F u z a i
浮在: Culture, Contracts & Cloud Cats in the Japanese Translation of Kenneth Oppel's

Airborn

by

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浮在: Culture, Contracts & Cloud Cats in the Japanese Translation of Kenneth Oppel's *Airborn*

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Abstract

In my thesis, I examine the many processes of societal, cultural and linguistic negotiation within Masaru Harada's Japanese translation of Canadian author Kenneth Oppel's 2004 young adult novel, *Airborn*. By approaching the notion of translation as a theoretical framework, I explore both the source text and its translation across the metatextual, textual and editorial levels, examining the tensions, commentary, and unspoken narratives on audience, culture, and the novel itself that arise from the translation process. Tracing the implications of the translation's phonetic gloss and interventional explanations, I first interrogate both the translation's assumptions about its readership, and the narrative behind the translation's integration of made-up terminology and "politeness levels" exclusive to the Japanese language into the text. I continue with an examination of the parallels between the textualization processes present in the novel's plot and the translation process, discussing the various ways in which the text itself mirrors, and even comments on issues of translation via its own narrative. Finally, I explore the narrative of expectations and assumptions surrounding the text itself with regard to Harada's own commentary about the novel's translation, editorial interventions, and the translation's ultimate commercial reception within Japan. In doing so, I foreground the multilayered nature of translation itself, and further illuminate the ways in which societal, cultural, and linguistic differences are ultimately handled and negotiated within the novel's translation.

Fuzai

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Introduction: Sailing Toward Dawn

Like any game of pretend, you had to half-believe it to play properly.

Kenneth Oppel's *Airborn,* Ch. 16

Translation is an odd journey. While the etymology of the word "translation" itself implies the simple meaning of something "carried-across," something far more complex than mere exchange happens to a text over the course of the translation process. When at long last a text finally comes to dock in foreign shores, it rests as neither a mirror nor a replica of the original, but rather, the product of an electric exchange, a "current" conversation between source text and translation. Far more than merely granting a text another language to be understood in, translation allows for a piercing, even shocking reinterpretation of a work, not only of the characters and ideas presented therein, but of the text itself and all its intricacies, jolting the source text with new life —and questions— in turn.

What constitutes a "reinterpretation" of a text? What sort of factors drive a text towards reinterpretation within the context of translation? With such a reinterpretation, does the translated text lose its authenticity in turn? What is to be gained through this process, and what impact does it ultimately bring to the translated work and the source text alike? Readily

offering up an anthill of answers, but a mountain of questions, these concerns warrant serious consideration as they tower over both translated texts and their readers worldwide.

Luckily, mountains were never much of an issue for airships — physical or not. As a novel deeply concerned with the circulation and recoding of meaning, 2004 young-adult novel *Airborn* by Canadian writer Kenneth Oppel, as well as its 2006 Japanese translation by Masaru Harada (勝 原田), carry these same weighty questions and more onboard in their depiction of the *Aurora*, a lighter-than-air luxury airship, and its troubled journey to safe shores. Set in an alternate history world in which airships flourished instead of crashing and burning with the *Hindenburg*, *Airborn* is a first-person narrative following the life of Matt Cruse, a 15 year-old cabin boy working aboard the *Aurora*. As an artifact of aerial transportation, the *Aurora* also provides a space that enables an extraordinary degree of social fluidity and exchange—one which, the novel suggests, would not be possible otherwise. Thus, through a fateful encounter with the wealthy Kate De Vries, Matt finds himself teaming up with the young heiress to finish her late-grandfather's dying work and document proof of a hitherto undiscovered species of "beautiful creatures" that her grandfather supposedly encountered. And yet, in order to keep their subversive friendship a secret, the two frequently find themselves enacting a performance of "proper" social interaction, strategically adapting or "translating" their register in front of others to avoid attention. After an unexpected attack by the ruthless Szpirglas and his gang of sky pirates, however, the *Aurora* is forced to make an emergency landing on an undocumented, seemingly-uninhabited island in the middle of the sea. In a stroke of fate, however, it soon becomes clear that the island, itself a liminal space of "non-existence," is in fact home to both the "cloud cats," the same mysterious creatures

that Kate's grandfather, Benjamin Molloy, encountered, and the sky pirates that wrecked the *Aurora* in the first place. With Szpirglas' band of deathly desperate pirates ready to kill to protect their secret, Matt and Kate find themselves racing against the clock to escape the island and deliver news of the cloud cats' existence to the world at large.

Bearing far more than just crates and freight on its troubled journey to safe shores, then, the *Aurora* carries with it the "truth" of the cloud cats and the pirates alike. Holding both photographic and physical evidence of the cloud cats' existence, and the damning coordinates of the pirates' hideaway, Matt and Kate's dual discovery of the cloud cats and pirates brings with it a crisis of communication. If the *Aurora* were to fall to the machinations of the pirates, it would spell not only the end of all those onboard, but the silencing of an earth-shattering discovery as well, clipping the cloud cats' wings and plunging them back into the shadows of non-existence. Not only would the pirates be free to continue their reign of terror undetected and unopposed, but knowledge of the cloud cats would remain forever bound to the island, a secret known only to the outside world as nothing more than the ravings of a dying old man. Thus, while the *Aurora*'s journey, fraught with peril and Vernes-esque adventure at every turn as it is, remains a quest to safely deliver its passengers and cargo, the ship bears an equal responsibility to deliver something else entirely: *meaning*.

Beneath the weight of such responsibility then, the ship's journey presents itself as a sort of communicative act, a desperate effort to relay a certain meaning to the outside world. Much in the same way words are considered vessels for meaning, the *Aurora* itself becomes a vessel, a literal "floating signifier" for these dual discoveries, but as the course of the novel reveals, the journey it faces is anything but smooth sailing. In discussing and comparing the

Canadian novel and its Japanese translation, I seek to examine and address these same inter-sections among imaginative aerial movement, social mobility, and the conveyance of meaning, all of which are exacerbated and magnified by the fact that the novel has become a successful translation event in its own right. In both the original and the Japanese translation alike, then, I argue that *Airborn* finds itself deeply concerned with the "translation," or the "carrying across" of meaning, effectively paralleling all the uprisings and tumultuous turns of the translation process via its narrative. Already offering up a slew of commentary on issues of translation, culture, and identity in the original, the novel's Japanese translation echoes and amplifies these same concerns, all the while adding a few of its own. From the meta-textual devices added to simultaneously minimize, yet highlight areas of foreign dissonance for Japanese readers, to the countless deviations in meaning and nuance arising from the the translation process, the translation differs from the source text in countless ways, but it is in these same differences that the translation finds the power to hold course and effectively bridge the gap from English to Japanese. Through its fictional technologies and imaginary geographies, *Airborn* provides remarkable examples of, and commentary towards, the very real processes of cultural, social, and linguistic negotiation. The novel is, in this sense, remarkably suited to both literary and theoretical interrogation within the larger framework of translation studies.

