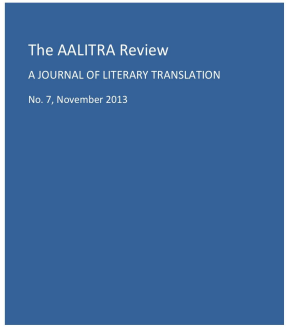

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Two Moons Over Europe: Translating Haruki Murakami's *1Q84*

ANNA ZIELINSKA-ELLIOTT and METTE HOLM

Abstract

This article relates the experiences of several European translators of Haruki Murakami's novel, *1Q84,* discussing difficulties they encountered in the text and different solutions they chose. These are in turn compared to the solutions chosen in the English translation, which was published later than many European versions. How, for example, should the translator handle such issues as the use of narrative present or fluctuations between the first and third person of the narrator? How to express in alphabetic languages the author's creative manipulation of the Japanese writing system? The article also discusses the issue of mistakes, including both those appearing in the original text and those made inadvertently by translators, as well as editorial cuts in the English translation and the reasons behind them. Finally it relates translators' personal experiences and reflections, which may have influenced the choices made in their versions of *1Q84*.

In the world of contemporary international fiction, few literary events are as big as the release of a new novel by Haruki Murakami. Murakami's books are instant bestsellers not only in Japan, but around the world, from the US to Korea and from Norway to Brazil. Indeed, with each new Murakami book a guaranteed hit around the world, translations of the latest book are commissioned as soon as it is made known that a new work is on the way.

The international Murakami phenomenon reached one of its milestones with the appearance of his novel *1Q84* in 2009. Though it has received mixed reviews, *1Q84* sold well in every market in the world; in Japan alone, over a million copies were printed in the first twelve days (a record which was broken in April 2013 by Murakami's most recent novel, *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*). The first two volumes of *1Q84* came out in Japanese in the spring of 2009, with the third volume following a year later, in 2010. Translation rights were quickly sold for twenty-six European languages, including English, as well as for Chinese (separately for the PRC and Taiwan), Korean and Hebrew, among others. The same pattern was repeated in spring 2013, following the publication of *Tsukuru Tazaki*, of which one million copies were printed within the first week. Bidding wars for the foreign copyright started less than a month after the book's appearance.[1]

Solely in terms of length, *1Q84* presents a considerable challenge to the translator. The book began to appear in various foreign-language editions almost immediately, led by the Korean (the cost of the rights apparently setting a new record), which came out after just four months in August 2009.2 Elsewhere, translations of the first two volumes came out in 2010. By autumn 2011, when the English edition was released, translations of Books 1 and 2 had already appeared in most European languages, and all three books of the trilogy had appeared in Dutch, German,

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1 For details on the bidding war in Korea see Dennis Abrams, "The Fight Is On".

2 As of early 2012, that number has reached twenty-five, including Bulgarian, Catalan, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, French, Galician, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish and Ukrainian. This is according to information given on the website of Curtis Brown, the agency representing Murakami in Europe.

Swedish and Polish editions, often to great fanfare. During the month leading up to publication in Germany, for example, one page from the novel was released on the publisher's website every day. In Denmark and France, publishers put countdowns of the days remaining until publication on their websites. In Poland, selected pages were released on the internet, and a YouTube advertisement announced the date of approaching publication. Italy and Spain also came up with YouTube "trailers" announcing the appearance of the book. Perhaps none of these was equal to the hype preceding the appearance of the English translation, which, among other things, featured a trailer on YouTube. One fragment of the book was printed in The New Yorker a few weeks in advance of the book's release by Knopf in October 2011, and short passages were offered to impatient readers on Murakami's Facebook page every few days, along with quotes from different ranking lists judging Murakami's chances of winning the Nobel Prize that year.

The extraordinary sales that reliably greet each new Murakami work have had interesting effects on translation practices. This article explores the experience of several European translators of *1Q84*, as relayed to us in questionnaire responses and email communication. It describes how they shared approaches in dealing with some specific and – from the translator's point of view – particularly problematic, textual techniques used in the original. It also compares the solutions used by some of the European translators with those used in the English-language translation.

Is shorter better?

The near-simultaneous appearance of so many different translations of Murakami's work, and the great commotion surrounding its various releases, distinguishes the publication history of *1Q84* from that of all earlier Murakami books, and creates a unique situation in which to evaluate the circulation of the Murakami brand in the world.

The first two books of *1Q84* consist of twenty-four chapters, each in alternation telling stories of Aomame, a thirty-year-old woman, and Tengo, a twenty-nine-year-old man. (The structure of Book 3 is very different, since it has thirty-one chapters, consists of three alternating narratives, and is slower-paced.[3]) We learn that they met at school in 1964, when they were both ten, and now, twenty years later in 1984, they start searching for each other, having realized that they had loved each other as children. In the process of this search, they enter a parallel world, in which everything else is almost the same as this world, one visible difference being that there are two moons in the sky. In her puzzlement, Aomame christens this parallel world "the world of the year *1Q84*", where "Q" stands for the English term "question mark". Hence the book's title, an obvious reference to Orwell's classic. Later, it turns out that the parallel world is the world of a novel that Tengo is writing, so it becomes the story of a novel within a novel, the former influencing the latter. The novel deals in depth with such issues as violence towards women and children, as well as the emergence of new religious sects, themes that were only briefly mentioned in Murakami's earlier works.

