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# A Genealogy of Literal Translation in Modern Japan

Akira Mizuno

## Introduction

Itamar Even-Zohar begins his seminal essay “The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem” with a comment on the major role translation has played in “the crystallization of national culture” (1990 [1978]). According to Even-Zohar, translation actively shapes the center of the polysystem and exerts innovatory forces within the system, especially “when there are turning points, crises or literary vacuums” (*ibid.*, p. 47). Meiji Japan was undoubtedly at a crucial turning point, emerging from the feudal system to become a modern nation state, and finding itself under the threat of colonialism after more than two hundred years of self-imposed isolation from the rest of the world (from 1641 to 1854)—except for a small Dutch trading post in Nagasaki. The Meiji Restoration of 1868 marked the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate and officially ushered in a new cultural era. In order to establish itself as a respected nation in the world and to avoid exploitation by Western powers, Meiji Japan was determined to close the gap between itself and these Western countries both economically and militarily. Two mottos widely repeated in those days were *bunmei kaika* (“civilization and enlightenment”) and *fukoku kyōhei* (“enrich the nation; strengthen its armies”). Drastic reforms were carried out in practically all areas of Japanese civilization in an effort to achieve rapid modernization.

Everything was in flux and the literary polysystem was no exception. A new literary system had not yet taken shape,

and during the first two decades of the Meiji era no work truly deserving to be called literature was produced. As if to fill the literary void, many Western texts, in both pragmatic and literary fields, were translated or adapted into Japanese. The translations of such works as Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help*, the novels of politicians like Bulwer-Lytton and Disraeli, and the science fiction of Jules Verne were widely welcomed. Thus, in the literary polysystem, translations generally held a superior position over original Japanese writings until the Naturalist movement took shape around 1908. In the early Meiji period, there were two types of translation: full translation and adaptive translation. The style of the translation was either *kanbun* (classical Chinese writing) or *gesaku* (light literature of the Tokugawa period) (von Schwerin-High, 2004, p. 35), and the primary translation mode for literary texts in this period was adaptation (Miller, 2001, p. 4; Kondō and Wakabayashi, 1998, p. 489). It should be noted, however, that translation and adaptation coexisted until the middle of the Meiji period, when adaptation was eclipsed by literal translation as the major mode of translation (Miller, 2001, p. 13).

As Gideon Toury indicates, translation norms are unstable and changing entities with complex structures (1995, pp. 62-63). He also suggests the possibility of the coexistence of three types of competing norms: the mainstream norm, the remnants of a previous norm and the rudiments of a new norm. Modern Japan is a case in point. John Scott Miller does not use the term "norm," but his argument for the changing roles of translation and adaptation within the modern Japanese literary polysystem hints at the dynamic nature of norms competing for the dominant position in such a system (2001, p. 13). After the replacement of adaptive translation by full translation, a new set of competing norms developed on the translational scene in modern Japan: the literal translation norm and the free translation norm.

In order to reconstruct the translational norms in modern Japan, this paper will focus mainly on the theoretical, semi-theoretical and critical discourses on translation (Toury, 1995, p. 65). These theoretical discourses on translation may unconsciously reflect the mainstream norm or they may be an

adversarial discourse against a superior competing norm. These discourses may themselves become a dominant norm or may be overwhelmed by another competing norm. This paper will trace the translational discourses of translators, critics and writers to suggest that from the middle of the Meiji period, up to and including the post-World War II period, the literal translation strategy (or adequate translation) was considered to be a superior translational norm as compared to the free translation strategy (or acceptable translation), and that the translated works of Western literature rendered according to the literalist norm have exerted a profound influence on the formation and development of modern Japanese literature.

Before examining the literal tradition, a few words on free translation are in order. The free translation strategy existed in the Japanese translation tradition before the Meiji period. In the eighteenth century, Ban Kōkei (1733-1806) stated, in a section of his *Kunitsufumi Yoyo no Ato* entitled “Yakumon no Jō (On Translation)”, that translators should make full use of their minds to capture the meaning of the source text, thus recommending free translation (Ban, 1993 [1777], pp. 48-53). According to Sugimoto, “Yakumon no Jō” may be the first theoretical statement on translation in Japan (1996, p. 74).

