Ibsen's ideas, however, were recast and placed outside the translated text. In the case of his translation of *John Gabriel Borkman*, Ōgai's strategy was to write the novel *Seinen* as a critical continuation of his literary translation of the original play; there he discussed amongst other problems altruism and egoism that had been raised by Ibsen in *John Gabriel Borkman*. In translating Ibsen's *Ghosts* as *Yūrei*, Ōgai used the same strategy, but this time he scattered his critical comments across several of his short stories, such as *Ka no yō ni* and *Hyaku monogatari*; he no longer referred directly to Ibsen's play itself, but only to ghosts as a symbol of inheritance. His cultural translation took place beyond the literary translation, and subsequently came to manifest itself in the historical stories he was soon to write. Here his technique was to replace the source texts of his translation, Western literary works, with Japanese historical materials.

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