

# Translating Japanese into Japanese: Bibliographic Translation from Woodblock to Moveable Type

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## I

Recent years have seen a burgeoning of interest in expanding the notion of translation to include practices and concepts around the world that coincide only partially with understandings of the term now dominant in Europe and North America. A consensus is emerging – thanks to the work of scholars such as Marilyn Gaddis Rose, Maria Tymoczko, Theo Hermans, and others too numerous to name – that in order to comprehend “translation” in a way that does not fundamentally betray the promise of the word, theorists and practitioners must find ways to carry it beyond the borderlands of what they already know it means. The viability of translation as something more than a narrowly local concept depends, after all, on the fact that the term itself can be translated by other words, in other languages, each of which can in turn be translated into additional languages: translation means *traduction*, which means *traducción*, which means *tradução*, which means *ترجمہ*, which means *översättning*, which means *മൊഴിപൊരിപ്പ*, which means *sevri*, which means *翻訳*, which means *përktim*, which means . . . et cetera. Except that even this is a simplification, not only because each of these words has its own range of locally elaborated denotations and connotations, but also because there is no reason to expect that any of them, or any other word that might translate “translation,” would work in every situation. In some languages, “translation” might well be translated, depending on the context, by a dozen different words, some of which might then be back-translated into English using

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words other than “translation” – the verb *yawarageru* (“to soften”) was often used in early modern Japan, for example, to describe the translation of Chinese into Japanese. It is, perhaps, less of an evasion than it seems to suggest that translation might be defined, in the context of the increasingly global field of translation studies, as the sum of all possible translations of the word “translation.”

Some clarification is necessary, however, in order to make this definition serviceable. The point is not simply that the English word “translation” needs to be seen as one among a daunting number of similar words around the world, each encrusted with layers of meaning that derive from its particular linguistic, social, historical, and cultural contexts – that when in Rome, we must frame *translatio* as the Romans did, or nowadays *traduzione* as the Italians do. In fact, any term in any language that might be invoked as a translation of “translation” can potentially be brought to bear on practices and products in any other context, even when these products and practices are not generally regarded as forms of translation in their local context, or in the context from which the term derives. We might, for instance, use the early modern Japanese notion of “softening” to consider graded readers such as those in the Barron’s Educational Series *Shakespeare Made Easy*, even though no early modern Japanese would ever have applied the term to a translation into any language but the Japanese of her or his day, and even though the term “softening” has no currency in English-speaking contexts. Conversely, we might extrapolate from the range of meanings “translation” has in English today to think about a hugely significant class of texts that has never, to my knowledge, been conceptualized in Japan as a variety of translation, and whose very existence would seem to have gone unnoticed in English-language scholarship: the intralingual transcription.

This, essentially, is my purpose in this essay. Except that, rather than approach intralingual transcription as a theoretical issue, or through a consideration of a particular *text*, I will focus on a particular kind of *publication*: typeset editions of premodern Japanese books that were originally printed from woodblocks. This will allow me to explore the intralingual transcription as one element in a process of translation that is carried out, not just on an orthographic level, but also in the material form of the book – as part of what I will refer to as “bibliographic translation.” I hope this somewhat radical use of the word “translation” will serve as a signpost, pointing toward one of the many as yet uncharted territories across whose border the concept of translation might usefully be carried.

## II

In 1882, fifteen years after the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate, the landscape of Tokyo underwent a subtle but significant change: the city’s bookstores began dividing themselves into two groups by choosing to specialize in either Japanese- or Western-style books (Yamamoto 2001, 179–80). One can only imagine how thrilling it must have been for young students and other intellectual elites to be able, for the first time, to

walk into a store of the latter sort and browse shelves lined, not with floppy, woodblock-printed books, piled up horizontally, but with rows of upright, typeset tomes whose very form stood as an emblem of modernity. These bookstores, offering immediate entry into a vast world of newly accessible knowledge, must have seemed as magical as digital libraries do today.

In retrospect, however, the appearance of shops that traded exclusively in Western-style books seems most noteworthy for the process of loss it inaugurated. These bookstores did not specialize in Western books, but in Western-style books: works that had been imported from abroad, but also, crucially, many that had been published in Japan, in English and other foreign languages, as well as in Japanese. The chief characteristic these “Western-style” books shared was that they had been printed with moveable type. The segregation of shops that stocked such volumes from those that carried the *old* kind of Japanese book made it possible, not merely to imagine, but actually to step into a world in which all types of modern knowledge were represented as typeset knowledge. And of course the corollary is that woodblock-printed books could no longer be considered modern.