The tradition of free translation persisted into the Meiji period. Kimura states that *Fukkatsu* (1908), the translation of Leo Tolstoy’s *Воскресение* (*Resurrection*) by Uchida Roan (1868-1929), was representative of the kind of communicative and fluent translation which was readable and understandable for Japanese readers (1972, p. 376). It should be noted, however, that many translators who were regarded as advocates of the free translation strategy had two conflicting translational attitudes. For example, in the preface of his translation *Kaichōon*—an anthology of poems from a variety of sources—Ueda Bin (1874-1916), famous for his domesticating translations, described his translation strategy as follows:

A translator who is trying to transplant the beauty of the poetry of a foreign language should take care not to sacrifice the novel

flavor of the poetry for the reason that there is a wealth of domestic poetic expressions. (Ueda, 1962 [1905], p. 16)<sup>1</sup>

Despite this comment, however, Shaku Chōkū (1887-1953) (Shaku Chōkū is a pseudonym of Origuchi, but he wrote this article under the name Shaku Chōkū) criticized Ueda's translations as too domesticating:

Ueda's translation technique is more than perfect. However, his translation seems to have totally Japanized the color and flavor of the original poems. [...] Even if the object of translation is literature, the translation technique need not be literary. My translation seems misleading. Put it as follows. "The translator should attach greater importance to linguistic understanding of the original works and the reproduction of the subtle shades of the source language than to the effort to give translation literary status in the target language." I admire Ueda's translation techniques but the problem is that he has translated literature and has produced literature. (Shaku, 1963 [1950], p. 592)

Origuchi's criticism notwithstanding, it cannot be denied that Ueda was cautioning translators not to be too domesticating. In reality, it is hard to find a purely free or literal translation as the translators of the twentieth century "use the practice of blending domesticating and defamiliarizing devices" (von Schwerin-High, 2004, p. 8). Therefore, it should be kept in mind that translators with a literalist slant, who will be further examined below, often adopted a free translational approach when necessary.

### **The Literal Tradition**

This section will focus primarily on the literalist tradition of the two competing translational norms and trace the development of the literal translation strategy as of the middle of the Meiji period.

It is generally acknowledged that before 1885, many translators had taken great liberties with original works, focusing

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1 All English translations of Japanese texts are mine unless otherwise indicated.

more on conveying content than on conveying literary flavor (Kondō and Wakabayashi, 1998, p. 489; Yanagida, 1961, p. 36). New ground was broken by the translation of *Kenelm Chillingly* (*Keishidan*) (von Schwerin-High, 2004, p. 36),<sup>2</sup> in the preface of which the translator explained his literal translation strategy, which gave priority to the form of the original language.

The novel is the art of language. Therefore, it goes without saying that its beauty lies in the combination of form and content. However, many translators are concerned only with its content and pay no attention to its form.

I have tried to create a new translational style by making certain that the formal features of the original remain as they are as much as possible in the translation. For that reason I did not mind violating Japanese conventions because it is often impossible to translate the minute and elaborate expressions of the original work. (Fujita and Ozaki, 1885, pp. 1-2)

Asahina Chisen, the translator of *Keishidan*, was prepared, just as Even-Zohar suggests, to “violate home conventions” so that “the translation [would] be close to the original in terms of adequacy” (Even-Zohar, 1990, p. 50). As Yanagida Izumi puts it, “with the appearance of this translation, translators gained for the first time the wholly conscious expression of a translation strategy” and “the content-centered, unconscious translation strategy was replaced by a conscious translation strategy that put emphasis on both content and form” (Yanagida, 1961, p. 59). Yoshitake describes the features of the style of *Keishidan* and calls it *shūmitsuyaku* (“precise translation style”):

The style of this translation was based mainly on the traditional *kanbun* style, blending *kango* (phrases that consist of Chinese characters) and *kana* (Japanese phonetic alphabet) to give the translated text a softer flavor, a kind of translation style called

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2 Though the official translators of this book were Fujita Meikaku (1852-1892) and Ozaki Tsuneo (dates of birth and death unknown), the actual translation work was conducted by Asahina Chisen (1862-1939), who was a student at Tokyo Imperial University at the time (Yanagida, 1961, p. 60). It was a common practice in the Meiji period to publish a book written or translated by an obscure writer or translator under the name of an influential author with his permission.