Linguistically speaking, English and Japanese are just about as far apart as the countries in which they're spoken[1], but nevertheless, as a translation between these two languages and the many cultures in which they find their home, the Japanese rendering of *Airborn* dramatizes its own efforts and struggles in the translation process, seeking to draw them together and establish a route of communication between them. But with meaning and the language used to express it fundamentally tied to culture and all the exclusive forms, customs and inclinations therein, simply "transporting" it elsewhere as is would be disastrous, if not an outright impossibility.

And yet, thriving in the liminal skies between expectations and reality, airships were no stranger to impossibility in their day. "Bigger than the *Titanic*," and "heavier than the Eiffel Tower," but "lighter than air," as Kenneth Oppel's website for *Airborn* proclaims, the *Aurora*'s mere existence is portrayed as a defiance of logic (a point that Matt himself is well aware of), making the ship itself a space not only tolerant of impossibility, but actively informed and influenced by such contradictions. Subverting expectations of both possibility and realization, but flying proudly all the same, the *Aurora* thereby finds a strange bedfellow in translation, a subject quite familiar with claims of "impossibility." Thus, by mere means of

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[1] Perhaps most notably, Japanese is a high-context, SOV language that relies on postpositions to express grammatical information. Unlike English, Japanese doesn't conjugate to plurality or person, lacks a future tense, and is completely free of definite and indefinite articles. Instead, the language uses a topic-comment structure, a complex system of honorific conjugations, and a mixed writing system combining two syllabaries with ideographic characters imported from China. Phonetically, the language relies on a set consonant+vowel syllabic structure further differentiated by the fact that the language contains only five vowels (a, i, u, e, o). Here is an illustration of some of these features:
EX: 田中さんはりんごを食べる。
(Tanaka-san wa ringo wo taberu)
Tanaka (honorific) (topic marker) apple (direct object marker) eat(s). —> Tanaka eats apples.

its nature as an airship, the *Aurora* becomes stage to not only roughly half the novel, but to a number of issues and concerns of the translation process as well.

As an attempt to illustrate the complexity of these processes, my thesis interrogates the phenomenon of translation in *Airborn* in conceptual, textual, cultural, and editorial terms. In the first section, I propose my own theoretical framework towards translation within which I discuss the novel, as well as the notion of "impossibility" and its complex relationship to an audience's experience of a translated text. In the second section, I discuss the phonetic gloss and system of notes added to the text in its journey to Japanese, with special attention to the narratives about culture and readerships these additions weave. In the third section, I then move onto some of the specific areas of linguistic tension in the novel's Japanese translation with regard to made-up words as well as their representation, treatment and implications within the context of the world of the translation. Continuing this exploration of the world of the translation, in the fourth section, I then study the implementation and use of grammatical politeness levels unique to Japanese over the course of the translation. Shifting from the linguistic to the narrative world, in the fifth section, I then explore the role of textualization in Matt's own life and the striking commentary that this brings to the relationship between the source text and the translation. Lastly, in the sixth section, I examine the narrative of expectations and assumptions surrounding the translation itself with reference to Harada's own history with the translation, editorial interventions, and the translation's ultimate commercial reception by Japanese readers. By gradually expanding my focus and exploring the text on the metatextual, textual and editorial level, I hope to both shed light on the piercing, multi-lay-

ered nature of translation as well as explore the many ways in which cultural and linguistic differences between English and Japanese are handled and negotiated within the translation.

Finally, as both a point of consideration and a hint of things to come, I'd like to point out the composition of my thesis' title: 浮在 ("Fuzai"). A term and play on words of my own making following the translation's own penchant for made-up terminology, 浮在 combines the kanji for "float" and "exist" to form a new word altogether. While I've reserved the full explanation behind this term until my thesis' conclusion, as I explore the *Aurora's* journey inside and out the world of the novel, the notion of a "floating existence" will hopefully become something of an anchor idea to help foreground the various issues I discuss in relation to the source text and translation. After all, hundreds of feet in the air or not, even airships need anchors.

Glossary

The following glossary lists the specialized terms appearing frequently over the course of this thesis:

Casual Language: The term I utilize to refer to familiar speech as indicated by the lack of polite conjugations. Interchangeable with casual speech.

Hiragana (ひらがな）**:** The primary Japanese syllabary used to represent native Japanese words. Structurally, it represents the same basic set of sounds that its sister syllabary, Katakana, offers.

Honorific Language: The umbrella-term for 尊敬語 ("sonkeigo," or "reverential language" and 謙譲語 ("kenjougo," or "humble language)" that I utilize here. Both forms are indicated by a distinct set of conjugations.

Furigana （ふりがな）**:** A phonetic superscript used to indicate the pronunciation of words written in kanji. Also used to indicate the pronunciation of kanji when said pronunciation might not be readily evident or known, or when the writer wishes to introduce a non-orthodox reading of a word.
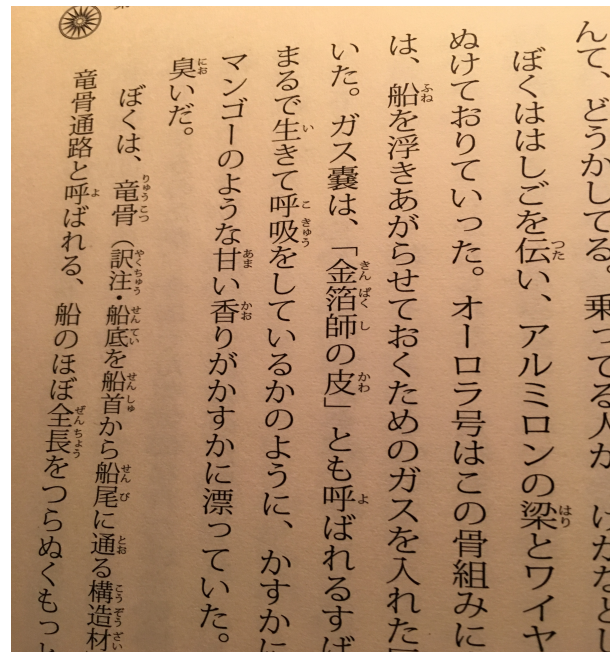
Kanji （漢字）**:** The meaning-bearing Chinese characters used in written Japanese. Kanji express meaning rather than sound, and in order to look a word up in a standard Japanese dictionary, the "reading," or pronunciation applied to the kanji in any given word must be known beforehand. In general, "readings" are divided into two types: "On-yomi," or pronunciations influenced by Chinese, and "Kun-yomi," the bases of native Japanese words tied to the meaning expressed by a given kanji.

