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## **Audience Attitude and Translation Reception: The case of Genji Monogatari<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

This article proposes a skopos-based analysis of the English translations of the eleventh century Japanese literary work, Genji monogatari (“The Tale of Genji”) as a means of understanding the basis for the translations’ differing receptions among their target audiences. The translations, by Suematsu Kenchō (1888), Arthur Waley (1926-32), Edward Seidensticker (1976) and Royall Tyler (2001), are widely spaced chronologically and, being published between 1888-2001, were each produced with differing audiences and aims, thus making them a useful corpus for this analysis. In addition, all of the translators have written, with varying degrees of explicitness, about their motivations and purposes in conducting their translations. First, through an analysis of the translators’ writings, introductions, and individual circumstances, the article will demonstrate how the skopos for each translation can be determined. Second, through an analysis and comparison of text excerpts, it will demonstrate how the skopos influenced the translation choices of the individual translators, with material being, for example, omitted, changed in psychological tone, or rendered more explicit, depending upon the individual translator's overriding purpose in their work. Finally, through an

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analysis of the reviews of the various translations, it will consider the extent to which each translator was successful in achieving a positive and intended response to his translation in the target audience.

### **Keywords**

Audience; reception; skopos; Japanese; Genji monogatari

### **Introduction**

Why do some translations succeed, and others fail? Why are some translations, which are originally well-received, later criticised as inadequate? What is it, in fact, which governs the reception of a completed translation? It would be uncontroversial to say that the broad answer to these questions is that reception is determined by the interaction of different factors: the linguistic and semantic content of the translation--its text--as a product of the translator's intentions in performing the translatorial act, as well as their ability to realise those intentions; and the readiness of the target audience to accept a target text with those encoded intentions. When the former and the latter align, then a translation is well-received; if, however, they conflict then the opposite is the case.

This can result in the production of multiple translations of the same text. As was initially suggested by Antoine Berman (1990), this process of the retranslation of a literary text can be seen as a form of progress towards a version which most accurately captures the sense of the original; equally, Yves Gambier (1994) has argued that translations progress from initially being target-oriented, toward more source-oriented versions, these two approaches forming the basis of the so-called "retranslation

hypothesis” as discussed by Andrew Chesterman (2000, 2004). Of course, subsequent work has also demonstrated that the retranslation hypothesis does not hold for literary translation in all contexts (Paloposki and Koskinen 2004), or in other genres of translation (Susam-Sarajeva 2003; Aaltonen 2003), and that a desire to present differing interpretations of a text (Venuti 2004), whether literary (Jenn 2006) or intellectual (St. André 2003) may play a significant role in why some texts are consistently retranslated.<sup>1</sup> An additional feature is that, over time, the composition and attitudes of the audience for a text changes as, indeed, do norms of translation and, therefore, it is almost inevitable that a text produced in one historical period will become less-well-received in a later one, regardless of the intentions and skills of the original translator (Brownlie 2006: 150).

The aim of this article is to demonstrate this process empirically through a study of the English translations of the eleventh century Japanese literary work, *Genji monogatari* (“The Tale of Genji”), and their differing receptions. This work has been chosen because it has been translated multiple times over the period 1880-2000, by a number of translators who have written explicitly about their intentions in, and motivations for, translating the text; the translations themselves have also been extensively reviewed, allowing for an accurate assessment to be made of their reception.

First, we will briefly review existing theories concerning the success of translations and their reception by their target audience, and suggest that judging this can be done by an examination of the translation’s *skopos*, defined as the “purpose of the overall translational action” (Nord 1997: 27). Of course, this must also necessarily include the intended audience, as a key criterion is that the translation should “function

in the situation in which it is used with the people who want to use it” (Nord 1997: 29). Second, in order to demonstrate this, we will discuss the *Genji monogatari* itself, and the purposes of the translators; third, we will examine the strategies employed by the various translators in pursuit of their translation aims through the comparison of a number of excerpts from each of the translation texts; finally we will discuss the reception of these texts, through an analysis of contemporary reviews. This will enable us to draw conclusions about how the translations have influenced the reception of the work by their target audiences.

### **Translation Reception--Theoretical Approaches**

“A successful translation,” says Anthony Pym (2004: 13), “is one that meets its corresponding success conditions,” but those conditions are as varied as there are translations, translators and translation theories. Indeed, the notion of “success” in translation varies depending upon the approach: for some, it means matching a specific range of translation techniques to texts of a particular genre, while maintaining “complete fidelity to the intent of the original author” (Reiss 2000: 16); for others, it is whether the target text can generate an equivalent response in the reader of the translation to that generated in the reader of the original (Nida 1964; Nida and Taber 1969). Some argue that the success of a translation can only be judged in relation to its source (House 1997; Hermans 1996); while others emphasise “not the individual word or the single sentence, but rather the text in context” (Hatim 1999: 202), or how well the target texts fulfils its function in the target culture (Nord 1997). The extent and complexity of this debate is testament to the complexity of translation itself.