*shūmitsuyaku* (precise translation style), attributed to Morita Shiken. (Yoshitake, 1973, p. 134)

*Shūmitsuyaku*—a kind of literal translation style—was perfected by Morita Shiken (1861-1897) (Yanagida, 1961, p. 112), who was a prolific translator of such Western writers as Jules Verne, Victor Hugo, Charles Dickens, Washington Irving and Nathaniel Hawthorne. In his essay “Hints on Translation,” Morita asserted that even an idiomatic expression such as “engrave in one’s mind” should be translated literally into the target language, and never be rendered into a corresponding idiomatic expression found in the target language (*kimo ni meizu*, i.e., “impress on the liver”), because a literal translation conveys not only the meaning of the idiomatic expression but also how Westerners express the meaning of the corresponding Japanese concepts (1991 [1887a]). He also argues against the use of maxims and proverbs stemming from the target language. In another essay “The Future of the Japanese Language,” he argued that, in the future, the Japanese language would be what he calls a “communicative but at the same time literal translation style,” which closely follows the arrangements of expressions and phrases of Western languages (Morita, 1981 [1887b], p. 237). This may sound as if Morita was strongly advocating a literal, source language-oriented, foreignizing translation style, but in a personal letter to Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859-1935), a translator of Shakespeare as well as an influential playwright, novelist and literary theorist, he maintains that flexible translation strategies should not be dismissed in favor of literalism:

However, the gap between Japanese and foreign [Western] languages is so wide that one translation strategy does not work on all occasions. There would be instances when one has no recourse but to replace verbs in the source language with nominal phrases, convert adjectives into adverbs, paraphrase short expressions in longer sentences and make long expressions shorter. (Morita, 1991 [1892], p. 289)

Akiyama compares Morita’s translation of Edgar Allan Poe with a more recent one and praises Morita’s version as having no looseness or unevenness, adding that it is understandable that the translations of Futabatei Shimei were greatly influenced by

the tone of Morita's translations (1995, pp. 181-182). Tayama Katai indicated that after the publication of Morita's translation of *Choses Vues* by Victor Hugo (*Tantei Yūberu*),<sup>3</sup> some expressions from his translation, such as “Kare wa kakuno gotoku seri” (“He did like that”), became fashionable among young intellectuals (Tayama 1909, pp. 178-179)—a fact which suggests the considerable influence his translations had. Citing Tayama's comment, Kimura argues that it was by carefully reading the translation of *Choses Vues* and deeply respecting *shūmitsuyaku*, that Futabatei Shimei produced such supreme translational works as *Aibiki* in Meiji Japan (Kimura, 1972, p. 391).

### **Futabatei Shimei and *Genbun itchi***

It is widely acknowledged that the year 1888, when *Aibiki*, Futabatei Shimei's (1864-1909) translation of Turgenev's *Свидание* (*The Rendez-vous*) was published, marks a new phase in the history of modern translation in Japan (von Schwerin-High, 2004, p. 36). With the translation of *Aibiki*, Futabatei consolidated the foundation of the modern Japanese literary language which unified the spoken and the written language (*genbun itchi*). *Aibiki* is accorded high regard not only because it set the standard for translated literature, but also because it exerted a revolutionary influence on writers of the Meiji period in terms of form and content (Yanagida, 1961, p. 138). Kimura praises Futabatei's translation, saying that it was he who set the foundation for *genbun itchi*, not Yamada Bimyō or Ozaki Kōyō, and that Futabatei's contribution was greater (1972, p. 391). As noted above, however, Futabatei learned much from Morita Shiken's translations and adopted a literal approach in his own translations. He explained his translation policy in an essay entitled “Yo ga honyaku no hyōjun” (1961[1906]):

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3 Morita's version was actually an indirect translation from the English version *Things Seen*. It is not known which copy text Morita used for his translation. Takahashi Osamu, who made a recension of *Tantei Yūberu*, speculates that the text Morita used may be *Things Seen* which was published in 1887 by Harper & Brothers Publishers in New York. The translator's name is unknown.



When translating from a foreign language, putting too much emphasis on meaning may ruin the original. As I believed that translators should fully understand the tone of the original, I tried to retain even the commas and periods of the original. If the original sentence had three commas and one period, I tried to transfer them into the translated text as they are, thus retaining the tone of the original. (Futabatei, 1961 [1906], p. 218)

The “literalness” of *Meguriai*, Futabetei’s translation of Turgenev’s *Tpu вcмpeчy* (*Three Encounters*), which was published later in 1888, was more conspicuous than that of *Aibiki*. The translation of *Meguriai* was so literal as to sacrifice Japanese syntax, even approaching unintelligibility (Kimura, 1956, pp. 43-44). Futabetei’s literalism seems to come from the fact that he placed high value on the source texts. He himself admitted that his translation was “awkward and clumsy,” (Futabatei, 1961 [1906], p. 218) and it gained only a poor reputation among many contemporary writers. However, young readers favored the language of his translations, and young writers thought that it opened an avenue for a newer language with which to capture reality. As Nakamura notes, young contemporary writers such as Shimazaki Tōson, Tayama Katai, Yanagita Kunio and Kanbara Ariake developed their poetics by reading this translation (1959, pp. 67-68).