If we look at the production of the book, many European editions followed the Japanese example, releasing Books 1 and 2 first, with Book 3 appearing after a delay. Even the British edition, which appeared more or less simultaneously with the American, was divided into two parts: Books 1 and 2 came out first, and the third volume followed about a week later. However, in the US, the American publisher, Knopf, decided to publish all three books of *1Q84* as a single volume, in a joint translation by Jay Rubin (Books 1 and 2) and Philip Gabriel (Book 3). For that reason, abridgements were made, particularly in Book 3, where many of those parts that were meant to remind the reader of what had happened in Books 1 and 2 were simply eliminated, apparently with Murakami's approval (Rubin and Gabriel).

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3 It is worth noting here that in one of the interviews after the publication of the book Murakami said that he knew Book 3 had to be a book "with no movement". This does not mean that nothing happens in the last volume of the novel, but the action markedly slows down as the characters spend a lot of time thinking and reflecting (Matsuie 41).

Similar situations have occurred before. As is well known, considerable editorial changes were made in the English translation of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle.* The publication of the German translation, which was based not on the original Japanese but on the abridged English-language translation of the novel, was followed by an extended controversy, summarized in Jay Rubin's biography, *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words.* At issue was whether, given the cuts in the English translation – cuts approved by the author, it should be said – German readers actually read the "real" book, or whether all they got was a German translation of the English. Rubin quotes an eminent German scholar of Japanese literature, Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit, as saying about Murakami that "by promoting the translation of the English version of his works into other languages, he himself comes to embody that English-language-centered cultural imperialism that we continue to deplore and resist" (Rubin 309).

Whatever we might think about this criticism, a fundamental question emerges: to what degree is the English version of a Murakami novel a translation, and to what degree is it a reworking of the Japanese original on different editorial principles? Is it fair to say that the French, say, or Russian translation – done without any additional editorial input in the form of extensive cuts – is more "faithful" to the original than the English? Or is the English to be regarded as having undergone a further level of editing, and being therefore somehow more "polished"? In other words, what happens to the idea of a novel, or of the "original" as an "integral text" when it comes to Murakami? It should be noted here that Murakami himself incorporated many of the cuts made in the American version of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* into the Japanese pocket edition (*bunkobon*) that was published later (Rubin 307).

Jacques Westerhoven, the Dutch translator, believes that *1Q84* was a challenge to translate because of its repetitions:

> There is so much overlap in the first two volumes. Several times, almost identical information reaches us from two different sources, so I had to be careful to provide it in different styles – depending, of course, on who delivers the information in that particular part of the text. If I had been Murakami's editor, I would have tried to persuade him to eliminate the redundant passages, but as a translator you have no choice but to follow the text, warts and all. After all, you're not the author. You can't just start tinkering with a text because you happen to think you can improve it.

It is important to note here that some of the repetitions alluded to by Westerhoven have in fact been cut in the English translation. For instance, a page-long description of the ostracism and trauma Aomame suffered in primary school because of her religious practices is summarized in English simply as "the harsh days of her childhood" (639). It is true that we learn more about those "harsh days" in other places, from comments made by Tengo and by Aomame's teacher, but there are details in the omitted passage that do not appear and are not referenced elsewhere:

> When she woke up in the morning, getting dressed for school was a struggle. Often she was so stressed that she would have diarrhoea, or sometimes would vomit. There were also times when she ran a fever, got headaches, or her limbs would go numb. But she didn't miss even one day of school. Had she, she would probably have wanted to miss many – and if that had continued, she would never have gone back to school again. That would have meant defeat at the hands of her classmates and teachers.
>
> (Our translation)[4]

4 The Japanese original reads as follows: 朝目を覚まし、学校に行くために服を着替えるのが苦痛だった。緊張のためによく下痢をしたし、ときどき吐いた。熱を出すこともあったし、頭痛や手足の痺れを感じることもあった。それでも一日も学校を休まなかった。もし一日休めば、そのまま何日も休みたくなるはずだ。そんなことが続けば、二度と学校には行かなくなるだろう。それは同級生や教師に自分が負けることを意味する。(Murakami, *Book 3*, 90)

Readers of the novel will know that Murakami frequently makes reference to the similarities in the childhood experiences of Aomame and Tengo: both are unloved by their parents, rejected by their classmates in school, but possessed of strong characters that enable them to overcome these difficulties. The absence of the foregoing description from the English version, however, prevents the Anglophone reader from finding further reinforcement of this theme, since – unlike the reader of the Japanese text (or other unabridged versions of the novel) – he or she has no way to make the connection to Tengo's suffering similar physical ailments (which in fact *are* described in the English translation):

> For better or worse, though, Tengo was born with a robust constitution. Even if he had a fever or a stomachache or felt nauseous, he always walked the entire long route with his father, never once falling down or fainting, and never complaining.
>
> (90)

This would seem to be an instance of something that is not "lost" in translation, but is, rather, deliberately eliminated. Yet it is done with the author's blessing, so one presumes that Murakami himself, upon further consideration, saw no harm done to his story.