Katakana (カタカナ）**:** The sister syllabary to Hiragana, mainly used to transcribe foreign words. Occasionally used for emphasis and other purposes.

Polite Language: The term I utilize here for the です (desu) and ます(masu)-level of polite conjugations utilized in Japanese. Less polite than honorific language, but more polite than casual language.

Yakuchū (訳注）**:** Translator's notes used to clarify unfamiliar points in the translation. In *Airborn*, these notes are inserted directly into the text itself via parentheses.

Text Preview

んて、どうかしてる。乗ってる人が、けがなどし
ぼくははしごを伝い、アルミロンの梁とワイヤ
ぬけておりていった。オーロラ号はこの骨組みに
は、船を浮きあがらせておくためのガスを入れた
いた。ガス嚢は、「金箔師の皮」とも呼ばれるすば
まるで生きて呼吸をしているかのように、かすかに
マンゴーのような甘い香りがかすかに漂っていた。
臭いだ。
ぼくは、竜骨（訳注・船底を船首から船尾に通る構造材、
竜骨通路と呼ばれる、船のほぼ全長をつらぬくもっ

Pictured above is a page from the novel including both 1.) the smaller furigana script attached to the right of each kanji (most prominently seen within the brackets in the center of the page), and 2.) yakuchū enclosed in parentheses in the second to last line at the far left of the page.

Conventions

-Since I'll be presenting examples from both the source text and translation in parallel, I've adopted the following system to accommodate both versions of the text.

    ENG: (The lines as they appear in the English original)

    JPN: (The relevant lines as they appear in the translation)

    LIT: (How the Japanese translation "literally" reads)

-For instances in which the literal translation is distinctly non-idiomatic in English or understanding would be better served by an alternate phrasing, I'll list the phrase in question in its closest natural rendering in English and then follow with the "literal" translation in parentheses.

-For individual Japanese words presented in the text, I'll attach the romanization of that particular word in most cases (unless ambiguity is needed for rhetorical reasons).

-Given that this study focuses heavily on the Japanese translation of *Airborn* as a text in its own right, parenthetical references for citations of the translation only contain the translator's last name, not the original author's. They will appear, therefore, as "(Harada 15)" instead of "(Oppel, Harada 15)."

-With the exception of the vowel combinations "ei" and "ou," a macron is used above a vowel to denote a long vowel in Japanese.

1. Adaptation in the Air: Impossibility, Staging & The Theatre of the Domestic

Among the many difficulties of translation is the sheer impossibility of a text from one culture occurring as it did originally within the context of another. Despite his experience sailing around the globe, *Airborn* never once hints at Matt being able to speak a foreign language, much less Japanese, but in the paradoxical skies of translation, not only is he given the ability to speak the language fluently, but the cultural knowledge and code to present himself and his thoughts in a Japanese manner. As such, from names and descriptions to characters' speech patterns, everything in a text is inevitably rooted in and informed by the mosaic of cultural context in which it was conceived, and as a result, even when translated into the most natural, flowing prose the target language can offer, the text will inevitably maintain its nature as a foreign work. Kept afloat by these same contradictions and impossibilities, then, the translated text will inevitably become a "staging" of the original adapted to the target language and culture.

As the word "staging" itself suggests, this process bears more than a few passing similarities to the regular adaptation and reimagining of productions within theatrical practices.[2] Just as every production of a play is adapted, fitted, and even contorted to the boundaries and dimensions of the theatre it's being performed in, so too does what I call "the theatre of the domestic," the socio-linguistic boundaries of a translated text as defined by the "domestic" terms of the target language and culture, inevitably come to define the so-called "dimen-

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[2] In his essay, "Translation, Community, Utopia," Lawrence Venuti notes a similar process in translation, claiming that, with regards to translation, "The source message is always interpreted and reinvented, especially in cultural forms open to interpretation," (Venuti 470). Put another way, translation highlights the notion of the source text as a sort of floating entity "up in the air" and open to any number of readings and interpretations.

sions" of the text in turn. Far more than the mere context governing narrative discourse in a given language and culture, I posit that the theatre of the domestic serves as the framework for molding a foreign work into an "acceptable" form to domestic audiences, providing a guideline for all the "necessary" changes that might accompany just that. Much in the same way performances of Shakespeare around the world can magically summon Chinese-speaking Hamlets or the Takarazuka revue can transform women into "men" with the rise of a curtain, the theatre of the domestic allows for an almost occult transformation of the original text in which the "impossibility" of the original text actually occurring the way it's presented in the translation seeps into the text at its core, deeply affecting both translation and source text alike. What's more, as Annie Brisset notes in "The Search for a Native Language," this same sort of impossibility is often compounded by representational difficulties in translation due to "the absence in the target language of a subcode equivalent to the one used by the source text in its reproduction of the source language," furthering the notion that the theatre of the domestic must in turn try and present domestic equivalents based on the linguistic and historical context of the work itself as well (Brisset 344).[3]

But if all that goes into the theatre of the domestic, what of its audience? What's to be said of the individuals partaking in such texts, and how is their experience of the text molded by the aforementioned "impossibility" running through the veins of any translated work? Readers of fiction, and especially readers of fantasy-fiction works such as *Airborn*, are never all that bothered by impossibility, however. All fiction, by mere definition, exists outside of

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[3] By means of example, one of the questions Brisset raises to illustrate her point is "What is the French equivalent of the English of the American South in Faulkner's novels?" Due to the lack of an exact French equivalent to the dialect in context, Brisset's question suggests, any such translation would naturally have to take such questions of representation into consideration (Brisset 344).

reality, an inch from real life, worlds away, or somewhere in between. And yet, no matter

how far removed a work is from reality, all fiction has no choice but to rely on what has been

called the audience's "suspension of disbelief" to varying extents.[4] Put another way, the con-

cept posits that, in exchange for an audience willingly allowing themselves to accept such

false realities, a fictional work has no choice but to offer up a certain degree of believability

or reality within the world of the story. Functioning as a sort of contract between reader and

author, then, the suspension of disbelief allows audiences to accept and even enjoy a work of

fiction, in spite of the ultimate "falsehood" of the events of the text in the strictest sense of

the term.