Futabetei’s translational works not only contributed greatly to the realization of *genbun itchi* (unification of the written and spoken forms of a language or the vernacularization of written Japanese) which had been an enormous challenge for the literary language of the early Meiji period, but also radically changed the attitude of the Japanese people towards nature (Kimura, 1956, pp. 43-44; Akiyama, 1998, pp. 238-240). Until then the Japanese sense of beauty had been confined to *kachōfūgetsu* (“flowers, birds, wind and moon”)—a symbolic expression for the traditional attitude towards nature, which the Japanese had learned from Chinese literature. Futabetei tried to do away with the connotations and clichés of traditional Japanese literature (Kaganoi, 2002, p. 125) by introducing the attitude that sees nature as *the Other* (Satō, 1995, p. 376). This new attitude can be clearly observed in the short story *Musashino* (1898) written

by Kunikida Doppo, in which the author wrote that he had come to appreciate the beauty of deciduous forests thanks to Futabatei's scenery sketch in the opening paragraph of *Aibiki*. Indeed, Kunikida is said to have transcribed Futabatei's translation. In fact, as Karatani indicates, what most influenced Kunikida and other writers of the time was not the style of Futabatei's novel *Ukigumo* but his translation *Aibiki* (1998, p. 40).

## Grand Japanese vs. Petit Japanese

In the early Taishō period (1912-1926), Ikuta Chōkō (1882-1936) denounced the entirely Japanese domesticating translations, such as those done by Uchida Roan, as “petit-Japanese” and asserted the virtue of translations which were more faithful to the Western source language. He called the latter “grand-Japanese,” writing in the introduction to his translation of Flaubert's *Salammô*:

I have tried to translate this work so it would look more overtly translational than my earlier translation of *The Triumph of Death* (English version of *Il Trionfo della Morte* by Gabriele D'Annunzio). In particular, when translating conversation, I have taken special care to use “universal” Japanese in order not to remind readers (by register or diction) of a certain time or class in Japanese history. I have also tried to avoid the use of the “petit-Japanese” of the past and paid attention to prepare for the future “grand-Japanese.” I would like to ask readers to permit me to say that this is my stubborn predilection and translation policy. (Ikuta, 1913, p. 5)

This statement was a “bold challenge” to the “acceptable” and “domesticating” translation norm which was actively competing with the “adequate” and literal translation norm at the time (Kimura, 1972, p. 377). The influence of the translation of *Salammô* is evident in the short story *Nichirin* (1923) by Yokomitsu Riichi—especially its frozen (very formal and archaic) style of conversation—which paved the way for his literary fame. The writers of the *Shin-kankaku-ha* movement (New Sensationalists), of which Yokomitsu was one of the major figures, made conscious efforts to adopt a new style introduced by the literal translations of Western literary works. Another short story by Yokomitsu, *Atama narabini Hara* (1924), gave rise to a

controversy in the literary world of Japan because of its novel style, which by combining inanimate subjects and transitive verbs mirrored the construction found in Western languages. The two opening sentences of the story can be translated back into English simply as “The super express train was running at top speed. Small stations along the line were ignored like stones.” According to the literary critic Odagiri Susumu, this bold personification was quite an unprecedented expression in Japanese literature<sup>4</sup> (1974, p. 82).

***Shin-Kankaku-ha*<sup>5</sup> (New Sensationalists) and Paul Morand’s *Ouvert la nuit***

Ikuta Chōkō (2003 [1925]), the translator of *Salammbô*, took a critical attitude towards *Shin-Kankaku-ha* with regards to *Yoru Hiraku* (1924), the translation of Paul Morand’s *Ouvert la nuit* by Horiguchi Daigaku (1865-1945). Immediately after Ikuta’s comment, counterarguments were raised by Ito Einosuke (2003 [1925]), Inagaki Taruho (2003 [1925]) and Kataoka Teppei (2003 [1925]). This controversy centered around the literal translation style of Horiguchi’s translation, which seemed to have an important effect on the writers of *Shin-Kankaku-ha*. Horiguchi’s translation included such rhetorical devices as simile, personification and allusion, through the use of which *Shin-Kankaku-ha* came to be designated as such (Usui, 1959, p. 290). Horiguchi states in the preface of his translation:

Paul Morand’s style frightens people. Why? The reason is quite simple. A new stylist with high sensitivity and keen insight combines entities as a new configuration in a manner that has not been tried before. In the traditional style, entities were combined by “the logic of reason” while Morand replaced it by “the logic of sensation.” (Horiguchi, 1924, p. 16)

However, Ikuta flatly denied the novelty of the style, proclaiming that if people were astonished by the newness of the expressions of *Yoru Hiraku*, it was because they had no knowledge

4 This is somewhat of an overstatement. Other writers of earlier times such as Natsume Sōseki sporadically used such constructions.