It seems to me, however, that any attempt to judge the success of a translation has to take into account the reaction of its intended audience: as a broad generalisation, a translation is a text produced with a specific audience in mind, “a more or less defined group of individuals who may share some cultural models but not others” (Martin de Leon 2008: 19). If that audience does not want to read a translation intended for it, no matter how excellent the translation’s formal qualities may be, it has to be described as less than entirely successful. As a logical extension from this, as part of assessing a translation’s success “it becomes necessary to specify both the relevant target group and the purpose of the translation for each specific case” (Risku 2002: 525), because without this information it is impossible to judge the translation’s extra-linguistic context adequately. In addition, “the success of the translated text is crucially dependent on the expectations of the target audience” (Gutt 1996: 252), both in terms of what a translation should be, and how a text in a particular genre should be expressed, and so what those expectations are also need to be determined.

The expectations an audience has for “translation”, however, as Christiane Nord (1991: 92) suggests, vary between cultures, and within cultures at different times, which is a major reason why translations once judged acceptable can be found wanting later, and “why there will never be a common translation code for all cultures” (Nord 1991: 92). While translators are, of course, able to work contrary to these expectations, and Lawrence Venuti (1995) famously argues that they should, Ernst-August Gutt (1996: 254) points out that even should the translator explain why a non-conventional text has been produced, there is no guarantee that the audience will accept it. Venuti’s own account (Venuti 1998: 18) of his attempt to follow this course is evidence of the accuracy of this insight.

Broadly speaking, then, I would suggest following a functional approach to assessing the success of a translation: determine the text's skopos, including purpose and target audience, and then see how well the target text has fulfilled that purpose and addressed that audience. As a corollary to this, a translation should largely be judged only in terms of its reception on first publication, due to the inevitable changes in audience attitude discussed above. More concretely, one should first determine how well the target text complies with the translator's aims in undertaking the task--what the purpose of the translation is, in other words. In literary translation, this information is often available from translations' introductions, or other writings by the translator. There is a role here for considering the relationship of the target to its source, but the function of any specific translation operation needs to be viewed in terms of whether it is appropriate to fulfil the translation purpose. Second, the reaction of the target audience needs to be judged: again, for literary translation, this could be done on a crudely quantitative level by looking at sales figures, but there is also a role for considering reviews of a translation by critics, as these are likely to be informed, consciously or unconsciously, by the target audience's conventions and expectations, and in the majority of cases, a positive review by critics should indicate a positive response by the audience. Having outlined this method, above, I shall now apply it to the *Genji monogatari* and its translations, first briefly introducing the source text and its significance.

## **Genji monogatari**

Genji monogatari (“The Tale of Genji”) is a lengthy prose narrative written by a woman named Murasaki Shikibu while she was in service at the Japanese imperial court at some point in the period 1000-1011, recounting the life of “Genji”. The protagonist is the son of an emperor, but reduced to the status of a commoner due to a lack of strong familial backing and endures exile and disgrace, before rising to the heights of his society. Genji is portrayed as a paragon: outstandingly handsome, effortlessly graceful and cultivated, and able to excel at anything he attempts. He is also unable to resist the lure of almost any woman who crosses his path, and much of the tale concerns his dealings with a variety of lovers, and the consequences his actions bring, both to himself and the women in his life. The final ten chapters continue the story after his death with the lives of his descendants.

The work occupies a central position in the prose literature of the Heian period (794-1185), which was almost universally written by women, and intended for consumption by the women of the court nobility. Murasaki Shikibu’s audience, therefore, was principally the empress whom she served, and the other ladies of her immediate circle, and there is evidence from contemporary sources that it was evaluated highly.<sup>ii</sup> In the century or so after its composition, the Genji became viewed as a depiction of a Golden Age, and an indispensable resource for anyone who considered themselves cultured, and while its reputation has fluctuated over the centuries, it currently occupies a position in Japanese culture similar to that of the works of Shakespeare in English--simultaneously a source of popular allusion and reference, and object of continued critical study.<sup>iii</sup>

There are currently two partial (Suematsu 1974; McCullough 1994) and three complete translations of *Genji* into English, produced over a period of more than a century and the majority released into quite different socio-cultural circumstances. Each translator had different purposes for their work, each translation was received differently, and all of the translators have, to a greater or lesser extent, discussed either their motivations for translating the work, or their translation practices and strategies, and had their strategies analysed and reviewed by others. This means that there is a wealth of material available which can be used to determine both the translators' intentions in undertaking the work, and the reception of it. In the discussion below, I will focus on the translations by Suematsu Kenchō<sup>iv</sup>, first published in 1882; Arthur Waley (1926-32), Edward Seidensticker, first published in 1976 and Royall Tyler (2001). Helen McCullough's partial version (McCullough 1994) will be omitted as it has attracted least attention, being aimed at "students in survey courses and others who may lack the time to read *The Tale of Genji* and *The Tale of the Heike* in their entirety" (McCullough 1994: ix).

