

Arrietty Comes Home: Studio Ghibli's *The Borrower Arrietty* and Its English-language Dubs

Catherine BUTLER

Stories have two voices. They tell us of people and their adventures, but they also tell a silent tale of the cultures that gave rise to them. Beyond their positive content, they imply the unspoken moral, cultural and aesthetic norms that give that content point and meaning. By considering what stories omit, we can perceive the customs and beliefs they take for granted. In their linguistic choices, their settings, their exposition and resolution of plots, their presentations of characters and relationships, they speak eloquently of the narrative culture that gave them birth.

All this becomes most easily visible when the context of a story changes, for example by moving across cultural, linguistic or temporal borders. Then, stories undergo complex transformations: what had seemed obvious and natural may become odd, or opaque. People who translate and adapt stories must find ways to cope with such difficulties. Their task involves more than mapping the story onto a new language; exact linguistic and cultural equivalents usually do not exist, making one-to-one mapping impossible. In this article, I will explore some of the choices made by the English-language adaptors of Studio Ghibli's 2010 animated film, *The Borrower Arrietty*. Because this film was itself an adaptation of an English-language novel, the choices involved are of particular interest and complexity.

Studio Ghibli and British Children's Literature

Hayao Miyazaki of Studio Ghibli has long shown an interest in British children's literature. Of a 2010 list of his fifty recommended classic books for children, almost half are by British authors ("Hayao Miyazaki Picks"). Indeed, no fewer than three of Ghibli's full-length films have been adaptations of British children's novels. 『ハウルの動く城』 (*Howl's Moving Castle*) (2004), 『借りぐらしのアリエッティ』 (*The Borrower Arrietty*) (2010), and 『思い出のマーニー』 (*Memories of Marnie*) (2014) are based respectively on Diana Wynne Jones's *Howl's Moving Castle* (1986), Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* (1952) and Joan G. Robinson's *When Marnie was There* (1967). While Miyazaki himself wrote and directed

the film of *Howl's Moving Castle*, the two later films were directed by his protégé, Hiromasa Yonebayashi. Miyazaki provided the screenplay for *The Borrower Arrietty*, along with Keiko Niwa, who also co-wrote *Memories of Marnie* with Masashi Ando.

In adapting British children's literature for a Japanese audience, Ghibli was inevitably involved in two complementary processes: first, that of removing, or toning down, specific British references that would make the films harder to understand or less interesting for a Japanese audience; and second, providing their stories with a Japanese cultural context. The three films I have mentioned address this problem in different ways. Diana Wynne Jones's novel, *Howl's Moving Castle*, is largely set in a fantasy world rather than in Britain itself, although Wizard Howl is very specifically Welsh, an identity emphasised by his fondness for Welsh rugby songs such as "Sosban Fach" ("The Little Saucepan"). Miyazaki's film removed all references to Wales, including an episode in which Howl and the book's other protagonist, Sophie, visit Howl's sister in present-day Wales. Other culturally-opaque elements, such as the use of a poem by the sixteenth-century English poet John Donne as a magic spell, were also omitted. In the case of the other two novels, Ghibli relocated the action from Britain to Japan, making all the major characters native Japanese.

When Ghibli's films were subsequently dubbed into English for cinematic (and later DVD and Blu-Ray) release, the work was done in most cases through the Disney and Pixar studios, which naturally wished to make them comprehensible and appealing to audiences in their primary market of North America. The underlying "Britishness" of these narratives was thus further attenuated, although it was also acknowledged to varying degrees. In *Howl's Moving Castle*, for example, Disney used British actors for some of the main parts: Howl himself was played by Welshman Christian Bale, while the English-born actresses Jean Simmons and Emily Mortimer provided the voices of old and young Sophie. Nevertheless, they were instructed not to use their British accents, instead adopting what screenwriters Cindy and Don Hewitt described as "a mild 'Mid-Atlantic' accent which is neither American nor British" (Team Ghiblink), a decision that might prompt us to wonder why British actors were used at all. In the case of *When Marnie Was There* (as *Memories of Marnie* was named for its English-language release, reviving the title of the novel), American actors were used for all the main parts. The story thus migrated from the novel's setting on the Norfolk coast in eastern England, to the Hokkaido of Yonebashi's film, and thence to an ambiguous place, neither England, Japan, nor America, for the

English-language release.