5 The Japanese suffix “*ha*” means “school of thought” or “group.”

of the expressions developed by *haiku* and that there was nothing new in this novel (2003 [1925], pp. 474-483). This was ironic and even comical because he criticized the writers of *Shin-Kankaku-ha* without knowing that their writing style was strongly influenced by his translation of *Salammbô* (Senuma, 1970, pp. 403-404). While Inoue acknowledges the alienating effects of some of the expressions in Horiguchi's translation (1994, p. 359), Watanabe points out that the original French expressions were not so novel as to create alienating effects (1980, p. 175). To illustrate, let us cite a passage from *Ouvert la nuit*:

J'allais voyager avec une dame. Déjà, une moitié d'elle *garnissait* le compartiment. L'autre moitié, penchée hors de la portière, appartenait encore à la gare de Lausanne et à une délégation d'hommes de nationalités diverses, noués au quai par une même ombre, unis par une églantine semblable à la boutonnière. Des sonneries *grelottaient*. Les voyageurs *coulaient* sur l'asphalte. (Morand, [1922] 1992, p. 78) [My italics]

Watanabe admits some alienating impact in Horiguchi's translation of "une moitié d'elle *garnissait* le compartiment" as "half of her body adorned the compartment," especially his use of the verb *kazatteita* ("adorned" or "decorated"), but says that the impact becomes much weaker in the cases of "grelottaient" and "coulaient" in just the same way as in French. He suggests that the seemingly novel style of *Yoru Hiraku* may rather have been the novelty of its use of literal translation by Horiguchi, modeled on Morand's expressions (Watanabe, 1989, p. 176).

### **Nogami Toyochirō and the "Monochromatic Translation" Strategy**

Nogami Toyochirō (1883-1950)'s *Honyakuron* (*On Translation*) epitomized the theory of the literalist tradition in the history of Japanese translation. He advocated producing a "monochromatic translation" when a translator could not reproduce "equi-quantitative effects" (meaning: similar stylistic effects) in the target language. Nogami admonished that if a translator could not reproduce the tone of the original, he should refrain from painting the translation with "his own cheap colors" (Nogami, 1938, p. 101). This approach is a kind of literalism whereby no

attempt will be made to make the translation more accessible to the target audience. Nogami claims that when translating Western literature, the translator should make translations more like foreign products, instead of taking the domesticating translation approach, and recommends actively incorporating foreign styles and expressions into the Japanese translation, thus enriching the expressive potential of this language (Nogami, 1938, pp. 224-229). Although Kobayashi Hideo, an influential literary critic, expressed his approval of Nogami's approach (Kobayashi, 1938/1968, p. 256), it is unclear to what extent Nogami's book exerted influence on the actual work of translation.

A brief overview of the comments and statements about literal translations will reveal the profound influence these had on the creation and development of the modern Japanese literary polysystem. It may have been a mistake on the part of translators and writers to think that literally translated Western styles and expressions would bring fresh expressions into the Japanese language and culture. However, as we have seen, regardless of the intentions of those translators and writers, the literal translation approach contributed to the formation and development of modern literary movements in Japan.

### **Linguistic Features of Literal Translation**

Up to this point, the meaning of the term "literal translation" has not been specified. But what precisely does it mean? What were the actual features of the literal translation of Western (Indo-European) languages?

Inoue, for one, points out that a typical feature of literal translation is the transference into Japanese of a construction which has a material or abstract noun as a subject (1996, p. 54), just as we have seen in Yokomitsu Riichi's work. With regard to this, Yamanaka suggests that the Japanese language is averse to the combination of an inanimate subject and a transitive verb (1998, p. 116). So a sentence like "Curiosity prevented me from going" (from *Kinkakuji* by Mishima Yukio) is conspicuous within the Japanese text because it is contrary to the convention of the Japanese language. Yamanaka argues that such a construction

meant introducing a “fresh” usage into an environment where animate subjects were used predominantly.