Much in the same vein, then, so too does a translated work require its own sort of

agreement to function: a "simulative contract" simultaneously involving reader, writer and

translator. As the name implies, by "simulative contracts" I refer to the multitude of micro-

agreements and negotiations among the parties made as a way to accept the translated text's

inevitable nature as a staging or "simulation" of the original. Perhaps lacking the linguistic

proficiency to read a text in the original, the audience of a translated work has to accept the

boundaries and contours of the theatre of the domestic to gain access to the text at all. By en-

tering into a simulative contract then, audiences have to accept that the text as it's presented

via the translation is in fact the entirety of the work itself. In other words, in exchange for

offering audiences access to a text that would've otherwise been out of reach, simulative con-

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[4] The term "suspension of disbelief" was first forwarded by Samuel Coleridge in his 1817 work, *Bi-ographia Literaria.* The idea bears a close resemblance to the notion of "verisimilitude," or, as the Encyclopædia Britannica defines it, "the semblance of reality in dramatic or nondramatic fiction" es-pecially with regards to the overarching "framework of the narrative" ("Verisimilitude").

tracts demand that audiences accept the translated text as fully representative of the original, despite its nature as a simulation staged within the theatre of the domestic.

Taken together, then, the theatre of the domestic and simulative contracts play an unmistakably crucial role in the translation process, affecting the text in question not only on a meta-textual, linguistic level, but seeping deep inside it to fundamentally change it from the inside out. It should come as a no surprise then, that for a novel so heavily paralleling the translation process, the many roles these elements play in the Japanese translation of *Airborn* are both notably significant and readily apparent, serving to keep the translation aloft through its darkest skies.

Thus, in examining the twin voyages of the Aurora and the translation process, it becomes essential to not only examine these concepts as they relate to translation in general, but to consider their impact upon *Airborn* itself, with regards to both the original and the Japanese translation. To this end, *Airborn* demands a deep exploration of not only the meta-textual issues informing and molding it as a text and a translation alike, but of the underlying textual notions of identity and world that shape the novel as well.

From one port to another, then, the *Aurora* and the Japanese translation of *Airborn*, two floating impossibilities bound together by their mutual hardships and uprisings, fly together as one, sailing toward dawn.

2. Worth Noting: Translator's Notes & Readerships

Given that any translation's primary concern is the establishment of a new readership for a text on foreign soil, it should come as no surprise that *Airborn* keeps a keen eye out for its Japanese audience in more ways than one. While the English original has found itself a comfortable spot on readers' bookshelves and classrooms alike[5], in its journey overseas, it becomes clear that the translation has adopted a number of strategies and additions to target and adapt to a similar demographic in Japan.

First and foremost among these are the 訳注 (yakuchū), or "translator's notes," scattered throughout the work, explaining and clarifying various terms and concepts throughout the novel that the average young reader might require clarification for. As the term suggests, these notes are secondary additions not present in the original, and as evinced by the fact that Harada felt the need to incorporate them into the text directly, seem designed to form a part of the "experience" of the text itself. What's more, these are no mere footnotes relegated to the bottom of the page, but instead, full-on insertions within the text itself, sectioned off merely by parentheses, as if they themselves were miniature airships gliding across the page.

Like the *Aurora*, then, the parenthetical yakuchū employed in the novel have their own responsibility to "transport" the presumably-unknown terminology they accompany into the reader's understanding, as seen in the first chapter when Matt lists a number of "winged things" sailors had claimed to have seen in the skies:

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[5] See Martin, *Airborn Novel Study*. Notably, this unit plan (for the novel's original Canadian release) showcases the wide variety of educational content the novel offers, with particular insight and focus on the many literary devises it utilizes.

ENG: Angels and dragons, sky kelpies and cloud sphinxes (Oppel 21).

JPN:「天使や竜、空を飛ぶケルピー（訳注：スコットランドの伝説に

出てくる、人を水死させるという馬の形をした水の精）や、雲の上を

歩くスフィンクス。」(Harada 37).

LIT: Angels and dragons, kelpies (Translator's Note: Water spirits appearing

in Scottish legends that took on the form of a horse and caused people to

drown) that fly the sky, and sphinxes that walk on clouds.

Drawing on a wide variety of mythological creatures in that sentence alone, it imme-diately becomes clear which forms are expected to be known by readers intuitively (angels and dragons), and which would most likely prompt confusion— in this case, the so-called "sky kelpies." Notably, the sentence presumes that the Japanese audience would be readily familiar with the Egyptian sphinx, yet presumes a far lesser knowledge of the Scottish kelpie, serving to help define the expectations and assumptions made towards readers. Thus, while both "sphinx" and "kelpie" are rendered in katakana, the "foreign-ness" of the "kelpie" is effectively doubled by the explicit signaling of its foreign nature.

And yet, later on in the novel, while engineering the Aurora's emergency-landing on the island, Captain Walker addresses the crew members as follows:

ENG: "…I want this vessel tied down as tightly as Gulliver! Houdini could

not shift her, nor a typhoon! See to it, men!" (Oppel 118)

JPN:「係留マストはないが、この船をガリバーみたいにしっかりと

しばりつけようじゃないか！嵐が来ようが、あの有名な奇術師のフー

ディーニが来ようが動かないようにするんだ。みんな、頼んだぞ！」

(Harada 169)

LIT: "We don't have a mooring mast, but let's tie this ship down tightly like

Gulliver! Make it so it won't move if a storm, or even that famous magician,

Houdini, comes! Everyone, I'm counting on you!"