Mary Norton's novel, *The Borrowers*, about a family of miniature people (or "Borrowers"), who live in secret in a human house, is also set in a relatively specific place, a house near Leighton Buzzard in Bedfordshire, England (Norton, 14). Unlike *When Marnie Was There*, however, with its distinctive East Anglian coastal landscape of windmills, samphire beds and tidal flats, *The Borrowers* has a largely domestic setting and, beyond the nearby presence of woods and streams (features common in both Japan and England), depends less on a specific landscape than on the interior of the large family house at its centre. When Studio Ghibli made *The Borrower Arrietty*, the story was relocated to Koganei in the suburbs of Tokyo, not far from Studio Ghibli itself. Disney's 2012 English-language version of the film, titled *The Secret World of Arrietty*, employed American actors, and Disney tasked screenwriter Karey Kirkpatrick with, in his words, "making it work for an American audience" (Kirkpatrick). As we will see, the resulting film was Americanized in numerous ways.

However, uniquely with one of Ghibli's productions, the English-language rights outside North America were taken up by another company, Studio Canal, which released a version of the film voiced by a largely British cast in 2011 (a year before Disney), simply titled *Arrietty*.⁽¹⁾ Arguably, the use of American accents for a version of *The Borrowers* might have been especially jarring to British viewers, since that book retains its status in the UK as a classic of children's literature, unlike *When Marnie Was There*, which had long been out of print and was largely forgotten by the time Ghibli's film was released.

We thus have four different versions of the story: Mary Norton's original novel, Ghibli's adaptation, and the two English-language dubs of that adaptation.⁽²⁾ As has been shown by Kentaro Yamada (in his articles on *My Neighbour Totoro* [2004] and *Spirited Away* [2005]) and Chihiro Tamura (in her study of the dubs of *Princess Mononoke*, *Spirited Away* and *Howl's Moving Castle* [2010]), among others, a comparison of multiple versions can provide valuable insights into some of the factors at play in the process of adaptation. In this case, those factors include the diverse cultural contexts of Japan, the UK and the USA, and the storytelling conventions and preferences of the different directors, writers and studios, but also their differing attitudes towards the process and purposes of adaptation itself.

To adopt the terminology of the translation theorist Lawrence Venuti, any adaptation can be characterized as sitting somewhere on a scale that runs between

domestication and foreignization. A domesticating adaptation is one that attempts to put as few obstacles as possible between the adaptation and its intended audience, “bringing the author back home” (Venuti, 20). This may mean, for example, changing foreign names to domestic equivalents, and either omitting or replacing references to foreign places, customs, foodstuffs, and so on. A foreignizing approach, by contrast, will attempt to preserve the text’s original cultural context, sacrificing ease of comprehension to authenticity, and “sending the reader [or viewer] abroad” (Venuti, 20).

Considered in these terms, the British dub, *Arrietty*, is in general a far more “foreignized” adaptation of Ghibli’s film than Disney’s *The Secret World of Arrietty*, being much closer to a literal translation of the Japanese script. An obvious example of this difference is the two adaptations’ use of names. Although Ghibli had kept the names of Norton’s diminutive Borrowers unchanged—Pod (ポッド), Homily (ホミリー) and Arrietty (アリエッティ)—in *The Borrower Arrietty* the human characters were given Japanese names to suit the new setting. The boy who befriends Arrietty (unnamed in the novel) became Shou, his great-aunt Sophy became Sadako, and the housekeeper (Mrs Driver) became Haru. The British dub of *Arrietty* retains these Japanese names; however, Kirkpatrick’s script for Disney domesticates them to Shawn, Jessica and Hara respectively.⁽³⁾

In other cases, both the UK and US dubs choose to “domesticate” to some extent. An example occurs early in the film, when Arrietty gives her mother a bay leaf and a red shiso (perilla) leaf that she has collected from the garden. In the Ghibli script, we find the following exchange:

アリエッティ: あと、そのシソの葉もいい香りでしょ。

ホミリー: そうね。お砂糖があれば、おいしいシソジュースができるんだけど……。

Arrietty: Anyway, that shiso leaf has a nice fragrance, doesn’t it?