### **Translators of *Genji monogatari***

Suematsu *Kenchō*

Suematsu Kenchō (1855-1920) was sent to Britain in 1878 and, although initially assigned to the Japanese legation, after a period in London, enrolled in Cambridge University where he studied law (Mehl 1993). As someone who was

politically active--he was subsequently elected to the Japanese Diet in the elections of 1890--and in close contact with the highest echelons of the Japanese government, he would clearly have been involved in the campaign to secure revision of the “unequal treaties” the previous Tokugawa regime had been obliged to sign with the western powers in the 1850s. These treaties contained a number of provisions which irked the Japanese, but most galling was extraterritoriality--the powers’ indication that they did not consider the Japanese “civilized” enough to deal with their nationals justly and humanely. Consequently, a major foreign policy aim for the Japanese was to demonstrate their “civilization” to the west, and it is in the light of this that Suematsu's decision to translate *Genji monogatari* must be viewed, as has been previously identified (de Gruchy 2003; Suzuki 2008).

In his English introduction to his translation, Suematsu praises *Genji* as the height of his nation’s literature and, crucially for his purposes, states that he wishes to give readers “information on the history of the social and political condition of my native country nearly a thousand years ago. They will then be able to compare it with the condition of mediaeval and modern Europe” (Suematsu 1974: 17). The clear sub-text here is an emphasis on the “civilized” nature of Japan, and the long history of that civilization.

We can, therefore, characterise the *skopos* for Suematsu’s translation as being political: he was seeking to influence British and American public opinion positively about his Japan, and was, therefore, aiming at a general target audience of educated English language readers. This had a number of implications for his translation strategies and decisions, as will be seen below.

## Arthur Waley

It is difficult to overstate Arthur Waley's (1889-1966) influence on those who followed him. The majority of English translations from classical Japanese, as well as a significant number from classical Chinese published prior to 1950 were produced by him, and while, as will be seen below, these later came in for criticism, it is impossible to deny their initial impact. As Donald Keene (1970: 57) was to write, "he established such strong traditions that it is only fair to say that we all belong to the School of Waley."

Waley's translation of *Genji* was published in six volumes between 1925 and 1932 and, by virtue of its completeness, is an entirely different work from Suematsu's. Moreover, his motivations were entirely different: saying to his publisher, Sir Stanley Unwin, that in *Genji* he had found "one of the two or three greatest novels ever written" (Morris 1970: 75), and later stating that "recreating *The Tale of Genji* as an English novel was the fulfilment of a personal quest" (de Gruchy 2003: 118). This clearly suggests that his intention was to make a major work of literature more widely known by producing a translation that functioned effectively within the conventions of the target literary culture, and that the work was aimed at a general, educated, literature-reading British audience. Although it should also be noted that "sex was used to sell the novel" (de Gruchy 2003), and it was promoted to a female audience by articles written by Waley about the novel in 1924 and published in *Vogue*, and later by a review of the first volume of the translation by Virginia Woolf.

## Edward Seidensticker

The world into which the next full-length Genji translation, by Edward Seidensticker (1976), was released was substantially different from that of Waley. Information about the country was much more widely available, and a substantial quantity of Japanese literature, both modern and pre-modern, had been released in English translation. Equally, Seidensticker himself was a very different translator: unlike Waley who held the position of Assistant Keeper of Oriental Prints and Manuscripts at the British Museum between 1913-29, but then devoted himself largely to his scholarly and literary activities, Seidensticker was embedded firmly within the US academic establishment, holding positions at Stanford, Michigan and Columbia. He was an extremely active translator of modern Japanese literature, translating many of the novels of major figures such as Kawabata Yasunari and Tanizaki Jun'ichirō.

Seidensticker commented upon his motivations for undertaking the retranslation of the work in terms which suggest he wished to correct what he saw as some of the “faults” of the previous version, saying, that the “Waley translation is very free. He cuts and expurgates very boldly [and o]n the whole, his excisions seem merely arbitrary” (1981: xiv). A further criticism was that Waley’s “is a highly ornate piece of work, adding much that may seem very nice but represents elaboration upon the original” (Seidensticker 1980: 23), and suggesting that “the whole of the new translation is implicit comment upon the process,” clearly believing that his own version is better at replicating the “brisker and more laconic” (Seidensticker 1981: xiv) source text.

Equally, however, he viewed his translation as a new literary version of the original, and one to be read by a general audience, commenting that he had deliberately chosen to exclude substantial commentary and annotation to avoid producing “a volume

of notes as big as the translation”, and bluntly saying that this “would not do” (Seidensticker 1981: xii). This corresponds, of course, with the pattern and motivations for retranslation identified by Berman (1990).

### Royall Tyler

Finally, we come to the most recent full-length translation, by Royall Tyler (2001). Like his immediate predecessor, Tyler, too, is an academic as well as a translator, concluding a wide-ranging career as Professor of Japanese at the Australian National University at Canberra. Unlike his predecessor, however, Tyler has written extensively about the work in academic, critical terms (Tyler 1996, 1999, 2003a, 2009) and there can be no doubt that he regards his translation as having “value as a contribution to scholarship on the work” and being “critical to a new interpretation of the entire Tale of Genji” (Tyler 2003b).