While in the original text itself, this line presupposes that the ship's crew would've all had knowledge of both Gulliver and Houdini, in the translation, a sort of "semi-explanation" is snuck into the line's Japanese rendition. Notably, while the reference to Gulliver is left unexplained without any sort of preface aside from the ropes being used at the moment, Houdini actually receives something of an introduction in that he's referred to as 「あの有名な奇術師のフーディーニ」 or "that famous magician, Houdini," a description not at all present in the source text. While this reference lacks a translator's note to accompany it, the mere fact that added context was deemed necessary serves to further reveal the cultural background that the original text and its references are situated in, as well as Harada's perceived need to clarify Houdini's identity to young Japanese readers.

From these two instances alone, the translator's crucial role in the theatre of the domestic becomes immediately clear, functioning not only as an intermediary in linguistic differences, but also in "mismatches" in cultural knowledge such as the ones mentioned above

as well. Just as the theatre of the domestic is in and of itself a tool for handling foreign elements, so too is the translator's "supplementing" of the text a part of its realization upon that same stage. And yet, for *Airborn*, while the purpose of such additions (either explicitly signaled to the reader via the "yakuchū" or added in unannounced in the same vein as the Houdini reference) is ultimately explanation, the fact remains that their very existence constitutes a sort of "domestication" of the text to Japanese standards beyond mere translation.

Thus, while not so frequent as to appear on every page, the collection of these "yakuchū" and the subsequent added context implanted into the novel constitutes a text on its own. Taken together, they represent a complex image of the target language and its relation to international cultural references, weaving its own narrative or theory about what the average audience of the translation would presumably know instinctively and what they might need clarification on. In other words, the presence of the yakuchū directly comment upon what elements of the text would and wouldn't require an explanation for the translation's target audience, in turn serving to highlight areas of tension in the process of relaying the novel's narrative. Notably, these explanations don't seek to address questions of a character's behavior (that is, to try and explain the underlying logic behind their mannerisms, what a particular utterance might've meant, etc.), and instead seek to supplement the audience's knowledge base of the world of the novel through interruptions in the narrative that pause the action and address the reader directly. Functioning as a part of the theatre of the domestic, then, these explanations become one of the many strategies employed to manage the "foreign-ness" of the text and present it in such a way that the audience of the translation can readily digest, all

the while putting the spotlight on those same areas where the novel's "foreign-ness" must be held in check.

While these yakuchū serve to clarify potentially confusing references, the novel's Japanese translation takes pains to alleviate any linguistic difficulties as well. Due to the nature of Japanese kanji, if a reader were to encounter a word containing an unknown kanji in the text, they wouldn't be able to look it up via a standard dictionary, and as such difficult vocabulary could prove a significant obstacle to reading and enjoying the novel, especially within the novel's target young-adult demographic. To that end, the translation applies a novel-wide furigana standard to the text, indicating the pronunciation of every single word written in kanji that appears therein, no matter how basic it might be. Thus, even though 人 (hito) or "person," is among the most basic words in the language, when it appears in the translation, its pronunciation in hiragana accompanies it on the page as such: 人. What's more, while this was most likely a machine-aided process, the fact that furigana accompanies such words only upon the first time they occur on any given page suggests the ulterior, albeit educational motive of "teaching" words via the text. In doing so, the Japanese translation effectually "trains" its readers to note and subsequently memorize the orthoepic standards governing kanji usage in words both simple and complex.

In a strictly physical sense, however, such supplemental mechanisms also constitute a graphic intervention on the surface of the translation itself. In effect, both furigana and the aforementioned yakuchū seem to "float" along the page, at once a part of the text, but readily distinguished from it. In this sense, they replicate the impossibilities that the *Aurora* enables

over the course of the narrative by demonstrating the process of cultural and linguistic trans-

ference in their own right throughout the duration of the translation. Much like the source

text and its own translation, those graphic additions find themselves negotiating the gap be-

tween the written representation of the novel and audience understanding from above, a

structural support upholding the narrative from the first page of the translation to the last.

Functioning as a type of intermediary, and by extension, a reflection of Harada's presence as

an intermediary in the text, both the yakuchū and furigana used throughout the novel serve to

enact the process of translation itself on a miniature scale, opening up the novel to new audi-

ences one sentence at a time.

And yet, while the use of furigana helps minimize any dissonance stemming from

domestic forms, the collection of yakuchū in the Japanese translation serve as a means to

both protect and highlight the foreign nature and cultural context of the text, rendering such

information into cargo every bit as valuable as the text itself. As Lawrence Venuti notes in his

essay "Translation, Community, Utopia," the establishment of the "foreign context in which

the text first emerged" is a necessity for any translation that seeks to "communicate to its

readers the understanding of the foreign text that foreign readers have." Drawing off the work

of Jean-Jacques Lecercle in that same essay, Venuti introduces the idea of the "domestic re-

mainder," or additions to the text produced by the translation process that "results in the pro-

duction of textual effects that signify only in the history of the domestic language and cul-

ture" (Venuti 473).

In resorting to such interventions, the translation hearkens back to similar practices in

the pre-modern 漢文 (kanbun) tradition (starting around the ninth century AD) that saw Ja-

panese scholars annotate fully-Chinese texts into "understandable, albeit rather unnatural, Japanese," via a system of "special marks" indicating word-order and grammatical inflection (in a process quite similar to the application of furigana). Additions and explanations to a text were also quite common in the works of Meiji-era translators such as Nakamura Keiu (1832-91) and Oda Jun'ichirō (1851-1919) who included numerous translator's notes to explain foreign concepts. Thus, the explanations that Harada appends to *Airborn* not only help clarify the novel's cultural context but also play into a longstanding tradition of Japanese translation (Kondo, Wakabayashi 485-489). In light of this same history, then, it becomes clear that, rather than repurposing unfamiliar forms to their closest domestic equivalents, Japanese translations of foreign works have long opted to adopt processes of addition and explanation as the means of choice to convey unfamiliar ideas. An act of preservation by default, these textual processes serve to allow the free import of new ideas and concepts into the language and culture, all the while defining and explaining them in domestic terms via tried-and-true translation strategies.

In light of such, while the novel's use of yakuchū and furigana undoubtedly comprises a part of *Airborn's* "domestic remainder," their use ultimately allows for a more accurate depiction of the original within the context of translation, despite the fact that such explanations and glosses were absent in the source text. Thus, for all the ways these elements differ from the original text within the theatre of the domestic, in the end, these same variations are what ultimately grant the translation resonance with the original and authenticity in turn. While the graphic intervention of such strategies can carry their own narrative of expectations and assumptions regarding reader knowledge, it's also important to recognize the many

ways in which furigana's phonetic properties can open narrative possibilities of a different

sort: namely, the narrative behind naming itself in the novel.