Six short years later, books in the Western style had largely supplanted Japanese-style books – which is to say that, setting aside language, content, and trends in book design, there was no longer much difference between books published in Japan and those that citizens read in the great Western metropolises. They were all printed using similar technologies, and took essentially the same form. And while this may sound like a fairly superficial change, it was not superficial at all. This is not just because moveable type was all but useless for producing books in which writing and pictures mingled on every page, as in some popular genres of early modern fiction. To jettison xylography in favor of increasingly standardized moveable type meant, among other things, accepting a new vision of the shape that written Japanese would take in print – a vision so drastically at odds with the whole history of the language that it entailed nothing less than a radical transformation in shared standards of legibility. It meant, in short, tacitly accepting that sooner or later all those old Japanese woodblock-printed books, not to mention hand-written manuscripts, would have to be *translated* into the form of the modern, typeset book before ordinary readers could make any sense of them. It meant the rise of a particular species of intralingual translation that one might refer to, somewhat reductively, as “transcription” – or, more comprehensively, with the neologism “bibliographic translation.”

In order to understand why this was so, one needs to know a little about how Japanese was written in premodern times. Perhaps the most crucial point, in this connection, is that in Japan writing remained essentially calligraphic from the time when it was first introduced from China in the fourth or fifth century until the late nineteenth century. Indeed, this calligraphic element was implicated in the very development of written Japanese as a system comprising three separate scripts: *kanji*, the graphs originally imported from China, and two syllabaries called *hiragana* and *katakana*. Early on, in works such as *Record of Ancient Matters* (*Kojiki*, 712) and *The Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves* (*Man'yōshū*, eighth century), Japanese was written

exclusively in *kanji*, which were used either phonetically, to transcribe individual syllables, or logographically, to represent complete morphemes or words. This system had its attractions, but it could also be cumbersome, since as a rule readers had to judge which function a given *kanji* was serving. And so, over time, a new system emerged that allowed readers instantly to distinguish graphs meant to be read as syllables from those meant to be read as morphemes or words: *kanji* were read logographically if they were written in “block script” (*kaisho*) or a conventional cursive form, and phonetically if they were rendered in a style more cursive than other *kanji* they were paired with, or eventually in a cursive form so stylized as to pass beyond the pale of conventional *kanji* orthography. The syllabary known as *hiragana* came into being when a limited number of these super-cursive *kanji* came to be used regularly to represent each syllable in the Japanese language.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the dual logographic and phonographic system that forms the core of Japanese writing had its origin in a purely calligraphic distinction between more or less cursive forms of the same *kanji*. Likewise, the retention of multiple *hiragana* forms for each syllable – four common ways to write “a,” thirteen ways to write “ka,” and so on – was motivated by a privileging of variety over simplicity that had everything to do with calligraphic esthetics. Having four different ways to represent the syllable “a” was a resource, not a redundancy, like multiple shades of green on a painter’s palette.

There was also a second sense in which writing was calligraphic in premodern Japan. No matter what technology had been used to create a piece of writing, it always had an “autographic” element: it was done in some sort of calligraphic style, and in the individual hand of an author or amanuensis. This was obviously the case with texts created using the age-old technique of dipping a brush in ink and tracing graphs on paper, but the same held true for woodblock-printed texts, which were, as a rule, direct facsimile reproductions of hand-brushed writing. Indeed, calligraphic style was important even in the typeset books known as *kokatsuji-ban*, printed over five decades after a font of copper moveable type was brought to Japan from Korea in 1592. The most famous of these works, the so-called “Saga books” (*Saga-bon*), were printed using wooden moveable type with ligatures that made it possible to mimic the flow of hand-written calligraphy – most likely that of Hon’ami Kōetsu, who oversaw the books’ production – and, just as importantly, to link *hiragana* that formed single units of meaning, making the texts easier to read. Tellingly, the type in these books was not standardized: here, too, multiple *hiragana* graphs were used to represent each syllable, and none was given a single, fixed shape. Far from saving time, the use of moveable type must have made these books considerably more troublesome to print than if solid woodblocks had been used.