Murakami is, of course, not the only author whose work has ended up being abridged and changed in English translation in order to better match the tastes of the "English-speaking reader" (itself a somewhat ill-defined notion). The case of Milan Kundera's *The Joke*, which ended up with five different English translations, is a famous case in point. About the first translation by David Hamblyn and Oliver Stallybrass, published in 1969, Kundera wrote: "I remember my amazement when I received the book in Prague; I didn't recognize it at all: the novel was entirely reconstructed; divided into a different number of parts, with chapters shortened or simply omitted" (vii). These words were part of the author's preface to the fifth version, published in 1992 and subtitled, "Definitive version fully revised by the author". However, in her article on translations of Kundera's work, Michelle Woods explains how these foreign-language translations have in fact ended up influencing the "original", as Kundera kept reworking the novel, apparently influenced by the English and French translations, which in turn had an impact on the later English versions. Woods says that Kundera tried to make the book "more palatable to Western audiences", which, ironically, is precisely what he had accused his translators of doing in the first place (205).

Another attempt to make a book more palatable to the English-speaking audience occurred during the editing process of Natsuko Kirino's novel, *Grotesque*, translated by Rebecca Copeland. In an article detailing the production of the translation, Copeland tells the following story:

> From the outset the editor was tasked with shortening the book. Minor characters were eliminated and scenes were cut, all in an effort to streamline the novel. I hated to see the deletions, having spent time with the characters that were cut. But I also understood that a novel like *Grotesque* would task most American readers. […] The last chapter of the book, the final nine pages in the English, was hardest hit. The editors felt the ending – more a coda than chapter – was confusing. It added a new dimension to the narrator's persona that seemed unsupported by the earlier chapters. And it began developing an ancillary character, the narrator's nephew, who embarks on prostitution himself. The editors eliminated this section – just as they had eliminated sections earlier in the book – and created a brisker, almost elliptic conclusion.
>
> (Copeland, 14)

According to Copeland, Kirino was informed of the proposed cuts and agreed to most of them, except the last chapter. Initially the editors had wanted to cut the chapter altogether. But Kirino would not allow it. Nor could she understand their objections to the chapter. To her, it was the crux of the novel, where all the variant threads came together.

Negotiations followed, and a copromise was reached, which included some of the author's suggestions for abridgement.[5]

Is it, then, mostly the economic considerations or literary arguments that lie behind the decisions made by the American publishers? The same kind of cuts are rarely seen in European markets.

Murakami International

Many critics have commented that Murakami's work translates unusually well into other languages, which may explain part of his popularity. Murakami himself admitted in an interview years ago that he was mindful of how his work would translate into foreign languages:

> I want to express myself in a common language, not in a sensibility that can be articulated only in Japanese. What I mean is, I use the language, eliminating from it Japanese-style emotionality, and I try to make sure that the text is suited to translation.
>
> (Kanemaru 21; our translation)

This approach has been extremely successful. Murakami's popularity has given rise to a global "team" of translators who specialize in translating his books; they work in all the world's major languages, and in quite a few less widely spoken ones as well – the total is over forty, and rising. In 2006, a gathering of sixteen "Murakami-ists", including the present authors (Murakami's translators into Polish and Danish respectively), met in Tokyo at a meeting sponsored by the Japan Foundation to discuss their experiences and the reception of Murakami novels in their respective countries.6 A number have kept in touch. While translating *1Q84*, we had the idea that it might be interesting to contact the other translators and find out what problems they were encountering in their work on the text.

In August 2011, we contacted several people and in the end collected eight responses (including our own) from translators ready to share their experiences.[7] Below we introduce the viewpoints of different translators and the problems that arose during their work on the novel. It is our hope that the discussion here will make it possible to see Murakami from a broader perspective, through the eyes of his most earnest and thorough readers – his translators, who, in contrast with literary critics, get to see the work intimately from within and have to digest and interpret every single word.

The translators responded to a number of questions, but the one that produced the most interesting answers was: What difficulties did you encounter in your translation? One feature of the book several people mentioned in this context was the question of how to handle the changes of person in the narration, occurring even within the same paragraph. As readers of the original will know, the novel is narrated in the third person, but the author often seamlessly switches to internal monologue written in the first person, which is quite natural in Japanese, where personal pronouns are often omitted and the subject is not stated, since it is usually understood. Not that Murakami omits his pronouns; in fact, he is often accused of using them too often, which gives his works a "foreign" flavour.[8] The Polish translator, Anna Zielinska-Elliott, said that it was a real challenge to translate that particular aspect of the novel into Polish. This issue surfaced mostly in

5 Email communication, 13 May 2012.

6 The papers given at that meeting were collected and published in a volume edited by Motoyuki Shibata et al.

7 The respondents were: Vibeke Emond (Swedish), Ursula Gräfe (German), Mette Holm (Danish), Tomáš Jurkovič (Czech), Ika Kaminka (Norwegian), Dmitry Kovalenin (Russian), Hélène Morita (French), Jacques Westerhoven (Dutch) and Anna Zielinska-Elliott (Polish). Email correspondence was in English, with the exception of Hélène Morita's survey response, which was in French.

8 See the following passage: 青豆は短くきっぱりと首を振る。いや、考えすぎてはいけない。天吾はいつか公園に戻ってくると信じ、ここでじっと待ち続けるしか私には選択肢がない。私にはここを離れることはできないし、この公園が今のところ、私と彼を結びつけるただひとつの接点なのだから。(Murakami, *Book 3*, 36).

the Aomame chapters. Every now and then she was forced to add phrases similar to "she thought" or "she told herself", because otherwise it became unclear who the subject was. The same method was used in the French, German, Danish and Norwegian translations. The Russian translator, Dmitry Kovalenin, came up with a novel solution: he used second person, as if Aomame's internal monologue was a dialogue between her and her alter ego.