His translation, therefore, can be characterised as academic: it possesses an extensive editorial apparatus, with numerous footnotes to explain allusions, customs, geography and so forth, and appendices providing information on aspects of Heian Japan ranging from clothing to typical layout of aristocratic housing. No one reading this can be in any doubt that they are reading a translation, that the world depicted is very different from their own, and that they are being informed and educated about it. In parallel with this, however, the reader is challenged by the text: where Seidensticker’s version “set a new standard of accuracy, and its style was far more accessible to American readers in the 1980’s or 90’s”, Tyler attempts “to draw the modern reader into something like that kind of active engagement”, given that “the original readers of Genji

were in no hurry, and they appreciated a rich, copious work that required them to come forward...to meet it halfway, in a process of fully engaged listening or reading” (Tyler 2003b). It seems feasible to interpret from this that he believes that previous translations have gone too far in the direction of explicating the text, and that his version redresses this balance to some extent by, among other strategies, dispensing with names for characters, making greater attempts to replicate aspects of the structure of interior monologues used in the source text (Midorikawa 2003: 206-13); and translating “long sentences into long sentences” thus “preserv[ing] the discretion and decorum of the narration” (Tyler 2003b), although, as will be seen below, in other areas he has, perhaps, moved further in the direction of explicitation.

The above discussion has shown that the skopoi adopted by the various Genji translators were different: Suematsu’s purpose was primarily political, with his translation being a diplomatic tool to influence western public opinion favourably about Japan, and the audience he targeted was, therefore, the general reading public in the late nineteenth century. Waley, by contrast, had strongly literary motivations, championing *The Tale of Genji* as a work of world literature, but simultaneously assimilating it into British literary culture of the 1920s. He aimed at his peers in the Bloomsbury group, educated women and other general readers.

By the time of Seidensticker’s translation, *The Tale of Genji* had an assured place in the canon of both world, and Japanese, literature. Waley’s translation strategies, however, had come to be regarded as faulty, and it was to produce an accessible and “accurate” Genji that Seidensticker worked. His audience, again, can be said to be a general literature-reading one, although given the fact that Genji was by this time widely taught on Japanese studies degree programmes, it also seems likely that he had

in mind an audience of fellow academics and students, too. Finally, Tyler's version is even more strongly aimed at the academic, scholarly reader with its extensive annotation and replication of source text features. It, too, though, was motivated by a reaction against the explicating translation strategies of earlier translators.

### **Linguistic Examples and Discussion**

The skopoi outlined above influenced the practical translation decisions and strategies followed by the various translators. In order to demonstrate this, we will now compare the translations of some excerpts from the source text, but before doing that it may be beneficial to comment briefly on the nature of the ST language, Heian Japanese.

The language spoken and written in Heian-kyō (present day Kyoto) during the Heian period was an agglutinative, SOV language with a complex verbal morphology. Tense, aspect, mood, voice, negativity and honorifics were all expressed through combinations of affixes attached to verb-stems, which meant that a significant semantic weight was placed on the ends of clauses. Simultaneously, it was a clause-chaining language, allowing for extremely long, grammatical sentences to be produced. Its predicates, however, lacked person, its nouns were indeterminate for number, and its discourse strategies were pro-drop, meaning that material which could be understood from the surrounding context, including syntactic subjects and objects, could be omitted. This placed a strong onus on the reader to interpret and comprehend the text in the light of the material both before and after it (for a full description of the syntax of the language, see Vovin (2003)).

These linguistic features of the language were reinforced by the nature of the society which spoke it: the court aristocracy. This tiny, highly stratified group consisted of the approximately 1100 men allowed to hold court rank, and their families (Miner; Odagiri; and Morrell 1985: 443-69). Given this small population, it is accurate to describe *Genji* as being coterie literature: the close-knit nature of the community permitted oblique expression, the mores of the society encouraged it, and the language's syntactic and discourse structure supported it.

The issues faced by translators in dealing with Heian Japanese texts have been extensively discussed (Morris 1964: 289-94; Miller 1986: 99-114; Seidensticker 1980; 1983; Tyler 2003b) and echo many of those faced by translators of modern Japanese,<sup>v</sup> but in essence these can be reduced to the fact that much of the information required in modern English, both syntactically and in terms of discourse, is omitted from the original texts and needs to be inferred. The temporal and cultural distance of the source culture from the target one, however, makes this extremely difficult, and substantially dependent upon an individual reader's intuitions about the text. Every modern reader of *Genji* in the original is likely to agree, at one point or another, with Seidensticker's remark that "Murasaki must have been called upon countless times to explain herself. The pity is that her answers were not preserved" (Seidensticker 1983: 88). Nevertheless, the text has been translated, and each translator has made decisions dictated by their *skopos*.

In order to demonstrate this, we shall now examine some excerpts from the ST, in conjunction with their translations. First, a brief section from the work's second chapter, *Hahakigi*. *Genji*, the protagonist, is spending the night at the residence of one of his retainers. While there, he has discovered that a door between his sleeping area,

and that of his host's young stepmother, is unlocked, and has brought the lady, Utsusemi, back to his own quarters. The excerpt describes her feelings about this, and his reaction to them:<sup>vi</sup>

- (1) 人柄のたをやぎたるに、強き心をしひて加へたれば、なよ竹の心地して、さすがに折るべくもあらず。まことに心やましくて、あながちなる御心ばへを、言ふ方なしと思ひて、泣くさまなど、いとあはれなり。心苦しくはあれど、見ざらましかば口惜しからまし、と思す。