The situation was altogether different in the late 1880s. This time around, the use of moveable type was intended to increase the efficiency of mass publication, and to make Japanese books look more like those of the West. Retaining the calligraphic, autographic qualities that had characterized writing for a millennium was hardly a priority – if anything, these were regarded as undesirable relics of an inferior, inefficient writing system. Modern Japanese moveable type rapidly proceeded to limit

the number of *hiragana* forms – a process that had already begun in popular early modern publications – until in 1900 the government decided to pair each syllable with a single form, and decreed that only these should be taught at school. And while some printers continued to experiment with ligatures, the trend was away from this kind of thing. In premodern times it had been common practice to string two or more *hiragana* together to mark units of meaning, much as letters are grouped into words in English; the standard practice now was to treat each *hiragana* as if it were a *kanji*, isolating it in its own square of space. The *hiragana* forms themselves, moreover, which had usually been allotted variable amounts of space depending on their complexity and shape, and on the calligraphic composition of the page, now assumed a perfectly regular, mechanical uniformity. It became possible, for the first time, to speak of “block script” *hiragana*, which would formerly have been a contradiction in terms. At the same time, the sudden regularization of forms, and the stripping away of their autographic character, also led to a drastic narrowing of the range of acceptable variability, so that each *hiragana* form could now be conceived of in terms of an idealized, standardized form, rather than in terms of a broad swath of calligraphic variations.

The *hiragana* children write today would, no doubt, have been legible to a calligrapher from an earlier age – Hon’ami Kōetsu, for example. At worst, he might have denied such standardized, blocky graphs the status of calligraphy, finding them recognizable but ugly. The schoolchildren, on the other hand – or their parents, for that matter – might admire Kōetsu’s calligraphy, or a woodblock-printed bestseller from the 1830s, but without special training they would be unable to read either one. And yet if one were to transcribe the texts – to translate those old books bibliographically into the modern form of the typeset edition – they would be able to read it all as smoothly as modern Japanese. Though in order to make the texts not only legible but also comprehensible, it would probably be necessary to translate them in another way, in terms of their grammar and vocabulary.<sup>2</sup>

### III

If, broadly speaking, translating a piece of writing entails transforming it in some manner intended to suit the needs or predilections of a particular audience either unable or disinclined to access it in its original form, then the transcription of premodern calligraphic texts into modern, typeset Japanese can be considered a form of translation. This holds true even though the transcription of premodern Japanese writing into modern type does not in itself constitute a “linguistic” change of the sort that takes place when a classical Japanese text is translated into modern Japanese. Indeed, while to my knowledge no one has explicitly discussed this kind of transformation as a form of translation, either in English or in Japanese, Japanese intellectuals certainly anticipated the effects of the shift from a culture of print centered on xylography and the circulation of handwritten manuscripts to a new culture of mechanized

printing. They knew that in order to keep books of the past from being lost to illegibility, something – bibliographic translation – would have to be done.

Just how much was at stake is suggested by a passage from *On Japanese Writing* (*Nihon bunsbōron*), a book the prominent statesman Suematsu Kenchō published in November 1886. In this treatise, Suematsu advances a sweeping argument about the need to reform Japanese by bringing the spoken and written languages closer together. As part of this thesis, he argues for the abolition of *kanji*: “Chinese characters,” he observes, “are indeed a script so difficult as to be without parallel anywhere around the world”; the Japanese people’s adoption of them, and their

rendering of the system still more difficult through the addition of various bells and whistles . . . was quite simply the stupidest thing that has ever been done in the realm. (1975, 64)

Suematsu notes that one possible objection to the creation of a new orthography was that it would “reduce old books in both Japanese and Chinese to so much scrap paper” (1975, 74).

But then – and this is the crux – he counters this view by pointing out that the old books might as well be scrap paper already, and that reprinting them in a new, modern form would, in fact, contribute to their preservation.