The American translators solved this problem by adding "she thought", etc. every now and then, but they also put the protagonist's thoughts in such passages in italics, which creates a visual difference not present in the original text. As a result a passage may look like this:

> Aomame gave a short, decisive shake of her head. She shouldn't over-think things. *The only choice I have,* she thought, *is to believe that Tengo will return to this playground, and wait here patiently until he does. I can't leave – this is the only point of contact between him and me.*
>
> (609)[9]

Tomáš Jurkovič, the Czech translator, stressing the absence of the first-person narrator, added that it may be caused by the fact that "Murakami tries to be more 'open' with readers and that he 'explains' a lot more things than he did in his former novels". Ika Kaminka, working in Norwegian, agreed that it was a difficult task to handle the fluctuating third- and first-person narration in the translation, because it meant switching from indirect to direct speech:

> It is a challenge to solve these shifts elegantly in translation, and especially difficult in the cases when the character suddenly seems to "think out loud" the kind of thoughts no one would actually think aloud. At times it feels almost like a form of ventriloquism, as if the character gives voice to the omniscient narrator, but in his or her own first person.

Another unusual feature of the novel is that in Book 3 the Aomame narrative is written almost entirely in the present tense. The narrative present is used frequently in Japanese, and Murakami often uses it in his writing – for example, in *Umibe no Kafka* (*Kafka on the Shore*) and in *Aftādāku* (*After Dark*) – but in this case, one third of the third volume is written entirely in the present tense. When Zielinska-Elliott was working on her translation of Book 3, the first two volumes of *1Q84* were already out in Poland. As she started translating the first of Book 3's Aomame chapters, she noticed the present tense everywhere and experienced what bordered on a panic attack, thinking it might have been used in a similar way in Books 1 and 2, and that she simply hadn't noticed. After building up the courage to check, she discovered to her relief that the consistent present-tense use was a device applied only in the last volume.

Although surprising at first, this technique grows on the reader and gives this part of the novel a distinctive feel. Zielinska-Elliott was not alone in going with the present in her translation: Holm, Kaminka and Kovalenin also decided to stick with the present tense in their translations. Kaminka stressed the necessity of doing so, because by the end of Book 3, when Tengo and Ao-

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9 Here is the same passage in three language versions:
GERMAN: Aomame schüttelte kurz und entscheiden den Kopf. Sie durfte nicht zu viel grübeln. Ich habe keine andere Wahl, *dachte sie*, als hier auszuharren und daran zu glauben, dass er zurückkommt. Ich sitze hier fest. Der Park ist der einzige Berührungspunkt zwischen ihm und mir. (*Buch 3*, 31; our italics)
FRENCH: Aomamé eut un bref et énergique mouvement de la tēte. Ça suffit, *se dit-elle*. Je ne dois pas trop réfléchir. Je n'ai pas d'autre choix que de croire que Tengo, un jour, reviendra sur le toboggan. Je dois continuer à l'attendre. Je ne peux m'éloigner d'ici. Car le seul point de rencontre que nous relie, lui et moi, aujourd'hui, c'est ce jardin. (*Livre 3*, 32; our italics)
RUSSIAN: Аомамэ резко трясет головой. Только не заморачивайся, велит она себе. Тебе остается лишь верить, что Тэнго появится здесь еще раз, а значит, надо сидеть и ждать. К тому же, пока и тебе [you] самой никуда отсюда не деться; а этот парк — единственное место, где ваши с Тэнго реальности снова пересеклись. (*Kniga 3*, 28)

mame finally meet, his reality – up to that point consistently written in the past tense – suddenly also shifts into the present tense. Putting all the Aomame chapters in the past would make that transition invisible. For his part, Kovalenin said:

> Of course, to translate them [those chapters] in the present tense was a must, because there we're dealing with the effect of a "slow motion camera," when there's no past or future, only pure existence on the verge of life and death.

Westerhoven agreed with him, saying:

> Most certainly did I keep the Aomame chapters in the present tense! I can't imagine doing anything else. I thought it was a stroke of narrative genius of Murakami's to write those chapters in the present, actually. It not only provides variation, but it gives a sense of urgency to those sections.

However, the English, French, Swedish and German translators of Book 3 decided instead to use the more natural-sounding past tense for these chapters. Philip Gabriel, the translator of Book 3 into English, said in an October 2011 interview in *The Atlantic* that, "After the first pass, the editor and I of course made some revisions, deciding, for example, to put most of the internal monologue in italics, and to put some passages that were in present tense into past" (Hoyt 915). One such passage reads:

> That afternoon she worked out on the stationary bike and the bench press. Aomame enjoyed the moderate workout, her first in a while. Afterward she showered, then made dinner while listening to an FM station. In the evening she checked the TV news (though not a single item caught her interest). After the sun had set she went out to the balcony to watch the playground, with her usual blanket, binoculars, and pistol. And her shiny brand-new bat.
>
> (617)[10]