Homily: You’re right. If I had sugar I could make shiso juice. (*The Borrower Arrietty*, 00:05:44–53)

Bay leaves are widely used in Western cuisine, but shiso is not, and the custom of using red shiso to make a summer drink is unfamiliar to most Western viewers. Accordingly, neither the UK nor US dub uses the word “shiso.” The UK dub opts for strategic vagueness, making Arrietty remark on the scent of some flowers she is putting into a vase rather than the leaf she has given her mother, while Homily for her part does not name the leaf from which she proposes to make juice.

Arrietty: Oh, don't these flowers just smell lovely?

Homily: So they do. With a bit of sugar I could make some juice out of this. (*Arrietty*, 00:05:21-29)

Vague as this version is, the practice of making a cool summer drink from elderflowers (in much the same manner that shiso is used in Japan) is sufficiently familiar in Britain for the scene to be easily comprehensible. The American version, however, differs more radically:

Arrietty: If you don't like your gift I can put it in my room.

Homily: No, no, I shall keep it. I have just the recipe for these. I'll have your father borrow some sugar. (*SWOA*, 00:05:21-29)

Arrietty's line is changed from a comment about scent to a teasing reference back to her gift of the leaves as a birthday present. By changing "juice" to "recipe," Homily leaves open the possibility that the leaves will be used as an ingredient in a meal (as bay leaves generally are) rather than as the basis of a drink. Small "domesticating" adjustments of this kind occur throughout the film, and the cumulative effect is to decrease the sense of its specifically Japanese setting.

That change may be relatively trivial, but it has knock-on effects later in the script. As Pod and Arrietty are about to leave to go borrowing, Homily asks them at the last moment to borrow a cube of sugar. Claspng her hands in supplication, a common Japanese gesture, she adds: 「シソのジュースが作れるし、お茶に入れると美味しいの」 ("I could make shiso juice—it's delicious in tea," *The Borrower Arrietty*, 00:09:02-08). As she speaks, Homily closes her eyes and looks upward, apparently anticipating the delicious flavour in imagination. The UK dub uses the moment in a similar way, although omitting mention of shiso: "We could have it to sweeten the juice I shall be serving for tea later." In *The Secret World of Arrietty*, however, where Homily has not spoken of making a drink using sugar, the resemblance of Homily's gesture to Christian prayer (hands clasped, looking upward) appears to have struck the screenwriter, and she is given a line to match: "Oh, please God, please help them."

This solution gives Homily a line consistent with her gesture, as interpreted within an American frame of reference, but it also has other consequences. It underlines Homily's tendency to worry about her husband and daughter's borrowing adventures, and introduces a Christian inflection to her actions. Arguably it therefore domesticates her as American, vocalised expressions of Christian belief being far more common in that country than in Japan or, indeed, Britain.

Beyond Domestication

The practice of “domesticating” culturally opaque elements of *The Borrower Arrietty* by finding homegrown equivalents explains many of the changes made in the UK and US dubs, but not all. For example, at one point in *The Secret World of Arrietty* Hara asks a delivery man for the telephone number of a pest extermination company, and he obliges by searching on his mobile phone. Hara then mutters the start of the number before writing it down: “1800-0 . . .” (*SWOA*, 00:37:10). In the USA, the “1800” prefix signifies a toll-free number (like “0120” in Japan), which implies an American location. Later, when Hara later gives her address over the phone, she identifies the road as “Elm Lane” (*SWOA*, 01:05:33). Miyazaki’s Japanese script includes neither a phone number nor an address, so these Americanizing details cannot be regarded as domestic equivalents to features in the original. Rather, they are additional moves that entrench the implicit setting of the story as America.

The appearance of on-screen writing is another area in which decisions must be taken by the creators of anime, as well as by those adapting scripts for foreign audiences. Some Japanese studios have tried to avoid giving viewers extensive exposure to Japanese script, precisely because it may be off-putting to foreigners, and to Americans in particular. Amy Shirong Lu quotes Kubo Masakazu’s suggestion that use of Japanese script may have limited the popular success in the USA of the well-known television anime, *Sailor Moon*:

Our research on this case suggests that things like Japanese writing showing up on signboards in the background and uniquely Japanese family settings distract American kids, preventing them from really becoming absorbed in the movie’s fictional world. With these examples in mind, from the start we had our hearts set on a thoroughly localizing *Pokémon* (in the English-speaking market). (Quoted in Shirong Lu, 173.)