Consider the various old books of our nation: how many are there in the entire country who can actually read them, and read widely among them; how many are there who can read them and truly understand their character; how many are there who can understand and derive real profit from them – only, it must be said, a small minority of the nation’s population . . . many types of books will need to be reconfigured into the form of modern writing and printed that way, but with the text itself unchanged – it is likely that this will increase rather than decrease the profit they yield, by comparison with the older forms. Consider *The Tale of Genji*: this book is one of the most flawed among all the books of the East, but in terms of its beauties, too, it is also very rare among the books of the East. In its old form, the number of people who can read it are as few and far between as stars in the morning. If, when it were printed, some new method were used that made its sense immediately apparent, just think how convenient that would be. (Suematsu 1975, 75)

Four years earlier, as a student at Cambridge, Suematsu had published a partial English-language translation of *The Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari*). He had based his translation on the most widely circulated early modern woodblock-printed text of the tale – a sixty-volume annotated edition called *The Moon on the Lake Commentary* (*Kogetsushō*) first published in 1673 – so he knew what it was like to read the book “in its old form”: it was difficult enough that few were capable of it. The work that had been heralded for centuries as the preeminent treasure of the Japanese literary canon was not merely incomprehensible to most of the Japanese population, it was

actually *illegible*, and would become even less widely legible in the near future. And so Suematsu imagined *Genji* printed in a new form, “with the text itself unchanged.” He was not suggesting that its classical language be translated into modern Japanese; he was speaking only of the particular form the writing would take when it was published. “If, *when it were printed*, some new method were used . . .”

Four years later, something like Suematsu’s vision would be realized. From 1890 to 1891, the Japanese public was treated to the publication of four moveable-type editions of *Genji*, three of which were close bibliographic translations of *The Moon on the Lake Commentary*. It is impossible to say whether or not these editions would have satisfied Suematsu; perhaps he would have been disappointed that all four were printed in *hiragana* and *kanji*. There is no question, however, that from a modern point of view these typeset editions were easier to read than the woodblock-printed book on which they were based. Indeed, at a certain point it ceased to be a question of *ease* for even the most highly educated readers: Suematsu might have *preferred* to read a typeset edition of *Genji*, but for a vast majority of the population educated using typeset textbooks, woodblock-printed books were all but illegible.

Some sense of how the typeset editions of *The Moon on the Lake Commentary* worked as bibliographic translations of the woodblock-printed book can be gleaned from a comparison of two corresponding spreads. Figure 45.1 reproduces the first two pages of the first chapter of *The Tale of Genji: The Moon on the Lake Commentary, Corrected and with Additional Annotations* (*Teisei zōchū Genji monogatari kogetsushō*), an edition issued in Osaka in 1891. Figure 45.2 shows the same spread in the original woodblock-printed edition of *The Moon on the Lake Commentary*. It should be apparent even to those unable to read Japanese that the typeset edition is very faithful indeed to the woodblock edition. In fact, the extreme similarity of the typeset spread’s layout to that of its source, even without regard to issues of content and orthography, already reveals the sort of meticulous attentiveness to the visual and material elements of writing that characterizes a “faithful” bibliographic translation.

In both books, the right-hand page is given over to a general explanation of the chapter: the chapter title, “Kiritsubo,” is printed in large *kanji* at the upper right, and the explanation is in a mixture of *kanji* and *hiragana*. (The only difference in the content is the inclusion, in the typeset edition, of a paragraph by the eighteenth-century scholar Motoori Norinaga.) The left-hand pages are split horizontally into two sections: the text of *Genji*, written mostly in *hiragana*, occupies roughly the bottom two thirds, while the top third is devoted to headnotes written, like the explanation on the right-hand pages, in prose heavy on *kanji*. *Kanji* play a prominent role, as well, in the brief inter-linear notes clarifying the readings or meanings of particular words in the main text; these are printed in smaller calligraphy in the woodblock edition, and in smaller type in the typeset edition. Though it is hard to see in the woodblock edition, page numbers have been placed toward the bottom of the left and right margins in each book; page 3 has been incorrectly paginated as page 4 in the typeset edition, and the chapter title, “Kiritsubo,” appears at the top of the left margin.<sup>3</sup>