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10 Here is the same passage in the original and in four different language versions:
その日の午後はサイクリング・マシンと、ベンチ型の器具を使って運動をする。それらを与えてくれる適度な負荷を、青豆が久方ぶりに楽しむ。そのあとシャワーを浴びて汗を流す。FM放送を聴きながら簡単な料理をつくる。夕方のテレビのニュースをチェックする（彼女の関心を引くニュースはひとつもない）。そして日が落ちるとベランダに出て公園を監視する。薄い膝掛けと双眼鏡と拳銃。美しく光る新品の金属バット。(Murakami, *Book 3*, 50)
DUTCH: Die middag probeert ze de hometrainer en de oefenbank uit. Voor het eerst in lange tijd geniet ze weer van een behoorlijke hoeveelheid lichamelijke oefening en van de vermoeidheid die je daarna voelt. Daarna neemt ze een douche en wast het zweet van haar lijf. Ze maakt een eenvoudige maaltijd klaar terwijl ze naar de FM luistert. Ze kijkt voor de zekerheid ook naar het avondjournaal (er is geen nieuws dat har interesseert). En als de zon ondergaat, verhuist ze naar het balkon om de wacht te houden over de speeltuin. Met een dunne deken over haar knieën, en haar verrekijker, en haar pistool. En haar mooie, glinsterende, nieuwe metalen knuppel. (*Boek drie*, 44)
FRENCH: L'après-midi de ce même jour, elle s'entraîna sur ses deux appareils, le vélo et le banc de musculation. Elle prit plaisir à cette petite séance. Cela faisait longtemps qu'elle n'avait pas pu pratiquer ces exercices. Puis elle se doucha pour se débarrasser de sa sueur. Elle se prépara un dîner frugal en écoutant une émission de musique sur la bande FM. Elle regarda le journal télévisé du soir (aucune information ne l'intéressa). Enfin, lorsque le soleil se coucha, elle sortit sur le balcon et surveilla le jardin. Avec une couverture légère, ses jumelles et son pistolet. Et sa batte métallique neuve aux reflets étincepants. (*Livre 3*, 44)
GERMAN: An diesem nachmittag trainierte Aomame mit ihren neuen Geräten. Nach der langen Zeit genoss sie es, sich einmal wieder richtig zu verausgaben. Anschließend spülte sie sich unter der Dusche den Schweiß ab. Sie schaltete einen UKW-Sender ein und bereitete sich zu seinen Klängen eine leichte Mahlzeit zu. Anschließend sah sie sich die Abendnachrichten an (es war nichts dabei, was sie interessiert hätte). Als der Tag zur Neige ging, setzte sie sich auf den Balkon, um den Park zu beobachten. Mit einer leichten Decke, dem Fernglas und der Pistole. Und dem schönen, glänzenden Metallschläger. (*Buch 3*, 44)
DANISH: Om eftermiddagen træner hun på motionscyklen og bænken. Det er længe siden, og hun nyder det i fulde drag. Bagefter skyller hun sveden bort under bruseren. Hun laver et let måltid mad, mens hun lytter til FM i radioen. Om aftenen ser hun nyheder i fjernsynet (men ikke en eneste af dem vækker hendes interesse). Da solen går ned, sætter hun sig ud på altanen for at holde øje med parken. Hun har et let tæppe over knæene og medbringer kikkert

When Holm asked Haruki Murakami directly about the importance of maintaining the same tense in translation, he said that his use of the present tense was spontaneous and instinctive, adding that it was up to each translator to choose the tense that worked best in his or her language.

This is an issue of considerable current relevance, since more books written in English appear to be using present tense narration nowadays (one of the more obvious examples might be Susanne Collins's *Hunger Games*), and the absence of a consensus among translators as to whether to maintain the temporal immediacy of the present is striking, and not without narrative consequences. In his 1991 translation of Murakami's 1985 novel, *Sekai no owari to hādo-boirudo wandārando* (*Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*), Alfred Birnbaum relied on tense structure to reproduce the effect of the novel's two alternating plots. In Japanese, Murakami created a clear distinction between them by using two different first-person pronouns, *boku* and *watashi*, an option obviously not available in English. To maintain this difference in style, Birnbaum decided to translate the *watashi* narrative entirely in the present tense, while the *boku* narrative was written in the past tense. This solution works on a different plane than the original, to be sure, but it succeeds nonetheless in reminding the reader of the fundamental disjunction of the two plots.

It seems that many translators feel that present tense just doesn't work the same way in their languages as it works in Japanese. The following excerpt, from a 2011 novel by Swedish author Kerstin Ekman, offers an intriguing commentary on this problem through the views ascribed to the novel's protagonist, a translator:

> The present was a tense she disliked. Banned it in fact, calling it the angst tense. [...] "Well, the present is impossible in translations," she said. "Especially English ones. Anglo Saxon writers shy away from it." [...]Lillemor wanted the past tense, probably since you've put things behind you and are in control of them in a narrative form as solid as cast iron.
>
> (Ekman 13)[11]

One wonders whether perhaps Ekman (or her protagonist), is not in fact correct, and that indeed English *is* often fearful of using the present tense. To test this, let us rewrite the passage from Book 3 of *1Q84* cited just above:

> That afternoon she works out on the stationary bike and the bench press. Aomame enjoys the moderate workout, her first in a while. Afterward she showers, then makes dinner while listening to an FM station. In the evening she checks the TV news (though not a single item catches her interest). After the sun sets she goes out to the balcony to watch the playground, with her usual blanket, binoculars, and pistol. And her shiny brand-new bat.

What is different here? Is there more angst expressed? Is one inherently led to wonder, what will happen next? Wherever one comes down on this question, there is no doubt that the two passages, one in the past and one in the present, read quite differently.