3. What's in a Name?: The Nominal Crisis of the Cloud Cat & Pirated Pronunciation

While the world of *Airborn* is considerably grounded for a novel that spends a good deal of time hundreds of feet in the air, it ultimately stands as a work of fantasy, despite the absence of magic and dragons and such. And yet, while imagined gases, oceans and technologies all exist in the world of the novel, for the most part, they're all rooted in the real world to some degree in their conception (e.g. the "Pacificus" ocean instead of the "Pacific"), adding an air of realism to the work as a whole. The sole exception to this rule, however, lies in the mysterious "beautiful creatures" inhabiting the skies surrounding the island: the "cloud cats."

Described as "a pale panther," "a bat" and a "bird of prey" all at once when Matt and Kate first lay eyes on one, "cloud cats" are large, feline omnivores with the miraculous ability to fly thanks to their incredibly light bones and powerful, bat-like wings (Oppel 179). However, unlike the other elements listed above, cloud cats hold no precedent in the real world from which to base themselves, instead appearing as the novel's sole "fantastical" element in the strictest sense of the word. With the existence of the cloud cats unknown to the outside world, when Matt and Kate finally see a member of the species in person, they naturally have no name for the creature that, up until that point, had never even "existed" in the known world.

Naturally, this immediately proves a problem. Given the fact that human language relies on countless signifier-signified relationships as a means to both process and understand the world, the creature's lack of any specific signifier anchoring it to human understanding cast it into a nominal crisis the moment Matt and Kate laid eyes on it. With the boundaries of

its existence every bit as blurred and indistinct as the pronouns used to indicate it in lieu of a proper name, it would be impossible to discuss, let alone understand the creature without first reigning it in with a name.

And yet, when Matt finally arrives at a name, he doesn't just invent some new word out of the clouds; instead, he combines two signifiers already available to him to form "cloud cat" and thereby pull the creatures out of the vortex of nominal possibilities. Merely by naming the cloud cats, Matt engages in an act of translation to relate the foreign (the cloud cats themselves) in terms of the domestic ("cloud" and "cat," two signifiers that Matt was already familiar with). By juxtaposing "cloud" and "cat," Matt tries to convey the fundamental nature of the creature, indicating both its pale, cloud-like color (and perhaps the species' aerial abilities with it), and its feline features in one compound-signifier. Thus, given its absence in the language until that point, conveying the creature's very existence requires its existence to be translated into domestic terms that approximated its features as much as possible. The creature is like a cloud and like a cat, but in reality, it is neither. And yet, in naming it so, Matt unknowingly "calls" the creature into existence, and by this single act of translation, he in turn creates new meaning where there once was none.

In the Japanese translation, the cloud cats' existence takes on another wrinkle, however. As one would imagine, the Japanese terms for both "cloud" and "cat" are entirely different, corresponding to 雲 (kumo) and 猫 (neko), respectively. Much in the same vein as the English original, the Japanese translation has Matt combining these two signifiers in an attempt to name the creatures, producing a word that's every bit as new in Japanese as it is in English: 雲猫.

The question is, though, just how would one go about pronouncing 雲猫? In the novel, the word is written in 漢字 (kanji), the meaning-bearing Chinese ideographic characters used in written Japanese. Notably, however, unlike the Latin alphabet, kanji express meaning rather than sound, and as such, the pronunciations applied to them can vary considerably.[6] Due to the development of the Japanese language, each kanji typically has both a "Chinese" reading (pronunciation) and a Japanese reading that are each used in different words. As such, "reading" a word written in kanji isn't so much "sounding out" the word, but rather, remembering and applying the appropriate pronunciation. But just what pronunciation is appropriate when the word itself is made-up? Going by the Chinese pronunciation alone, 雲猫 could presumably be read as "unbyou," but at the same time, by merely juxtaposing the Japanese readings of its constituent kanji, it could potentially be read as "kumoneko" as well. It's important to note that, in the event of actually expressing the words "cloud" and "cat" in Japanese, only the Japanese readings of "kumo" and "neko" would produce valid words, so if the translation of the term were to simply combine the words in the same vein as the English version, the Japanese pronunciation would seem the most likely.

The reality, however, is that neither of these readings were utilized in the novel. Instead, the word was represented in kanji as 雲猫 and then accompanied by furigana. Instead of using "unbyou" or "kumoneko," the translation features 雲猫, read as "kuraudo kyatto," a phonetic rendering of the original English term "cloud cat." In addition, while furigana has

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[6] To a certain extent, kanji can "hint" at their Chinese-pronunciation via shared graphemic elements, however. For instance, 青、精 and 請 all share the Chinese reading of "sei" due to the reproduction of 青 in the characters.

been traditionally used to show the pronunciation of a word composed of unknown kanji, the system holds the potential to indicate a word's meaning via the kanji it attaches to while instructing audiences to use a non-standard pronunciation when reading the word. Thus, by affixing the non-standard reading of "kuraudo kyatto" onto 雲猫, the translation acknowledges a certain "gap" between the meaning related by the word's kanji and its adopted pronunciation.

The importance of this is twofold: first, by using furigana to guide readers to a non-standard pronunciation, the translation suggests that audiences' assumptions as native speakers about how to read the word and how it's actually read in the story would most likely differ considerably, necessitating the use of furigana therein. At the same time, the pronunciation being relayed is fundamentally English in nature, or to put it another way, English disguised as Japanese. While the words クラウドキャット (kuraudo kyatto) and "cloud cat" might look different on the surface, the truth of the matter is that they're actually one and the same. With this, then, it becomes clear that, even in the Japanese translation, the terms that Matt uses to "translate" the "foreign-ness" of the cloud cat into the domestic are English, albeit English reworked to fit Japanese syllabic restraints.

While it's safe to say that audiences knew that the characters in the book spoke English originally, the fact remains that even in the Japanese translation of the novel, the "domestic" for Matt, the processes by which he understands and rationalizes the world around him, are fundamentally rooted in English. While he'd spoken nothing but fluent Japanese by any standard up until that point, this one moment reveals the nature of the translation as a simula-

tion of the original, an impossibility that directly acknowledges its own impossibility in turn. In the theatre of the domestic, the term "cloud cat" could've never appeared on its own, much less make the journey into Japanese unaided, so it was given the kanji 雲猫 to ensure its meaning was unharmed, and the furigana reading of "kuraudo kyatto" to protect both Matt's original conceptions and the process of translation depicted therein.