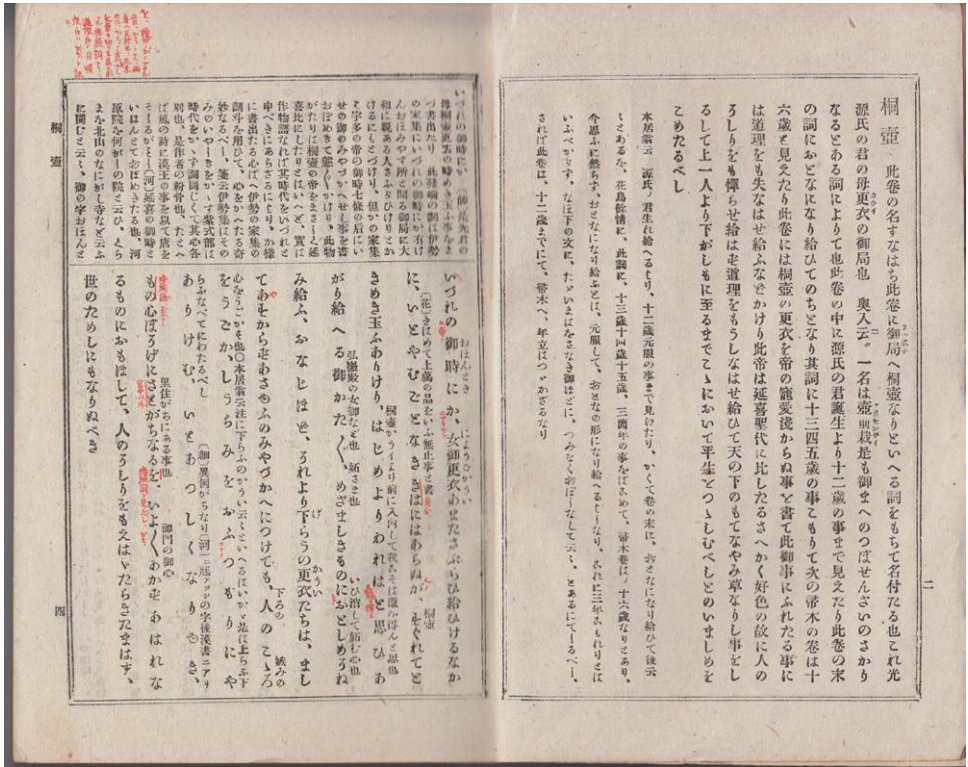


Figure 45.1 The first spread of the first chapter of *The Tale of Genji: The Moon on the Lake Commentary, Corrected and with Additional Annotations*. A previous owner has marked up the text, most likely fairly early in the book's life, judging from their style. [Murasaki Shikibu] (1891). *Teisei zōchū Genji monogatari kogetsushō*, ed. N. Inokuma, 8 vols. Osaka: Sekizenkan. Courtesy of the author.

Apart from the extra paragraph, the linguistic content of the typeset edition follows the woodblock edition precisely, with the all-important exception of its orthography. And even here, the fundamental orthographic distinction that structures the text – that between *kanji* and *hiragana* – has been preserved: the typeset edition uses *kanji* wherever there are *kanji* in the source text and *hiragana* wherever the source text uses *hiragana*. This is significant because, as I noted earlier, the different types of writing in this book are visually marked by the greater or lesser proportions of *kanji* to *hiragana* with which they are written: the main text includes relatively few *kanji*, while the notes – introductory material, headnotes, and interlinear notes – all make extensive use of *kanji*. Since an avoidance of *kanji* was characteristic of “feminine” prose (whether by women or by men) in the period when Murasaki Shikibu wrote *The Tale of Genji*, and an embrace of or even an exclusive reliance upon *kanji* was characteristic of “masculine” prose (whether by men or women) even in later ages, the distinction

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Figure 45.2 The first spread of the first chapter of *The Moon on the Lake Commentary*. [Murasaki Shikibu] (colophon 1673). *Genji monogatari kogenshū*, ed. K. Kitamura, 60 vols. Kyoto: Murakami Kanzaemon. Courtesy of Waseda University Library.

between the largely *hiragana* and the *kanji*-heavy styles stood as an embodiment of the difference in gender between the woman writer Murasaki Shikibu, and Kitamura Kigin, the male editor of *The Moon on the Lake Commentary*. In short, the use of *kanji* and *hiragana* had an internal coherence and meant something in the context of the commentary, so the orthographic distinction was retained in the typeset edition. It was preserved, that is to say, in the bibliographic translation.

The same cannot be said for the woodblock edition's other orthographical elements. First of all, the *kanji*, most of which were in a cursive style in the woodblock edition, have been replaced by block-script forms in the typeset edition. Not surprisingly, the *hiragana* have been treated like block-script *kanji* as well: each is isolated in its own square of space, rather than strung together with other *hiragana* to form words or morphemes, as frequently happened in the woodblock edition. The woodblock edition's already limited number of *hiragana* forms has been reduced so that hardly any syllables are represented by more than one form, and each individual graph has been standardized. Often the typeset versions of the *hiragana* look very different from those used in the woodblock edition. The cumulative effect of all these rewritings is that while Kitamura Kigin could have read the typeset edition, modern readers educated

after a certain time would be unable to read the woodblock edition without special training. The two texts are in some sense identical – they are, that is, identical to the extent that language and writing are conceived in phonologocentric terms, as meaning what they *say* – and yet at the same time they are so dissimilar as to participate in wholly different regimes of legibility.