As could have been expected, the question of difficulties encountered by different translators produced a variety of answers related to particular characteristics of each language, and yet it turned out that several people struggled with similar issues having to do with certain techniques used by Murakami. Hélène Morita, the French translator, did not think Murakami harder or easier to translate than other Japanese writers. For her, the difficulty with translating the novel into French lay in the fact that:

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og pistol. Og det nye, smukt skinnende aluminiumsbat. (*Bog 3*, 40)

11 This passage was kindly translated for this article by Linda Schenck, Ekman's English-language translator.

> French hates ambiguity. We are forced to determine, to specify. Sometimes it requires linguistic acrobatics in order to create sentences that would be acceptable in French, while at the same time avoid becoming too specific, unlike the original.

One other problem mentioned by a few translators was how to handle the speech of the character Fukaeri, a dyslexic teenage girl. The narrator tells us that "Her style of speaking had some distinguishing characteristics: sentences shorn of embellishment, a chronic shortage of inflection, a limited vocabulary (or at least what seemed like a limited vocabulary)" (44). Later he also mentions that Fukaeri used no punctuation, meaning that at the end of her sentences one could not hear periods or question marks. In the original, her lines are often written using the phonetic alphabets (*hiragana* and *katakana*), with very few Chinese characters (*kanji*). This is extremely effective in conveying Fukaeri's dyslexia in Japanese, because it makes the reader realize that reading and writing Chinese characters must be very difficult for her. The problem lies in how to convey this in translation.

Zielinska-Elliott considered changing the spelling of words and using a "simplified" spelling, that might be represented in English by the example of writing "nite" instead of "night", but she rejected this idea, because she felt that it would make Fukaeri appear stupid, which she most definitely is not. In the end she decided to write all of Fukaeri's speech exclusively in lowercase letters (even at the beginning of a sentence), and to use no punctuation marks (even at the end of a sentence). It was not an ideal solution, but it seemed the best of those she considered. When she told Holm about it, Holm said she liked the idea and would do the same in the Danish version. Kaminka also did it in the Norwegian translation. Vibeke Emond, the Swedish translator, decided to divide all words into syllables using hyphens in order to stress the monotony of Fukaeri's diction. Morita says that in her translation of Fukaeri's lines, she pushed the limits of what the French language can take. She continued:

> It amused and interested me to make her speak at the same time like a child and like a foreigner in a language, which is not to be written [or: read?] but heard. I wonder if the readers will hear it?

She also added an ellipsis after each of Fukaeri's lines.

The Russian translator, Kovalenin, decided to make Fukaeri's lines yet more visually different. He wrote them exclusively in italics and used hyphens between the words. He also tried to express the unusual character of her speech by altering her lines slightly. For example when she says: "[You] teach math" ("Sūgaku o oshiete iru"), he opted for *Ty-ob'iasniaesh'-tsifry*, which can be translated as: *You-explain-numbers*. The English-speaking Fukaeri, on the other hand, doesn't talk in a way that is visually different on the page. It's the content and the tone of her lines that makes her sound a little unusual and sometimes simple.[12]

12 Compare different translations of the same passage (the first conversation between Fukaeri and Tengo):
「あなたのこと知っている」、やがてふかえりは小さな声でそう言った。
「僕を知っている?」と天吾は言った。
「スウガクをおしえている」
天吾は肯いた。「たしかに」
「二回きいたことがある」
「僕の講演を?」
「そう」 (Murakami, Book 1, 84)
POLISH:
– znam pana – powiedziała po chwili cichym głosem.
– Znasz mnie? – powtórzył Tengo.
– uczy pan matematyki
Tengo przytaknął. – To prawda.
– dwa razy słyszałam
– Moje wykłady?
– uhm (74)

When asked about the greatest difficulties she faced in working on *1Q84*, Gräfe chose to talk about the mistakes she made in her German translation:

> Like many people, I like factual research a lot, so it has happened that I have translated into fact something that should have been left as fiction. In *1Q84*, for example, I was so influenced by the similarities between the cult appearing in the story and Jehovah's Witnesses, that I named the fictitious group in the novel "Jehovah's Witnesses," which Haruki Murakami explicitly had not intended. [It is] something I felt really bad about.

Making an embarrassing mistake is of course every translator's nightmare. Not all editors are willing to make corrections in new editions, although it would seem that in the age of electronic typesetting, this should not be difficult.

Another problem faced by translators is what to do if there is a factual mistake in the text. One assumes that the author might have done it on purpose, and it is the character who is mistaken, not the writer. Would readers understand this, though? Or would they instead assume that it was the author's mistake? Or, worst of all, the translator's mistake? One often feels the

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SWEDISH:
Till slut sa hon med låg röst: "Jag kän-ner till dig."
"Känner du till mig?" sa Tengo.
"Du un-der-vis-ar i ma-te-ma-tik."
Tengo nickade. "Det stämmer."
"Jag har lys-snat två gång-er."
"På mina lektioner?"
"Ja." (72)
RUSSIAN:
– Я-тебя-знаю.
– Ты меня знаешь? – переспросил Тэнго.
– Ты-объясняешь-цифры.
– Верно, – кивнул Тэнго.
– Я-два-раза-слушала.
– Мои лекции?
– Да. (*Kniga 1*, 77)
FRENCH:
«Je sais des choses sur toi…, dit-elle enfin d'une petite voix.
– Sur moi?
– Tu enseignes les maths…»
Tengo acquiesça.
«C'est exact.
– Je suis venue deux fois…
– À mes cours?
Oui…» (*Livre 1*, 85)
GERMAN:
«Ich kenne Sie», sagte sie kurz darauf mit leiser Stimme.
«Du kennst mich?», fragte Tengo.
«Sie lehren Mathematik.»
Tengo nickte. «Genau.»
«Ich habe zweimal zugehört.»
«Meinem Mathematikunterricht?»
«Ja.» (*Buch 1 & 2*, 83)
ENGLISH:
"I know you," she murmured at last.
"You know me?" Tengo said.
"You teach math."
He nodded. "I do."
"I heard you twice."
"My lectures?"
"Yes." (44)