The work of Studio Ghibli is aimed at a different market from that of *Sailor Moon* or *Pokémon*, but in *The Borrower Arrietty* too there are relatively few clear images of Japanese script. Many of the packets and brands on display in the house, such as the soap and washing-up liquid in Sadako’s kitchen (00:12:57), are in English, as is the word “COFFEE” on the can drunk by the delivery man (00:37:00). Some packages are in katakana or hiragana, but these are glimpsed only briefly. The hallway of the Borrowers’

home displays Japanese stamps, echoing the “portraits of Queen Victoria as a girl” (Norton, 17) that decorate the sitting room of Norton’s Borrowers, but in the same shot we also see a partial view of a picture with the English words, “kind of.”

The only example of script that has a plot-role is the note Shou leaves for Arrietty, along with the sugar cube that she has accidentally dropped on a visit to his room. In *The Borrower Arrietty* this bears the single word, 「わすれもの」. However, in both English-language versions this has been changed on screen to the English phrase, “You forgot something.” This decision offers a contrast with Yonebayashi’s later film, 『メアリと魔女の花』 (*Mary and the Witch’s Flower*), released in July 2017 as the first production of Studio Ponoc. Like *The Borrower Arrietty* and *Memories of Marnie*, *Mary and the Witch’s Flower* was adapted from an English children’s book, Mary Stewart’s *The Little Broomstick* (1971), although unlike them it retains its English setting (the book is set in Shropshire), and all the characters are depicted as native English. In the Japanese cinematic release, the characters speak in Japanese; however, they write in English, as if the domesticating act of using Japanese was regarded as more intrusively “frame-breaking” when performed visually (in writing) than orally (through speech).

Adapting to requirements of story convention

So far, I have concentrated on relatively discrete examples of the challenges of adaptation. However, the issues involved extend well beyond such local concerns into the more pervasive conventions of plotting and characterisation. Attitudes to the roles that certain kinds of character may play within a story, strategies for plot exposition, tolerance for digressions and uncertainty, the choice between explicit and implicit methods of conveying information, and a sense of what constitutes a satisfactory conclusion, are all to some extent culturally specific, relying on pre-existing narrative conventions and a shared repertoire of story and character. Part of the adaptor’s job may thus involve framing the story to fit better with the norms of the target audience, in terms not only of language and material culture, but also of interpretative strategies, narrative tropes, character templates, and so on.

Given that adaptors need to work within the framework provided by the original animation, the scope for making changes to the story and characters is limited, but it nevertheless occurs, as we can see on several occasions in *The Secret World of Arrietty* in particular. For example, in the Disney film Arrietty’s eagerness to start borrowing spills

into a “sassiness” largely absent from the Japanese script, where she is generally respectful of her parents. Consider this line, in which she reassures Homily about her forthcoming borrowing trip:

アリエッティ: 大丈夫よ、お母さん。うーんと気を付けるから。

Arrietty: It’s all right, Mother, I’ll be careful. (*The Borrower Arrietty*, 00:07:03–05)

Arrietty: It’ll be all right, Mother. I’ll be extra careful. (*Arrietty*, 00:07:03–05)

Arrietty: Oh, and don’t worry Mother, I’ll get Papa back safely. (*SWOA*, 00:07:03–05)

In the Japanese and UK scripts, the second half of Arrietty’s line is a simple reassurance that she will be careful. In the Disney version, she cheekily implies that Homily is worried about Pod’s safety rather than hers. A little later, when Arrietty and Pod set off on their expedition, Disney’s Arrietty asks about Pod’s lamp: “Do I get one of those? No? Okay” (*SWOA*, 00:08:46). These humorous lines have no equivalent in Miyazaki’s script, in which Arrietty is attending obediently to Pod’s instructions.