(Imaizumi Tadayoshi; Mori Shōichi; and Wokazaki Masatsugu 1976: 44)

hitogara no taogitaru ni tsuyoki kokoro o shii- te  
 character GEN gentle DAT be.strong spirit ACC compel PERF  
 kuwae-tare- ba naotake no kokochi shi-te sasugani  
 add PAST when young.bamboo GEN feeling do- PERF certainly  
 oru- beku mo ara-zu makotoni kokoroyamashiku-te  
 break must EMP be- NEG truly be.disturbing- PERF  
 anagachinaru mi- kokorobae o iukatanashi to omoi-te  
 be.unreasonable HON- behaviour ACC be.indescribable Q think- PERF  
 naku sama nado ito aware nari kokorogurushiku wa  
 weep appearance etc. very moving be painful THE  
 are-do mi-zara-mashika-ba kuchioshikara-mashi to obosu  
 be although see NEG MOD if be.regrettable MOD Q think.HON

‘When [she] forced some strength into [her] gentle nature, [she] seemed like [the] young bamboo, and would not ever break. [She] felt [his] disturbing and unreasonable behaviour to be beyond acceptable, and [her] appearance, weeping, was moving, indeed. While [he] felt pained, [he] felt [it] would have been regrettable, had [he] not seen [her].’

In the ST, syntactic subjects and objects are provided by the presence or absence of honorific elements, or inferred through the context. The various translators deal with this section as follows:

To her meek character there was thus added a firm resolution, and it seemed like a young bamboo reed with its strength and tenderness combined, difficult to bend! Still she felt the struggle very keenly, and tears moistened her eyes. Genji could not help feeling touched.

(Suematsu 1974: 64)

She was by nature singularly gentle and yielding, so that the effort of steeling her heart and despite her feelings, playing all the while the part of the young bamboo-shoot which though so green and tender cannot be broken, was very painful to her; and finding that she could not [sic] longer think of arguments with which to withstand his importunity, she burst into tears; and though he was very sorry for her, it occurred to him that he would not gladly have missed that sight.

(Waley 1935: 41-42)

Naturally soft and pliant, she was suddenly firm. It was as with the young bamboo: she bent but was not to be broken. He had his hands full but would not for the world have missed the experience.

(Seidensticker 1981: 43)

Although pliant by nature, she had called up such strength of character that she resembled the supple bamboo, which does not break. Her genuine horror and revulsion at Genji's wilfulness shocked him, and her tears touched him. It pained him to be the culprit, but he knew that he would have been sorry not to have had her.

(Tyler 2001: 40)

Each of the translators has emphasised, or explicated different elements of the same ST, as determined by their skopoi. Suematsu, who wishes to emphasise the civilised and

cultured nature of Japan, has reduced the events' emotional impact compared to that of the ST, and made Genji into a more sympathetic figure, by deleting his consideration of his own emotions at his actions. Waley, on the other hand, changes the psychological tenor of the scene, by inserting elements to suggest that Utsusemi is more of a willing participant: she has to make an "effort" to resist Genji "despite her feelings," but in the end is "unable to think of arguments," and thus by implication must have agreed to the situation. Agency for events is, therefore, shifted more to her than Genji--an appropriate choice for a work marketed to a female audience. Moreover, Suematsu refers to the protagonist with the proper noun, "Genji," while Waley uses the pronoun, "he": this encourages readers to project themselves into the situation, making the text more involving and engaging. The English, too, is appropriately literary, matching Waley's purpose of recreating Genji as an English novel.

Seidensticker, in keeping with his belief in the ST's "briskness," and to avoid Waley's "elaboration" has produced a much briefer version, mainly by omitting the original's description of the characters' emotional states and the consequent emphasis on the illicit nature of the situation. The result is, of course, easily comprehensible by a general audience. Finally, Tyler's version strikes a middle ground between Waley's elaboration and Seidensticker's terseness, but goes further than either in explicating the text, choosing the emphatic "horror and revulsion" to describe Utsusemi's emotions, and clarifying the meaning of *miru* "see" in the ST, which is a euphemistic expression for sexual contact.

Similar strategies can be seen in a later incident from the work's eighth chapter, *Hana no en*, "The Festival of the Cherry Blossoms." The evening after the end of the titular festival at the imperial palace, Genji has found a door unlocked on the *Kokiden*,

one of the palace buildings. On entering, he encounters a young noblewoman,

Oborozukiyo:

- (2) やをら抱き下ろして、戸は押し立てつ。あさましきにあきれたるさま、いとなつかしうをかしげ  
なり。わななくわななく、「ここに、人」と、のたまへど、「まろは、皆人に許されたれば、召  
し寄せたりとも、なんでふことかあらむ。ただ、忍びてこそ」

(Imaizumi Tadayoshi; Mori Shōichi; and Wokazaki Masatsugu 1976: 167)

yaora idaki- oroshi- te to wa oshitate- tsu  
gently embrace lie.down PERF door THE push.close PAST  
asamashikini akiretaru sama ito natukashū okashigenari  
extremely be.startled appearance very be.moving be.charming  
wananaku wananaku koko ni hito to notamae-do maro wa  
trembling trembling here LOC person Q say.HON-although I THE  
minabito ni yurusa-re- tare- ba meshiyose- tari- *tomo nanjū*  
everyone DAT permit PASS ASP when summon.HON ASP even what  
koto ka ara-mu tada shinobi-te koso  
fact INT be MOD just quiet PERF EMP

“[He] gently pulled [her] down and pushed the door closed. [Her] appearance of extreme surprise was charming. Trembling, [she] cried, ‘A man here!’ but [he replied], ‘As I am allowed by everyone, what would happen, even if [you] summoned [someone]? Just be quiet.’”