need to add a footnote in such cases, preferably upon consultation with the author. This is what Zielinska-Elliott chose to do when translating the story told by Tamaru about the Latin epigram carved over the door in the house of Carl Gustav Jung, when she realized that both the meaning of the sentence and the supposed location of the carving as described in the book were wrong. First of all, the sentence is carved above the door of Jung's house in Küsnacht, *not* the famous "Tower" in Bollingen, as it says in *1Q84*. Second, the translation of the sentence as it appears in Japanese is incorrect. The line reads: *Vocatus atque non vocatus Deus aderit*. This is a motto taken by Jung from Erasmus, which translates into English, "Whether called or not, God will be present". However, according to Tamaru it says: 冷たくても、冷たくなくても、神はここにいる ("Whether cold or not, God will be here") (Murakami, *Book 3*, 871). The mistake seems to arise from confusion between the English words "called" and "cold", which sound nearly the same when pronounced in Japanese transcription.

In this case, the difficulty for the translator was compounded by the fact that the sentence is also used as a title of Chapter 25 in Book 3. After some thought – and after consulting Murakami's Tokyo office – Zielinska-Elliott decided to add a footnote that observes, "Tamaru is mistaken", and explains the confusion.[13] Westerhoven, the Dutch translator, believes that Book 3 is "among other things, a meditation on divinity", and says that this passage "links up seamlessly with Aomame's musings on the nature of God in Chapter 14". He included a footnote in his version, suggesting that Tamaru must have misunderstood the quotation (but let stand the inaccuracy that the carving is found at Bollingen). Emond, the Swedish translator, and Kovalenin, the Russian translator, also decided to clarify the misunderstanding. However, the German, Danish, Norwegian, French and American translators chose not to include a footnote (publishers being notoriously loath to allow footnotes to mar the ostensibly perfect "mirror surface" of a translation), leaving readers to puzzle the discrepancy out for themselves.

Among the difficulties, Zielinska-Elliott mentioned her hesitation over how to translate one word in one of her favorite scenes in Chapter 5 of Book 1 (the same scene was also praised by Kovalenin). This is the scene where Aomame, having committed a murder, decides to relieve her stress, and goes to a hotel bar in order to pick up a middle-aged man for sex. After some small talk, Aomame suddenly turns to the man and, after announcing that she wants to ask him a personal question, she says something that can be literally translated as: "Is your *o-chinchin* on the big side?" (*Anata no ochinchin wa ōkii hō?*). Zielinska-Elliott wasn't sure how to translate this word.

> It means "penis," but it's a word predominantly used by children and mothers when talking to their children about their "wee-wees" or in other situations requiring a euphemistic term. Here, however, we have a thirty-year-old straight-talking woman talking to a man who is over fifty. Jay Rubin told me that he was going to use "cock," but all the Polish equivalents of "cock" were crude and lacked that infantile or neutral angle. So I decided to do a survey among Japanese female friends, asking whether they, their husbands or sons would use the word *o-chinchin*.

Zielinska-Elliott explains further the outcome of this rather intimate survey:

> The answers were pretty much unanimous: they would only use it when talking to a small boy. This confirmed my belief that I needed a somewhat childish-sounding word. I started asking Polish friends, and it turns out to be a topic on which many

13 Erasmus, in his *Adagia* (1232-2.3.32), a collection of proverbs and adages, was in turn quoting Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* I, ch. 118: "For which purpose it was by the Lacedaemonians themselves decreed that the peace was broken and that the Athenians had done unjustly; [3] and also having sent to Delphi and enquired of Apollo whether they should have the better in the war or not, they received, as it is reported, this answer: 'That if they warred with their whole power, they should have victory and that himself would be on their side, both called and uncalled'."

> people feel very strongly. Polish has a lot of words for penis, but most of them are either very crude or overly scientific. Several of those conversations took place in restaurants, and I would notice slightly panicked expressions on the faces of waiters as we were excitedly crying out: "You can't use *wee-wee*! Have you lost your mind?!" "Do you think *dick* is better?! It's not better!" In the end I made up a word, which was a diminutive of a term similar in connotation to the English "cock."

Holm also decided to go with a childish Danish word *tissemand*, used by mothers when talking to their little boys, which seems to be similar to the way *o-chinchin* is often used. The French translation also opted for a childish word, *zizi*, while the German and Dutch version chose words more similar to the English "cock" (*Schwanz* and *pik*) respectively. The Russian translator decided to pick the neutral "penis" (пенис).

Some observations on Murakami and Europe

To conclude, it is worth mentioning a few points concerning references to and quotes from different European and Japanese works included in *1Q84*, as well as some personal experiences related by the translators.