However, what translations bring into the target system is not limited to these constructions alone. Literal translation entails many other linguistic features. Kisaka defines *ōbunmyaku* (“Indo-European style construction”) as “the expressions and styles brought into the Japanese language by literal translations of European languages, which deviate from domestic conventions and in which their foreignness is kept intact” (1987, p. 124). He enumerates twelve grammatical forms that make *ōbunmyaku* possible in Japanese: (1) the explicit use of personal pronouns as subject or object; (2) the use of “it” as the third person singular neutral pronoun; (3) the use of “it” as an impersonal pronoun; (4) expressions that mimic relative clauses; (5) the use of inanimate subjects with transitive verbs; (6) the passive voice of an impersonal subject; (7) the use of generic subjects (we, you); (8) the formal subject-object construction (it-that construction); (9) inversions; (10) the have-construction; (11) the make-construction; and (12) the give-construction (causative verb construction). One can add to this list the use of reflexive pronouns, various tenses and such rhetorical devices as similes, metaphors and personification.

As Toury observes, translations always engender some change, however slight, in the target system, as translations “tend to deviate from its sanctioned patterns on one level or another, not least because of the postulate of retaining invariant at least some features of the source text” (1995, pp. 27-28). What is noteworthy is the fact that the translations Toury is referring to include both acceptable and adequate translations. However, the degree to which the features of the source text are retained is, by definition, higher in literal translation than in free translation. If a translation is “exceedingly literal,” it will contain “numerous awkward expressions” (Malmkjær, 2005, p. 31), to which we could add the “unnaturalness” and “abstruseness” of expressions. Moreover, in the case of the translation of relative clauses from English into Japanese for example, “exceedingly literal” translation would run the risk of overloading the capacity of the reader’s working memory (for further discussion of this topic, see Mizuno, 2005).

**Iwano Hōmei and *Bōyaku***

Iwano Hōmei (1873-1920) introduced another kind of literal translation, which he called *bōyaku* (“linear translation”). In his preface to *Hyōshōha no Bungaku Undō* (1996 [1913]), his translation of Arthur Symonds’ *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), Iwano wrote:

Permit me to say first that I don’t think loose, free translation is a good translation method, nor the odd literal translation done in the past. Contemporary translators [...] pay scant attention to the tone and force of the original expressions, convinced that the translation method doesn’t matter, whether it is free translation or otherwise, unless they engage in literal translation. But I think this is an unkind translation, not to say mistranslation. [...] I have tried to render each phrase linearly from the beginning of the sentence. I translated complex and coordinate clauses connected with conjunctives like “for” and “while” in that order, not reversing the order of the clauses, because that is the way to faithfully retain the tone, the force and the features of the original. (Iwano, 1996 [1913], p. 291)

This approach is not an original idea to be attributed solely to Iwano because translators such as Morita Shiken had already tried it, albeit only partially, and a popular introductory book about rhetoric *Sakubun Kōwa oyobi Bunpan* (*Composition and Collection of Illustrative Sentences*) published in 1912 had even recommended in a section on translation not to reverse the clause order connected with “when, which, while, that” (Haga and Sugitani, 1993 [1912], p. 306).

The reactions to Hōmei’s translation were largely negative (see for example Kanbara, 1973 [1914], pp. 81-91). However, its influence was enormous. Young writers and poets of the time, such as Saitō Mokichi, Kajii Motojirō, Ibuse Masuji, Kobayashi Hideo, Nakahara Chūya and Tominaga Tarō were all, in various ways, deeply impressed by the translation (Eto, 1969 [1961]; Kamei, 1973; Higuchi, 1986, 1994). A few comments suffice to illustrate how influential Hōmei’s translation was:

In retrospect, the influence that this strange translation, replete with mistranslations and dogmatism, exerted upon young

intellectuals in the late Taishō period is so profound that it is unfathomable. (Eto, 1969 [1961], p. 111)

I was nurtured by this book during my critical, formative years. At that time, my circle of acquaintances was limited to Kobayashi Hideo and Nakahara Chūya. The three of us conversed with each other, using vocabulary derived from Hōmei's book. (Kawakami, 1969 [1934], p. 160-161)

With regard to Hōmei's approach to translation, Inoue points out that the former's arguments consisted of two logical short-circuits or misconceptions (1994, pp. 353-354). First, Hōmei erroneously thought that a "literal" word-for-word translation was possible and, second, he erroneously believed that recreating the original word order would produce a "precise translation," without taking into account the structural differences between European languages and Japanese. Referring to Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator," Inoue also observes that a literal translation is meaningful only when it disturbs the target language with "pure language" and expands the possibility of expression in the target language (1996, p. 65).