[he] gently led her back to the corridor. He then added, “Let us look out on the moonlight together.” She was, of course, nervous, and would fain have cried out. “Hush,” said he; “know that I am one with whom no one will interfere; be gentle, and let us talk awhile.”

(Suematsu 1974: 152)

...he took her gently by the hand and led her into the house, closing the door behind them. The surprised and puzzled air fascinated him. “There is someone there,” she whispered tremulously, pointing to the inner

room. “Child,” he answered, “I am allowed to go wherever I please and if you send for your friends they will only tell you that I have every right to be here. But if you will stay quietly here....”

(Waley 1935: 149)

Quickly and lightly he lifted her down to the gallery and slid the door closed. Her surprise pleased him enormously. Trembling, she called for help. “It will do you no good. I am always allowed my way. Just be quiet, if you will, please.”

(Seidensticker 1981: 152)

With this he put his arms around her, lay her down, and closed the door. Her outrage and dismay gave her delicious appeal. “A man—there is a man here!” she cried, trembling. “I may do as I please, and calling for help will not save you. Just be still!”

(Tyler 2001: 156-57)

Suematsu completely changes the events of the scene in his version: far from Genji isolating Oborozukiyo from the rest of the building and laying her down on the floor, here he takes her hand and leads her to gaze at the moonlight, while her emotions are converted to being “nervous,” suggesting she is more concerned with being found in Genji’s company, rather than disturbed by meeting him. Both of these could be characterised as a standard romantic situation in western literature, thus emphasising the commonality of civilisation between Japan and the west. Waley’s approach is similar, in that Oborozukiyo is merely “surprised and puzzled,” and Genji is an understanding lover, placing agency in her hands (“if you will”) again.

Both Seidensticker and Tyler translate the description of Genji’s actions closely, but the former blunts the depiction of Oborozukiyo’s emotions by omitting the initial adverb, *asamashikini* (“extremely”), while the latter chooses to stress them with the emphatic translation, “outrage and dismay.” Similarly, Genji’s final remark to the lady

is phrased as a request in Seidensticker's translation, and a command in Tyler's, making him rather less sympathetic to a contemporary audience in the latter. Tyler's choice is closer to the ST syntax, and thus is appropriate given his aims of engaging the reader with the text.

As a final example, after Genji parts from Oborozukiyo and returns to his own quarters in the palace, he reflects upon the evening. In the ST, this is presented as a direct quotation:

- (3) をかしかりつる人のさまかな。女御の御おとうとたちにこそはあらめ。まだ世に馴れぬは、五、六の君ならむかし。

(Imaizumi Tadayoshi; Mori Shōichi; and Wokazaki Masatsugu 1976: 168)

okashikari- *tsuru hito no sama kana nyōgo no*  
 be.charming PERF person GEN appearance RHET consort GEN  
 mi- *otōto-* tachi ni koso wa ara-me mada yo  
 HON- younger.sibling PLUR be EMP THE be MOD yet world  
 ni nare- nu wa go roku no kimi nara-mu  
 DAT be.accustomed NEG THE five six GEN lady be MOD kasi  
 SPEC

Indeed, appearance of person had been charming! [She] must be one of Consort's younger sisters. Probably being fifth or sixth lady, not knowing world?

Suematsu reorders material in his version, inserting elements from Genji's thoughts which come after this excerpt in the ST into the middle of it. With these elements elided, his translation is:

Genji's thoughts were now directed to his new acquaintance. He was convinced that she was one of the younger sisters of the Niogo...he presumed her to be the fifth or sixth of them, but was not sure which of these two.

(Suematsu 1974: 153)

He also converts the direct quotation of Genji's thoughts to an indirect form, and eliminates the initial description of Oborozukiyo, converting this to a description of Genji's actions. Waley takes a similar approach with his first sentence:

He tried to recall the features of the lady with whom he had just spent so agreeable time. Certainly she must be one of Kokiden's sisters. Perhaps the fifth or sixth daughter, both of whom were still unmarried.

(Waley 1935: 149)

He does, however, give Genji's thoughts with his second and third ones. This strategy is in keeping with the skopoi of both translators: wishing to make the linguistic usage match that of literary English--Suematsu to emphasise the "cultured" nature of his text, and Waley for literary reasons--they avoid an intrusive use of direct quotation which might strike the target audience as unusual. Suematsu goes further, eliminating the quotation altogether, while Waley prepares the TT reader with his initial sentence.

Both Seidensticker and Tyler, however, retain the ST quotative structure:

What a beautiful girl! One of Kokiden's younger sisters no doubt. Perhaps the fifth or sixth daughter of the family, since she had seemed to know so little about men?

(Seidensticker 1981: 153)

What a lovely girl! She must be one of the Consort's younger sisters—the fifth or sixth, I suppose, since she had not known a man before.