In my own interview with him, Harada addresses these same concerns himself when explaining his choice for representing the term as he did. At first, Harada had wanted to write the world solely in Katakana as "kuraudo kyatto," "without using kanji," but mentioned that his editors had pushed him to render the word in kanji as 雲猫 given its "mystic feel"[7](Harada Interview 56). Harada goes on to mention that, personally, he felt a sort of "oriental air" (lit. "oriental scent") in the two kanji that comprise the word, and that the final form that combined both kanji and katakana was a sort of "compromise" between these two possibilities. Notably, Harada calls out the potential pronunciation of 雲猫 as "kumoneko" as well, but notes that having the protagonists pronounce the word as such with the native Japanese readings intact felt "out-of-place" to him.

Given his role as the novel's translator, Harada's labeling of the term's written representation as a "compromise" is especially noteworthy. Given the English influence of the word's applied katakana pronunciation and the "oriental air" of the kanji that comprise it, the word's nature as a "compromise" speaks to not only the novel's place in both English and Japanese-speaking spheres, but also to the overarching influence of simulative contracts upon

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[7] The full contents of the interview are attached at the end of my thesis under Harada's express permission.

the negotiation of meaning via translation. Furthermore, the fact that Harada explicitly called out the possible pronunciation of "kumoneko" as "out of place" (that is, "out of place" in its own language), suggests that the translation is indeed a "staging" of the original, guided by the unspoken assumption that all the characters in the translation are, in all actuality, speaking English the entire time. Taken together, the combined notions of orientalism and "out of place" language that Harada notes seem to suggest an imagined Western consideration of the translation on Harada's part. Put another way, in translating a novel clearly rooted in Western culture, Harada seems to presuppose a degree of jarring dissonance with the use of such "oriental" kanji in the term, seemingly adopting an imagined Western viewpoint despite his own natural familiarity and experience with the system. The term itself, then, becomes yet another clause in the audience's simulative contract, at once a striking reminder of the translation's nature of a "staging," but an undeniable cornerstone of the narrative, in both source and translation.

And yet, while the name "cloud cat" is every bit as "made-up" as the creatures themselves, as if to challenge any one reading of the "reality" the translation takes place in, the Japanese version plays host to another, entirely different "made-up" term that I've chosen to highlight specifically due to its distinct contrasts in structure and implication with 雲猫 (kuraudo kyatto). In a particularly ironic stroke, Spzirglas' band of pirates are referred to by a term that, while easy to comprehend, is certainly not listed in any Japanese dictionary: 空賊 (kūzoku). With the kanji comprising the word literally breaking down to "sky" and "thief/

brigand," its meaning is readily evident: sky pirate. When Matt first catches sight of Szpir-

glas' ship, the terms he uses to describe them differ considerably, however.

> ENG: "Pirates. That was all they could be" (Oppel 97)
>
> JPN: 空賊だ！まちがいない。(Harada 140)
>
> LIT: "Sky pirates! There was no mistaking it."

Notably, in the English original, Szpirglas' band is referred to merely as "pirates"

without anything hinting at the unique context under which they operated. Throughout the

English version, Szpirglas' group is continually referred to as "pirates," and in these same

instances, they're referred to as 空賊, or "sky pirates" in the Japanese version, establishing a

one-to-one correspondence between these terms.

While one might be tempted to assume from this correspondence that Japanese lacked

a term for "pirate" and that one simply had to be invented in turn, in actuality, Japanese has

another word for "pirate" entirely: 海賊 (kaizoku). Breaking down much in the same way as

空賊, the word combines 海 (sea) with 賊 (thief), effectively defining pirates as "thieves of

the sea" by the kanji that constitute the word. Thus, in Japanese, "pirates" are strictly sea-

bound ruffians, and to identify Szpirglas' motley, sky-sailing crew as 海賊 (kaizoku) would

result in a misnomer due to the wider boundaries of the English word "pirate." Harada, the

novel's translator, is no stranger to this term's intricacies either, explicitly calling Szpirglas a

"海賊ならぬ空賊" (kaizoku naranu kūzoku), or "not a pirate, but a sky pirate" in his after-

word to the translation, highlighting these same translation issues by juxtaposing the two

terms (Harada 490). Thus, despite the invented nature of the term 空賊 (kūzoku), the context

of the original work and the boundaries of Japanese vocabulary alike combined to necessitate

and normalize its use as a common, readily-understand term throughout the work.

Much like the reading of 雲猫 (kuraudo kyatto), however, the pronunciation of the

term offers up a fascinating commentary on its use and creation. Drawing a distinct contrast

with the English-in-disguise rendering of "cloud cat," 空賊 (kūzoku) opts for a much more

standard reading. Notably, the two kanji in the word are read with their Chinese-influenced

pronunciations (kū and zoku, respectively), suggesting that, at least to some extent, the term

was both conceived and used as a "domestic" term (in as much as Chinese readings of kanji

are "domesticated" Japanese and thereby opposed to "cloud cat" and its loan-word-based

rendering in katakana) on the same level as any other Japanese word within the novel. Fur-

thermore, just as certain Latin roots are readily understood by English speakers (e.g. aqua-,

terra-, manu-, etc.), 空賊 draws on the audience's presumed knowledge of kanji to create a

new term that, while nonexistent, is immediately understandable, to readers and the charac-

ters in the novel alike.

And yet, whereas 雲猫 (kuraudo kyatto), a term of Matt's own making, is informed

by domestic orthographic representation (e.g. the kanji clarifying the meaning), but foreign

pronunciation, 空賊 (kūzoku) is "domestic" in both its written form and accompanying read-

ing. Furthermore, based on its usage among the crew members of the *Aurora*, the word seems

to have existed in the world of the novel for some time beforehand, notably different than the

on-the-spot labeling that Matt applies to the cloud cats. While the signifiers that Matt combines to form 雲猫 (kuraudo kyatto) are readily identifiable as English, the signifiers and word-formation processes that 空賊 (kūzoku) relies on are unmistakably Japanese in nature, suggesting that, in the alternate reality of the translation, the external "world" of the novel actually operates in Japanese. Furthermore, Matt's usage of "cloud cat" suggests that he's an English-speaker merely being expressed in Japanese, but the nature and reading of 空賊 (kūzoku) seems to imply that the world of the translation takes place in a Japanese-speaking context, as opposed to an English-speaking world merely being rendered into Japanese.