We have seen that, as with any translation, intralingual transcription and bibliographic translation inevitably involve an attempt to mimic certain elements of source books but not others. In the case of this typeset edition of *The Moon on the Lake Commentary*, the editor and others involved in its production – not least its typesetters – expended much energy replicating elements of the woodblock edition that constructed meaning internally, through interrelationships with other elements of the book. At the same time, they transformed features that might be considered incidental to the inner meaning of the woodblock edition, but important, for social or practical reasons, to the establishment of an external relationship between the reader and the typeset book: *kanji* were printed in block script and no ligatures were used, presumably because printing cursive text using moveable type would have been too costly; the number of variant *hiragana* graphs was reduced and *hiragana* forms were standardized as part of a broad privileging of simplicity over variety in pursuit of universal literacy.

Certain features of the typeset edition, however, depart from what might at first seem a general rule that only elements of the woodblock edition that acquire meaning internally would consciously be preserved, while elements that acquire meaning through relationships external to the book would be altered. It is precisely these paratextual features, which were replicated because of the *social* meanings they generated, that are most illuminating in considering this typeset edition as a bibliographic translation. Perhaps the best place to begin is with the covers of its eight volumes: they have been modeled on the covers of a premodern book. Each consists of a green background, decorated with flowers and maple leaves, with a title slip printed at the center. The petals and leaves are crosshatched, so that they seem to be woven – the green is supposed to look like fabric. The title slip has a bit of a hand-painted landscape printed on it in gold, along with the title in black, cursive calligraphy. The basic format is the same as the covers of the woodblock edition, except that the woodblock edition's covers are much simpler – plain blue, made of thick paper rather than fabric, with printed black-on-white title strips. Presumably the covers of the typeset edition are meant to recall an elegant hand-copied text of *The Tale of Genji* – the sort one might find in the collection of an aristocrat. This suspicion is borne out when one opens the first volume: after a title page printed on thin red paper, one finds a preface in the hand of Baron Reizei Tamemoto, the twenty-first head of the famous Reizei family, printed on thick paper over a yellow background. It is followed by a second preface in the hand of Inokuma Natsuki, the editor, printed on thin paper. Both men make full use of the resources of Japanese calligraphy, writing in contrasting calligraphic styles.

The main body of this 1891 edition of *The Moon on the Lake Commentary* was printed with moveable type, on Western-style paper, and bound as a Western-style book. And yet its material form calls to mind an old Japanese-style book – not a woodblock-printed book, but a calligraphic, hand-written book. In fact, it was sold in a wrap-around case like those in which many Japanese books were traditionally stored. In short, while on one level this typeset book represents a faithful bibliographic translation of the woodblock edition of *The Moon on the Lake Commentary* – of its content and of its inner logic as an annotated text of *Genji* – on another level, it can be viewed as a sort of translational over-compensation. Rather than translate the outward form of the woodblock-printed book into that of a Western-style book, rather than translate the outward form of the original edition by giving the typeset edition plain blue covers with a simple white title slip, those responsible for the book's design decided to counter the modernizing, Westernizing movement the main text of the book embodies by exaggerating the premodern feel of the original edition, binding it in the image of a hand-written calligraphic copy of *Genji* that would have been even less legible for most Japanese in 1891 than the original woodblock edition of *The Moon on the Lake Commentary*.

#### IV

Writing is material. Orthography matters. Layout matters. Book design matters. These are all elements that contribute to the meaning books, and the writing in them, have for their readers. The design of *The Tale of Genji: The Moon on the Lake Commentary, Corrected and with Additional Annotations* played an important role in its translation of an illegible early modern woodblock edition of the quintessential Japanese classic into the legible form of a modern typeset edition, printed and bound in a “Western style.” This is as true of the style of its covers, the inclusion of the prefaces, and the packaging of the book in a wrap-around case – paratexts that framed the modern book as premodern, and imbued its typeset text with the social prestige of aristocratic tradition – as it is of the orthographic changes that made the text legible to modern readers, and of the careful preservation of the woodblock edition's orthographic distinctions and layout that allowed the typeset edition's text to mean what the woodblock edition's text had meant. To see how the typeset edition functions as a translation of the woodblock edition, we have to consider both books *as books*, not as mere texts. We have to think in terms, not just of intralingual transcription, but of bibliographic translation.