1Q84 includes a considerable number of quotes from other works. There is a long fragment of the *Tale of Heike*, a passage from a story by Hyakken Uchida (which is not identified as such in the book), almost a whole chapter from Chekhov's *Sakhalin*, a long passage from Isak Denisen's *Out of Africa* and a passage from Jung. Most translators used existing translations in their own languages, or produced their own, except for Kovalenin, who felt that the "official translation" of the *Tale of Heike* was too difficult to read because it was written in a "very heavy, almost unbearable language inappropriate for a modern book". He continued:

> So I had to rewrite it all the way down, remembering that it actually is an ancient manuscript, but, at the same time, is something that should easily impress a modern person like Fukaeri, Tengo, you or me.

Chekhov's book, however, has not been translated into all the European languages, so translators had to think of different solutions, unless they wanted to use the English version. For example, Kaminka and Holm, not wanting to translate Chekhov from English and/or Japanese, each found a Russian translator, whom they asked to render the passage directly from Russian.

Kovalenin offered an interesting story relating to this passage. Once, when interviewing Murakami, he invited him to Russia. Murakami asked where he should go, and Kovalenin suggested visiting his home island of Sakhalin, saying that Russian and Japanese elements were mingled in its history.

> So in a couple of years he invited me to his office and asked me to be his guide during his trip to Sakhalin [in 2003]. Off we went, and on the way to the island, on the plane and on the ferry, Murakami was reading Chekhov's *Sakhalin Island*. While we were there and visiting local museums, I translated for him all the stories about the Gilyak people he mentioned in his novel later on.
>
> Isn't it ironic? A translator tells his author a story, which the author transfers into a world bestseller, and then the translator turns it back into his reality in his own tongue… Now I'm thinking of it as one of the coolest adventures I have ever experienced in my life, next to my son's birth. So, to me personally, *this all is a proof* of the novel's philosophy: we really *do* change the world with the stories we're telling people around us.

As for the personal involvement of individual translators, nobody believes anymore (if anybody ever truly did) that the translator is simply a conduit transforming one language into

another without putting any subjective elements into the process. Starting in the 1970s with the development of polysystem theory by Itamar Even-Zohar, the focus of many translation theories moved from the translated text to the question of the translator's role. There is wide recognition that many forces are at play during the translation process; some the translator is aware of, while others are not immediately traceable to any particular source. As Lawrence Venuti writes:

> In contemporary translation theory […] language is constitutive of thought and meaning a site of multiple determinations, so that translation is readily seen as investing the foreign-language text with a domestic significance.
>
> (Venuti 468)

In other words, the translator's own cultural experiences colour and influence the way he or she approaches the text. Douglas Robinson suggests that we should understand translation in terms of "history of religion (spirit-channeling), the operation of ideology (norm channeling), cognitive science (the channeling of action potentials), and economics (the channeling of invisible hands)". He continues:

> [T]ranslation is seen as "governed" not by a single unitary mind, but rather by a loose and rather chaotic collection of competing forces that somehow, despite their lack of rationalist organization, nevertheless manage to bring about coherent action.
>
> (Robinson 194)

These observations are borne out by the experiences of a number of Murakami's European translators, which nicely underscore how very many different cultural, linguistic and personal elements came together to result in the different language versions of *1Q84*. For instance, Gräfe shared her own personal story when talking about the translator living in the world of the book he or she is translating:

> My family does not really notice [it] so much; rather it is I who starts connecting them to the characters with whom I spend so much time. Tony Takitani's father, for example, reminds me of my own father ([aged] 91), who also used to have an immense collection of records. In the Second World War, he spent five years as a prisoner of war in America and England. He was a musician and until I was twelve years old he made a living singing and playing the piano and the guitar in clubs for the American military and coffeehouses. Coincidentally, we both like the song *It's Only a Paper Moon*, which is important in *1Q84*. So I had him play it for me many times lately, especially after I turned in the translation of Book 3.

Other translators also referred to personal associations of this kind. Holm found the hothouse with flowers and butterflies in *1Q84* reminiscent of a glasshouse filled with birds, something that appears in one of her favorite novels, *The Werewolf*, by Aksel Sandemose. Jurkovič felt sure that Czech readers would be surprised by the many references to the composer Janáček, because when the river Vltava (German: Moldau) was mentioned in Murakami's *Sputnik Sweetheart*, Czech readers suspected that the translator had simply inserted the reference himself.

Recalling Murakami's earlier statement about writing with an ear to translation, it seems fitting to end with another statement from Holm, who talked about how, for her, translating from Japanese is like living in a world of many languages:

> I have the Japanese text – and then the dictionaries (mostly Japanese/English – and lately more and more Japanese/German). There are no direct dictionaries to Danish. […] But to sum it up – to translate Murakami is for me like bathing in a cacophony of languages, seeking help and inspiration everywhere. Sometimes I don't understand

> how my head can contain so many languages (Japanese, Norwegian, Swedish/German/French/English and a little bit of Dutch this time) and transform them into one consistent flow of Danish.

Though Murakami most likely meant translation into English when he spoke about making his work suited to translation, it is clear that he inspires associations and connections in many other languages besides.

As mentioned above, Murakami's newest book, *Tsukuru Tazaki*, is already a runaway bestseller in Japan and will again be translated simultaneously into multiple languages. We can expect that, as with *1Q84*, questions of the authority of an English-language version, the relationship of different translated texts to the Japanese original, and the relationships among different Murakami translators, will once more come to the surface, emphasizing the degree to which, unlike almost any other living author, Murakami's fiction constitutes a complex international literary event, at once linguistically sprawling and temporally compressed. The case of *1Q84* gives us a glimpse of "transnation-translation" as a model of future practice, a new mode of work, not only for specialists in Murakami, but translators working with other languages as well.

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