One function of such changes is no doubt to set up Arrietty for a fall. She is shown as overconfident, overexcited, and “hyper,” and this makes her careless. Perhaps however they also reflect a greater sympathy in American culture for adolescent testing of the boundaries of authority, as a sign of liveliness and independence, making Arrietty a figure with whom child viewers are invited to sympathise. Pod, for his part, is stolid and serious in all three versions, but in the Disney dub he is capable of a humour never shown by his Japanese counterpart. After he injures his leg, for example, Arrietty asks about his recovery. The Japanese Pod answers factually and straightforwardly:

アリエッティ: 脚、どう？

ポッド: ああ。もうほとんど歩ける。

Arrietty: How’s your leg?

Pod: I’m already almost able to walk. (*The Borrower Arrietty*, 00:53:22–25)

In *The Secret World of Arrietty*, by contrast, Pod cracks a joke, playing on the fact that Spiller (another Borrower) has just been eating a cricket’s leg:

Arrietty: How’s your leg?

Pod: Better than that cricket’s. (*SWOA*, 00:53:22–25)

A more complex example is that of the mother of Shou/Shawn, a character who is not present in the film except in the words of others. In *The Borrower Arrietty*, Aunt Sadako suggests that Shou is neglected by his divorced parents, and that his mother is at fault for travelling on business at a time when her son is ill with a heart condition. (In fact, Shou

does not seem concerned by this, and at no point expresses any desire for her presence.) Shou's absent mother is mentioned briefly at a few key moments in *The Borrower Arrietty*. The opening voiceover identifies the house as the place where she grew up. She is said to be the one who first told Shou about the Borrowers; and it is also said that the doll's house is hers—passed to her by her grandfather, Shou's great-grandfather, who built it to house the little people he believed to inhabit his home. Apart from these scattered mentions, she is absent from the script.

This combination of apparent maternal neglect and narrative inconclusiveness sits rather uncomfortably in a Disney film. Disney has long maintained a family-friendly, “wholesome” image. A neglectful mother, though not impossible, is an aberration requiring some explanation, and cannot easily be left unaddressed to the extent that happens in *The Borrower Arrietty*. Accordingly, the script of *The Secret World of Arrietty* links the failure of the doll's house to attract any Borrowers during Shawn's mother's childhood to her later neglect of her own child. She is said to have shown great faith in the doll's house project, and to have worked hard on it with her father (not her grandfather, as in Miyazaki's script), only to have it end in disappointment. In the Japanese film *Sadako* simply tells Shou that he is the fourth generation to inherit the doll's house; but the equivalent line in *The Secret World of Arrietty* has Aunt Jessica explain to Shawn that the doll's house—and, by extension, the Borrowers—are the true reason for his mother's absence:

Jessica: I think it's why your mother doesn't like to come here any more. Too many memories of wishes that never came true. (*SWOA*, 00:41:23-29)

It is implied that something in Shawn's mother's personality was cut off, or suppressed, by this childhood disappointment, and that this led not only to her reluctance to visit the house, but to a more fundamental severing, which has made her throw herself into her work, neglect her child, and generally behave in a manner coded as unmaternal. By contrast, Shou's mother in *The Borrower Arrietty* is not said to have had any special imaginative commitment to belief in the little people, nor loyalty to her grandfather. (In none of the versions is Shou/Shawn's father's equal neglect of his child regarded as requiring any comment or explanation.)

I have interpreted this change to the Japanese script in terms of cultural attitudes towards motherhood and family, but this is not the only possible reading. It may indicate a reluctance on Disney's part to leave plot points unresolved. The vagueness and

indeterminacy of *The Borrower Arrietty*'s references to Shou's mother may have been regarded as a loose plot thread needing to be tied, rather than appreciated as a realistic reflection of the messiness of real life. Certainly, a discomfort with narrative uncertainty is evident at other points in the Disney film, where changes have been made to resolve questions left open by Ghibli. For example, at the conclusion of *The Borrower Arrietty* we see Arrietty and Shou's farewell, then the credits roll against a sequence in which Arrietty's family sail downriver in a kettle. We hear nothing of the Borrowers' subsequent fate, nor of the outcome of Shou's imminent heart operation (although his brief voiceover at the beginning of the film provides implicit assurance of his survival). *The Secret World of Arrietty* is far more explicit. It not only gives Shawn a more extensive voiceover at the start of the film, explicitly identifying the forthcoming events as ones that will change his life, but resolves matters with the addition of a second voiceover at the film's conclusion:

Shawn [voiceover]: I never saw her again. But the following summer I returned, and was happy to hear the people in the house down the road talking about how many things in their home had gone . . . missing (*SWOA* 01:26:29–35).