This might seem a special case. But once we start paying attention to the role visual and material form play in creating meaning, it becomes possible to discover instances, even in English, in which form itself is translated, without regard to “linguistic” meaning as it is usually construed. We need not limit ourselves to the largely theoretical exercises of the sort J. C. Catford carried out in his chapter on “Graphological Translation” in *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, such as the “graphological translation

of *sputnik* from Russian italic, or cursive, (*спутник*) as *snymbuk*” (1965, 64). The “Oriental” fonts that became so popular during the heyday of Japonisme are a good example, insofar as they represent of an attempt to translate something of the form of East Asian calligraphic writing into English-language orthographic practice. Or we might look at the “square word calligraphy” developed by the Chinese artist Xu Bing, in which words in English are written so that they look like Chinese graphs, or at a scroll called “The One” by the Japanese artists’ collective Kakuto, included in the New York Public Library’s 2006 exhibition “Ehon: The Artist and the Book in Japan,” whose English text is turned on its side, written top to bottom with a calligraphy brush so that it looks like Japanese. Or we might consider the difference between the earliest translations of Japanese manga, which flipped all the spreads so that the books could be read from left to right, and the right-to-left translations that became dominant after Tokyopop became the first publishing house to issue all its titles in this format (Wolk 2002, 36). Or consider the Ugly Duckling Presse’s 2011 publication of Russian poet Lev Rubinstein’s series of note-card poems *Thirty-Five New Pages*, in a translation by Philip Metres and Tatiana Tulchinsky. Or consider the 1977 Yale University Press edition of *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, edited by Stephen Booth, who explained his decision to print facsimile reproductions of the 1609 Quarto text alongside a modernized text as follows:

My primary purpose in the present edition is to provide a text that will give a modern reader as much as I can resurrect of a Renaissance reader’s experience of the 1609 Quarto; it is, after all, the sonnets we have and not some hypothetical originals that we value. (1977, ix)

The truth is that, in the real world, we always have the books we have, and there is no such thing as a hypothetical original. Bibliographic translation plays a role in all sorts of cultural production, all sorts of translation, whether or not those involved are aware of it. As the various examples I have just mentioned suggest, bibliographic translation is a well-established practice, even if it isn’t yet a well-established category – at least not in English or Japanese, the two languages I can speak about with some confidence. In this essay I have tried to gesture, through reference to a very particular type of book published at a specific moment in Japanese history, toward a point of view somewhere beyond the edge of the well-tilled field of “translation” as it is generally understood in English today, from which scholars interested in translation as it pertains to other languages, areas, and times might begin looking a little harder at the materials they study. It would be very interesting to get a sense of what “bibliographic translation” might mean when the neologism is translated into other contexts: bibliographic translation as *traduction bibliographique*, as *traducción bibliográfica*, as *tradução bibliográfico*, as *ترجمة الببليوغرافية* . . . and so on.

SEE ALSO CHAPTER 15 (DENECKE), CHAPTER 23 (MAZZEI), CHAPTER 30 (HENITIUK), CHAPTER 38 (NEATHER), CHAPTER 39 (TAHIR GÜRÇAĞLAR), CHAPTER 43 (BERK ALBACHTEN)

## NOTES

- 1 I am simplifying matters: some *hiragana* are identical to the conventional cursive forms of the *kanji* from which they derive, while some represented more than one syllable. Unlike *hiragana*, the *katakana* syllabary did not originate in a calligraphic distinction: it was created by abbreviating block-script *kanji*. While the *katakana* syllabary was sometimes used in conjunction with *kanji*, the combination of *hiragana* and *kanji* was more common.
- 2 The genre I am thinking of, the *gōkan* (literally “combined volumes”), is a sort of early modern graphic novel. I discuss bibliographic translations of a *gōkan* based on *Genji* into typeset form in chapter 4 of *The Tale of Genji: Translation, Canonization, and World Literature* (2013).
- 3 In the woodblock edition, half the title appears in the left margin of each page, and half in the right margin of the following page. This has to do with the format in which most early modern Japanese printed books were bound: the “pouch binding” (*fukurotoji*).

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