(Tyler 2001: 157)

Tyler goes somewhat further than Seidensticker, with the insertion of a first person reference, making it absolutely clear to the TT audience that Genji's thoughts are being directly quoted. He also is more direct in his translation of the euphemistic ST expression *yo ni narenu* "be unused to the world," making it clear to the TT reader that sexual activity had taken place.

The above discussion has shown that each of the translators has followed consistent translation strategies in producing their versions of the ST, guided by their over-arching *skopoi*: Suematsu deletes, or rewrites, material which would suggest that the Genji depicts a world whose inhabitants were not "civilised" according to the standards of Victorian Britain; Waley with his conception of the work as a romance, recasts scenes to increase the agency of female characters, or to make Genji seem less aggressive. Seidensticker sacrifices material to produce a translation which is more "laconic" and less "elaborate"; Tyler presents a challenge to the reader with a version which is simultaneously explicated, but requiring background knowledge of the Source Culture to contextualise, and at variance with some of the norms of conventional literary English expression.

## **Translation Reception**

Having discussed the practical strategies followed by the various translators in pursuit of their *skopoi*, we will now consider what impact these had on their target audience, and thus how successful the translators were in fulfilling their aims.

Suematsu (1882)

John De Gruchy (2003) demonstrates from the contemporary reviews that Suematsu's work was largely viewed as a curiosity. For example, in 1882 *The Spectator* remarks "the story, if story it may be called, when there is not a vestige or anything like a plot, is exceedingly tedious... The best things in the book are the scraps of verse, which are sometimes really pretty" (de Gruchy 2003: 122). Nevertheless, it was successful enough to be reprinted more than once, and also form the basis for retranslations into other European languages--German in particular (Mehl 1993: 187). It could, therefore, be counted a successful translation in terms of the aims Suematsu had for it: he produced a work which was appealing to the target culture audience, and which worked to improve the "civilized" image of Japan and the Japanese and, therefore, contributed, even if in only a minor fashion, to the betterment of the nation and the achievement of its foreign policy aims. Indeed, the "unequal treaties" were renegotiated in the 1890s.

Waley (1926-32)

De Gruchy suggests that Waley's *Genji* was read as "a kind of travel literature" (2003: 133) which provided an escape from "the here and now" (2003: 132) of the

somewhat grim realities of the inter-war period in Britain. Contemporary newspaper reviews stressed the work's "modernity" and comparability with English novelists such as Jane Austen and the Brontë sisters, as well as European novelists such as Proust (de Gruchy 2003: 126). The work was clearly being assessed as both one of those works of world literature which had become part of the English language canon, but also as a work of English in its own right.

Major literary figures of the time also read and reviewed Waley's *Genji*, with perhaps the most effusive praise coming from Virginia Woolf, who, in her aforementioned review in *Vogue*, says:

While the Aelfrics and the Aelfreds croaked and coughed in England, this court lady...was sitting down in her silk dress and trousers with pictures before her and the sound of poetry in her ears, with flowers in her garden and nightingales in the trees, with all day to talk in and all night to dance in-she was sitting down about the year 1000 to tell the story of the life and adventures of Prince Genji.

(Woolf 1966: 265)

Waley can thus be said to have been wildly successful in his aims, and to have followed his *skopos* perfectly: producing a version of *Genji* which would be accepted as an English novel, matching his target audience's desire for romance and escapism with his translation, while also conforming to their literary tastes.

Seidensticker (1976)

Given Seidensticker's *skopos* of producing a translation which "corrected" the "faults" of Waley's version, it should come as no surprise that comparisons between the two

translations were a major feature of the reviews, with McCullough even going so far as to say that “few who have read Seidensticker's work will feel inclined to re-read his predecessor” (1977: 93), and Marion Ury (1977: 201) concluding that “it is no longer possible to take [Waley’s *Genji*] as a faithful representation of the original...we have not really had a *Genji* in English until now.” The reception was not uniformly positive, however, with Roy Andrew Miller suggesting that Seidensticker’s “fragmentation of the structures of the original is even more striking than it was in Waley’s earlier version” (Miller 1986: 113). All of these reviews, being published in academic journals or monographs, however, point to a further significant difference in the reception of Seidensticker’s translation:

Waley was reviewed and appreciated by literati who knew no Japanese and who read the *Genji* as a novel of their time, whereas Seidensticker...was reviewed mainly by Japan specialists in an educational setting and is now read mainly by professional readers--scholars and students. (de Gruchy 2003: 134)

It would seem, therefore, that while Seidensticker was undoubtedly successful in some of his translation aims--producing a less ornate version of the text--he was less successful in appealing to a general literature-reading audience, perhaps because his text is so clearly situated in Heian Japan, unlike Waley’s “imaginary kingdom” (Ury 1976: 286).

Tyler (2001)

Finally, we come to the reception of Tyler’s translation, which can best be described as muted. The sole review of it in a major Japanese studies journal does admit

that it is “a good Genji, the admirable product of ambitious and sensitive work” (Kamens 2003: 339), but also suggests that the value of this “faulty but necessary medium” (Kamens 2003: 334) is that it “will invite at least some readers to look beyond translation to imagine what else may be done” (Kamens 2003: 339) (Emphasis in the original). The clear implication here is that Tyler’s Genji and, indeed, the other translations, are only important insofar as they stimulate people to engage with the original text. Disappointing though this attitude may be, it would seem to be a reflection of the academic environment into which the translation has been released: one where in Japanese literary studies “translations are already much less important...than once they were” (Kamens 2003: 333).