From England to Japan to America

Having considered numerous factors involved in adaptation, I will conclude by tracing one scene through its various iterations from Norton's novel, to the Ghibli film, to the Disney script. Shortly before the climax of the film, there is a scene in which Arrietty and Shou/Shawn discuss the Borrowers' long-term prospects of survival. The scene takes much of its material from a passage in the novel, in which Arrietty and the unnamed boy likewise discuss the relationship between humans and Borrowers. In the book, Arrietty suggests that humans cannot be very numerous, so profligate is their use of natural resources, and quotes her father's belief that "it's a good thing they're dying out . . . [J]ust a few, my father says, that's all we need—to keep us" (69). By "keep us," Arrietty explains, she means that Borrowers take the things they need from humans. Although she refers to this as "borrowing," there is no suggestion of repayment, and the boy objects that this amounts to stealing. To Arrietty, however, this is a meaningless accusation: "You might as well say that the fire-grate steals the coal from the coal-scuttle . . . human beans are *for* Borrowers—like bread's for butter" (73).

This reversal of human perspective is unsettling for the boy, and in this scene provides a two-edged satire. Arrietty's assumption that Borrowers and their needs are

central to the world, and that humans exist for their benefit, parodies human complacency and anthropocentrism. As with Jonathan Swift's Lilliputians in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), the parochial nature of her perspective is underlined by the Borrowers' diminutive size. At the same time, the boy's own belief in human pre-eminence is shaken by coming face to face with a way of viewing the world so different from his own, one in which humans are farmed by Borrowers for their food and possessions. Shaken, he sets out to prove, rather aggressively, that humans are far more numerous than Borrowers, and to taunt Arrietty about her own species:

"I believe you're the last three."

Arrietty dropped her face into the primrose. "We're not. There's Aunt Lupy and Uncle Hendreary and all the cousins."

"I bet they're dead," said the boy. [. . .] "One day," he told her, smiling triumphantly, "you'll be the only Borrower left in the world!" (76)

Norton's boy is young, and cruel in a thoughtless way, revelling in being more knowledgeable about the world than Arrietty, and taking childish revenge for Arrietty's scornful attitude towards humans.

Miyazaki's script in *The Borrower Arrietty* preserves several aspects of this scene, including its concern with natural resources; but by omitting others it changes its tone considerably. Arrietty still explains to Shou that the Borrowers take the things they need from humans, but she does not imply that humans exist for the benefit of Borrowers; nor does she suggest that humans will soon die out. On the contrary, Ghibli's Borrowers seem aware from the beginning that their survival is precarious. For his part, Shou refrains from accusing Borrowers of stealing. The overt causes of conflict within Norton's conversation are thus removed. Like Norton's boy, Shou points out the large human population (specifying it at 6.7 billion), and he makes a bleak assessment of the Borrowers' survival prospects, including contemplating a time when Arrietty will be the last survivor of her race. However, whereas the boy smiles "triumphantly", Shou delivers his view in a contemplative and melancholy manner.

Shou's melancholy derives from two sources. On the one hand, he remembers that many species have died out because they were unable to adapt to the changing environment, and sees the Borrowers as another in this catalogue of ecological loss. He talks fatalistically of extinction being the Borrower's destiny (運命), and it is to this view that Arrietty takes exception.

翔: 残酷だけど、君たちもそういう運命なんだ。

アリエッティ: 「運命」ですって? あなたが余計な事をしたから、私たちはここを出ていくことになったのよ?

Shou: It's cruel, but that's your destiny.

Arrietty: "Destiny", you say? Don't you see that it's because of something unnecessary *you* did that we're moving away? (*The Borrower Arrietty*, 01:10:19-30)

For Arrietty, blaming fate is just a way for Shou to evade his own responsibility; after all, the immediate danger faced by her family was caused by Shou himself. Miyazaki's wider environmental point is surely that many other species, too, have become extinct as a result of avoidable human choices.