In the introduction to his translation, Iwano Hōmei also notes that "Fresh thoughts require fresh expressions" (Iwano, 1996 [1913], p. 239), but what he considered to be fresh thoughts were nothing of the sort, but rather mundane idioms or ordinary phrases. Only when they were translated literally into Japanese did they seem to be "fresh." There is no guarantee that Hōmei's *bōyaku* reliably produces "fresh styles." Higuchi Satoru, a literary critic and the fifth translator of *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* in Japan, points out that although Symons' style has a roundabout complexity typical of the late Elizabethan era, it is quite different from Hōmei's style which in turn represents the transition period of modern Japan (Higuchi 1994, p. 127). However, with regard to the significance of Hōmei's translation, Higuchi observes:

As Walter Benjamin put it in his essay "The Task of the Translator," if translation is like "fragments of a vessel which are to be glued together," which "must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another,"



and the translator “must expand and deepen his language by means of the foreign language,” translation would present an “alternative view” to the conventions of the target language. If so, his [Hōmei’s] translation, in spite of its lack of fluency and elegance as Japanese, may be one more of orthodoxy than heresy. (Higuchi, 1994, p. 133) [The fragments from Benjamin’s text are translated by Harry Zohn]

The “alternative view” Higuchi refers to reminds us of the term “hidden meaning” which, according to Serpieri and Elam, translators discover in the process of translation and use to “revitalize or regenerate the text, renewing its secret energy” (Serpieri and Elam, 2002, p. 4). They indicate that revitalizing the text is also achieved by the estrangement or alienation that translations bring to the target language, thereby releasing “new expressive potentialities” (Serpieri and Elam, 2002, p. 4). Estrangement or alienating effects can be achieved by a literal translation which creates a text with an unfamiliar structure, by the introduction of which the translation eventually reconfigures the target language. Still, we cannot fully understand why Iwano Hōmei’s translation, charged with “feverish and kinetic energy” (Higuchi 1994, p. 126), has left a lasting imprint on the history of Japanese translation and literature at its critical juncture.

Another point should be added regarding the significance of Iwano Hōmei’s *bōyaku* translation. As Inoue aptly points out, Iwano’s *bōyaku* strategy—a strategy to preserve the original word order or constituent order so as to recreate the logical and sensory flow of the original—did not work as intended (1994, p. 356). However, it should be mentioned that *bōyaku*, provided that it becomes more sophisticated, can produce a translation which strengthens otherwise loose lexical and intersentential cohesion. It can also reproduce theme-rheme structure and the old-new informational flow, thereby guaranteeing illocutionary effects and coherence. By comparing Iwano’s translation with the more recent translations by Maekawa (1993) and Yamagata (2006), one can appreciate the potential of Iwano’s approach. Although English back translation does not make much sense here, three translations are cited below so as to show the information structure and the division of the original sentences.

Original of Arthur Symons' *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*:

"I like to arrange my life as if it were a novel," wrote Gerard de Nerval, and, indeed, it is somewhat difficult to disentangle the precise facts of an existence which was never quite conscious where began and where ended that "overflowing of dreams into real life," of which he speaks. (1997 [1899], p. 13)

*Translation by Iwano Hōmei*:

"I like to arrange my life as if it were a novel," described Gerard de Nerval. Indeed, what is somewhat difficult to disentangle are the precise facts of an existence, and the existence was quite unconscious where began and where ended that "overflowing of dreams into real life," of which he speaks. (1996 [1913], p. 299)

*Translation by Maekawa Yūichi (1926 -)*:

"I like to arrange my life as if it were a novel," wrote Gerard de Nerval, and, indeed, to disentangle the precise facts of such a person who was never quite conscious of where began and where ended that "overflowing of dreams into real life," of which he speaks, is a somewhat troublesome task. (1993, p. 15)

*Translation by Yamagata Kazumi (1934 -)*:

"I like to arrange my life as if it were a novel," wrote Gerard de Nerval, and, indeed, to disentangle the precise facts which constitute such a man who was never conscious of where began and where ended that phenomenon of "overflowing of dreams into real life," of which he speaks, is somewhat difficult. (2006, p. 75)

Though English back translations cannot reproduce the exact word order, the translations by Maekawa and Yamagata are certainly more readable and natural than Iwano's translation as far as the Japanese language is concerned. However, the two recent versions, by interfering with the word order and forcing the reader to make a detour, weaken the illocutionary effects of the original and somewhat disrupt the flow of meaning. Iwano's translation is

more awkward and unnatural in terms of style and expression than those of Maekawa and Yamagata, but at least it does not dampen the illocutionary effects and the flow of meaning. It is not always easy to reproduce such effects by arranging the word order or phrasal order in the same way as the original because, as Lefevere puts it, “syntax is perhaps the most stringent and least flexible of all the constraints translators must work under since it regulates the order of the words” (1992, p. 78). Especially when one tries to translate between structurally different languages, it takes finesse to evade syntactical constraints successfully and reproduce a word order similar to the original because following the original information flow closely would, in all probability, entail “deconstruction” of the original syntax. Iwano’s “linear” translation approach had the potential of achieving a pragmatic equivalence or equivalence in the information structure by retaining the order of information presentation, thereby freeing the capacity of the reader’s working memory for further processing.