Similarly, despite Midorikawa Machiko’s claim that “eliminating what is strange and foreign...is no longer seen as the chief or only aim in literary translation” and “English translation of Genji monogatari has been marked by a gradual process of acceptance of foreign elements in style and content” (2003: 216)--broadly following the retranslation hypothesis--newspaper reviews of Tyler’s work stress that one can “feel the translator at work on every page,” and that its “rigorous faithfulness to the classical Japanese...can sometimes stand in the way of clarity” with this “choice plac[ing] technical accuracy above lyrical impact” (Niimura 2001). This suggests that while Tyler has clearly been successful in fulfilling some of his translation aims in producing a version which closely replicates the structure, style and content of the original, he has been less so at making this version appealing to his target audiences.

## Conclusion

The above discussion has served to illustrate how four different translators of *Genji* have made deliberate strategic choices in support of their translation aims. Each has also been successful in recasting the ST in pursuit of at least some of those aims: Suematsu made cuts and alterations to emphasise Japan's cultured and civilised nature, and secure the political aims of his government; Waley reworked the psychological tenor of the characters and events to make them more appealing to an inter-war British audience; Seidensticker simplified the language and situated events clearly in Heian Japan; and Tyler remains faithful to the style and content of the original, even where this conflicts with Target Culture norms.

Each of these works has also been received differently by their intended audiences: Suematsu's translation was regarded as a curiosity, while Waley's romance fed the hunger of the audience for an escape from the realities of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Seidensticker's translation, too, fit the conceptions of an audience which was more familiar with, and accepting of, Japan. Finally, Tyler's work has received grudging acceptance from an academy where translation as a part of literary studies is "much less important," and an equivocal judgement from a general audience for its close adherence to Source norms of language and culture.

Nevertheless, now, it is through Tyler's translation, and to a lesser extent Seidensticker's, that *Genji* is generally known and read in English, and it is their versions of the characters and story which shape the "general knowledge" of the work and its contents. As we have seen, both translators placed a focus on the contemporary source culture, and prioritised making this accessible to their audiences, either through strongly domesticated translation, or the provision of annotation, but the result of these

strategies was, perhaps, a neglect of the significance and reception of *Genji monogatari* in modern Japan. Thus, it is not uncommon to find non-specialist assessments of the work which tend to the inaccurate, or which display negative judgements of its protagonist, “Genji...is superior in every way, but his superiority doesn't extend to what westerners would consider moral probity. In particular, he is often guilty of rape and seduction” (Smiley 2006). This is a far cry from the attitude in Japan, where he is still viewed, popularly at least, as a paragon of male virtue and the ideal lover. So much so that a female character in a recent anime series is able to remark, on travelling back in time to meet the principal male character when he is only six years old, “If we raise him in a sterile environment for the next ten years, he'll be Hikaru [the Shining] Genji,” (Suzuki Yōhei 2013), implying that he will be perfect and without any of the idiosyncrasies she finds so annoying in him as he is now.

In terms of transferring the cultural significance of the work from the source to target cultures, creating, in other words, a version of the text which performs a similar function in the target culture to that of the original in the source one, there can be no doubt that it is Waley's translation which most successfully and accurately reflects the cultural attitudes to the work and its characters in modern Japan, even as it had a hand in creating them.

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<sup>i</sup> For a full discussion and review of retranslation see Gürçağlar (2009) and Deane (2011: 7-26).

<sup>ii</sup> Murasaki Shikibu's diary recounts, "His Majesty [Emperor Ichijō] was listening to someone reading The Tale of Genji aloud. 'She must have read the Chronicles of Japan!' he said, "She seems very learned." (as translated by Richard Bowring (1982: 137)), while Takasue's Daughter in her Sarashina no nikki ('Sarashina Diary') recounts her delight on being given a copy of the entire work (Hasegawa Masaharu et al. 1989: 385). "I wouldn't have changed places with the Empress herself," as Ivan Morris (1975: 47) puts it in his translation.

<sup>iii</sup> For more detailed background information on Genji Monogatari see Bowring (1988) or Puette (1983).

<sup>iv</sup> Japanese names are presented in Japanese order: family name followed by personal name.

<sup>v</sup> See, for example Wienold (1990a, 1990b) on the challenges of translating modern Japanese into German, which are similar to those posed by translation into English; Maynard (1998) on discourse related issues, or Refsing and Lundquist (2009) and Hasegawa (2011) for general pedagogical approaches.

<sup>vi</sup> The excerpts are presented in the original Japanese script, a romanised transcription, a syntactic gloss and a literal translation. Abbreviations used in the gloss are: GEN(itive); DAT(ive); ACC(usative); PERF(ective)--a marker of completed action; PAST (tense)--a simple past; EMP(hasis); NEG(ative); HON(orific); Q(otative); THE(me); MOD(al); LOC(ative); PASS(ive); ASP(ect); SPEC(ulation); PLUR(al); RHET(orical question).