The second source of Shou's melancholy concerns his personal future: he believes he will shortly die from his weak heart, and this naturally affects the tenor of his thoughts about others. (By contrast, although the boy in Norton's *The Borrowers* is staying at the house to convalesce after rheumatic fever, there is no suggestion that he is in mortal danger.) Miyazaki thus substitutes for Norton's boy's childish impulse to hurt Arrietty a scene that combines environmental guilt and personal tragedy, and provides a context that to some extent extenuates Shou's thoughtlessness in predicting the end of Arrietty's race.

In *The Secret World of Arrietty*, this conversation is changed once again. The screenwriter, Karey Kirkpatrick, reported in a 2017 interview with me that he felt Miyazaki's environmental focus in this scene would not play well with American audiences.

If you look at the Japanese dubbed version, and then look at what I did, I was allowed to make substantial changes to what that scene is about. With their blessing, and with respect, but just saying to them, it gets a little environmentally preachy in that scene in a way that I think Americans would have found a bit of a turn-off. Also, it got a little bit off-story. I reworked that scene and tweaked a few others to put greater focus on the differences between the two main characters, as well as the misperceptions between Borrowers and humans. (Kirkpatrick)

Kirkpatrick's script omits any mention of species extinction and environmental change, and has Shawn focus entirely on the inevitability of death, which is naturally much on his mind: "But you know none of us can live for ever, can we? We all have to die sometime." It is in this context that he, like Shou, suggests, "Sometimes you just have to accept the hand

of fate” (01:01:19–23). Arrietty’s response, rather than pointing out Shawn’s responsibility for their situation, constitutes a far more generic assertion of the virtues of individual self-reliance:

Arrietty [determined voice]: Oh no you don’t. Sometimes you have to stand up and fight for the things that are worth fighting for. (00:58:46–52)

This quintessentially American declaration is about as far from the Japanese 「仕方がない」 attitude to natural disaster as can be imagined, but also from the psychological and satirical tenor of the scene in Norton’s novel. It is one example among many of the ways in which various versions of a story reflect distinctions that go far beyond culturally opaque words and objects.

It is tempting to take the next step, and suggest that the differences between the Japanese, American and British versions of the story highlighted in this article (and they could easily be multiplied), reflect significant differences in their respective national cultures. I am inclined to believe this; however, further research is required, since many other factors were involved in the creation of the film and its English-language dubs. Perhaps the most significant of these is the specific culture of the Walt Disney Company, which has a decades-long tradition of adapting literary texts, often quite freely, in accordance with its own aesthetic and ethos. Disney’s greater latitude in making changes to the characterization, dialogue and tone of *The Borrower Arrietty*, in comparison to the more “faithful” Studio Canal adaptation, may reflect its company culture as much as any more general differences between the USA and the UK. That said, Disney does not exist in a vacuum: it both reflects, and has done much to shape, aesthetic and narrative practice in American popular culture, as well as ideas about desirable family relationships and personal values. The position of Studio Ghibli within Japanese culture is probably not quite so dominant, but it too has a complex and mutually-influential relationship with the wider culture of which it is a part. These are methodological complications in a study such as this one, but they are also part of the reason why the existence of the two English-language dubs for *The Borrower Arrietty* offers both a unique opportunity for linguistic and cultural comparison, and an illuminating perspective on these two studios’ working practices, as well as on the broader markets for which their productions are created.

Notes

- (1) The part of Arrietty herself was played by the Irish actress Saoirse Ronan, although she used an English accent for the role. See also, “Ghibli’s *Arrietty* to Have Different Dub Casts”, 2011.
- (2) This is not counting the translations made for the English-language subtitles, which differ from the script used in the dubs. For the purpose of this article I will concentrate on the dubs, as representing the versions most likely to be viewed by Western child viewers.
- (3) Given that Kirkpatrick is familiar with Norton’s novel (for example, inserting a reference to the novel’s Aunt Egglestina [Norton, 43–44, *SWOA*, 00:05:17], a character not mentioned in Ghibli’s adaptation), it is striking that he chose not to revert to Norton’s original names for the novel’s human characters. It may be that the technical requirements of lip-synching meant that he needed names with the same number of syllables as the Japanese (“Mrs Driver” demands four syllables to “Haru-san”’s three, for example), or he may have decided that a degree of artistic independence from both his sources was needed for his American audience.

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〔Cardiff University, Senior Lecturer (児童文学) 2017 年度在外個人研究員〕