## Conclusion

This paper, postulating that the translational norm of modern Japan has been the coexistence of competing norms, focused on the “literal” tradition in the history of Japanese translation after the Meiji Restoration. The literal translation strategy in modern Japan appears to be similar to Venuti’s “resistant strategies” in that it rejects the fluency of the translated texts and helps “to preserve the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text by producing translations which are strange and estranging” (1992, pp. 12-13). However, Japanese translators who adopted literal translation strategies at that time did not intend to shake the cultural hegemony of the target language, but as Ōsawa puts it, they “did play a major role in remolding the old traditions of Japanese language and literature” whether intentionally or unintentionally (2005, p. 149). From this brief description it follows that one can say that literal translation in its various incarnations has made a significant contribution to the founding and the development of the modern Japanese literary polysystem. Admittedly, it was the avant-garde literature of the time that benefited most from literal translations of Western literature. As Shimada noted, “The cultural history of the Meiji and Taisho

periods might have produced the finest of literature in the forms of adaptation and translation of Western literary works” (1951, p. 2).

Today the “literal” approach seems to have receded into the background, having been replaced by a more target-oriented approach (Furuno, 2002, p. 120).<sup>6</sup> This paper aims to contribute to Translation Studies in Japan by offering a reassessment of the potential of the literal tradition.

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6 Furuno claims that “from the 1970s onward Japanese translators have become more concerned with conforming to Japanese cultural and linguistic norms” and “this trend of adhering to ‘acceptability’ continued to gain increasing popularity into the following decades, although the older norm of ‘adequacy’ still persisted” (2002, p. 120). In her case study, Sato indicates that the norm of “faithful translation” persisted into the early 1970s, but does not work anymore, although arguments concerning the literal- / free-translation dichotomy are still active (2004, p. 194).

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**ABSTRACT: A Genealogy of Literal Translation in Modern Japan** — In modern Japan, especially in the Meiji period (1868-1912), translations occupied a dominant position in the literary polysystem. This paper claims that, since the Meiji period, "competing translational norms" have existed in the Japanese literary polysystem, which is to say that "literal" (adequate) and "free" (acceptable) translations have existed in parallel, vying for superior status. Moreover, this paper traces the literalist tradition in modern Japan. Though "literal" translation has been widely criticized, the styles and expressions it created have made

a significant contribution to the founding and development of the modern Japanese language and its literature. Among the arguments in favor of literal translation, Iwano Homei's literal translation strategy—the so-called “straight translation”—had different features than the others, and thus the potential to produce translations that maintain the cohesion, coherence, information structure and illocutionary effects of the source text.

**RÉSUMÉ : Une généalogie de la traduction littérale dans le Japon moderne** — Dans le Japon moderne, particulièrement à l'ère Meiji (1868–1912), la traduction a occupé une position prédominante dans le polysystème littéraire. Cet article suggère que, depuis l'ère Meiji, il existe des « normes traductionnelles en concurrence » dans le polysystème littéraire japonais, ce qui veut dire que des traductions « littérales » (adéquates) et « libres » (acceptables) existent en parallèle et rivalisent pour obtenir la supériorité. Par ailleurs, cet article retrace la tradition littéraliste dans le Japon moderne. Bien que la traduction « littérale » ait été amplement critiquée, les styles et les expressions qu'elle a produits ont apporté une contribution significative à l'élaboration et au développement de la langue et de la littérature japonaises modernes. Pour plaider en faveur de la traduction littérale, nous prenons l'exemple de la stratégie de Iwano Homei – connue sous le nom de « traduction directe » – qui a des caractéristiques différentes des autres et permet ainsi de produire des traductions qui maintiennent la cohésion, la cohérence, la structure informative et les effets illocutoires du texte de départ.

**Keywords:** Japanese literature, Japanese translation, literary polysystem, literal translation, alienating effect

**Mots-clés :** littérature japonaise, traduction japonaise, polysystème littéraire, traduction littérale, effet d'aliénation

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