In truth, however, the world of the translation exists somewhere in between these two extremes, a "compromise" between realities much like the Japanese rendering of "cloud cat," blurring the lines between domestic and foreign without hesitation, and readily embracing all the countless impossibilities that arise as a result. Ultimately, both 雲猫 (kuraudo kyatto) and 空賊 (kūzoku) are yet another simulative contract for readers to accept. These same words not only force readers to accept a gap in what the characters are saying and how their speech is represented in the translation, but also to face the fact that the characters in the novel as audiences encounter them inhabit the same space of "impossibility" as the translation itself.

It's no wonder then, that the two greatest threats to the *Aurora*, the cloud cats and the pirates, were also the same areas that pushed and stretched the reality of the translation the furthest. As obstacles that both the narrative and the translation had to overcome, the cloud cats and pirates seem to comment on not only the difficulty of translation, but of communicative acts within the same language as well. As two distinct entities that had been seen, and

even recognized, but never "pinned down" by the needle of discovery, both the cloud cats and pirates alike rested in the safe depths of the unknown until the events of the novel. As the narrative suggests, however, the real danger comes when trying to drag such unknown elements into the light of day, leaving those same unknowns just as likely to capsize any communicative act as they are to be tamed to the act's intentions. While the implications of the cloud cats and pirates themselves merit more discussion elsewhere, at the end of the day, whether 雲猫 or "kuraudo kyatto," 空賊 or "pirate," either one would still be just as likely to kill.

4. Politeness sans *San*: The Translation of Politeness, Respect & Cultural Code

While far from a concern for either cloud cats or pirates, in terms of both linguistic structure and cultural context, politeness stands out as one of the central pillars of the Japanese language. Unlike English, which tends to rely on word choice and intonation to make a speaker sound more polite, Japanese utilizes a complex system of conjugations for almost all parts of speech to regulate a speaker's politeness, as well as "honorific language," incorporating a variety of ways for speakers to humble themselves or exalt the addressee. As a general rule, polite forms are utilized wherever a degree of deference would be called for, and as such, whenever the addressee is of a higher status than the speaker, polite forms are used almost exclusively. On the other hand, so-called "plain forms" are used when the speaker and addressee are familiar with each other, and wish to avoid the icy distance of polite forms, or when the speaker is of a higher status than the addressee. While there are a few exceptions to this rule, this trend serves to regulate and shape all discourse in Japanese, in that the use of one of these forms is necessary to communicate and create comprehensible sentences in the language. Thus, by extension, merely by examining the politeness level a speaker uses in his or her conjugations, it's possible to gather a good deal of information regarding the relationship between the speaker and their addressee as well as the context surrounding it.

Thus, even though English is entirely lacking in such conjugations, to translate *Airborn* into Japanese these same politeness levels have to be incorporated into and applied onto the novel at every level to produce a legible and idiomatic text. Furthermore, while "polite" speech (as signaled by honorifics such as "sir," etc.) certainly exists in the source text, the fact remains that the lines between plain and polite speech in English are blurred in compari-

son to Japanese. As such, in translating the text, every single line of dialogue in the translation has to consider (and sometimes even make assumptions about) the relationship between the characters involved. What's more, as mentioned above, the use of honorific language (as opposed to mere polite language) brings with it an added layer of commentary on these relationships, and given the absence of such forms in the original English, constitutes a sort of "domestication" of the text to Japanese societal standards.

As the youngest crew member onboard the *Aurora*, the majority of Matt's dialogue on the ship is decidedly polite, given his lower status in all most of all of his conversations. Thus, as seen below, in his conversation with the captain in the first chapter, when addressing his superiors onboard the *Aurora*, Matt's speech is unfailingly rendered in polite language.

ENG: "Yes, sir. I have no fear of heights." (Oppel 11)

JPN: 「はい、船長。高いところは全然怖くありません」(Harada 22)

LIT: "Yes, captain. Heights (lit. high places) aren't scary at all."

While the presence of "sir," in the original English naturally signals polite discourse, in Japanese, Matt's conjugations make his politeness immediately clear, and serve to naturalize the conversation within a Japanese context. In other words, given that the use of polite language would be required in a similar situation in a Japanese context, by replicating such forms in the translation, Matt's original intentions could be readily preserved and represented in both linguistically and culturally appropriate terms.

Much in the same vein, upon first meeting Kate, Matt finds himself using this same register given Kate's "superior" status as a passenger aboard the ship, and a wealthy one at that.

> ENG: "If you're interested, there will be a tour later this morning." (Oppel 39)
>
> JPN: 「興味がおありでしたら、昼食前に船内ツアーがありますが、いかがですか？」 (Harada 59)
>
> LIT: "If you're interested (lit. if you have interest), there's a ship tour before lunch, but how does that sound (lit. how is that)?"

Notably, despite their similarity in age, Matt adopts polite language as seen above as a means to highlight Kate's higher status as a passenger, thereby placing himself humbly beneath her in a show of respect. While it's not at all strange in Japanese to use polite forms towards one's similarly-aged peers upon first meeting them, Matt's register here is notably more polite than that. As such, just as with Matt's conversation with the captain above, these polite forms often serve to pinpoint who holds the most power in any given dialogue.

Given the *Aurora's* status as a luxury airship, the needs and wants of the passengers naturally become one of the crew's chief concerns, placing the passengers in a position of power above both the crew and the captain. As seen in the captain's address to the crew members after the shipwreck, this relationship often manifests itself with the passengers us-

ing plain langauge(indicated by his use of "no ka" as a question form), while the captain

himself adopts polite language in turn.

> ENG: "We're shipwrecked, then!" said one passenger. "Not at all, sir. Our
>
> vessel is in one piece. And she will fly again" (Oppel 120).
>
> JPN: 「じゃあ、難破したってことなのか？」乗客の一人が言った。
>
> 「いいえ、そうではありません。船は無事ですし、再び離陸する予
>
> 定ですから」(Harada 171)
>
> LIT: "Then, we've shipwrecked (lit. it's that we've shipwrecked)?" said one
>
> passenger. "No, that's not it. The ship is unharmed, and we plan to take off
>
> again."

Thus, while the captain's status allows him to make free use of plain language to-

wards his subordinates, in addressing the passengers, he uses both polite conjugations (as

marked by his use of "desu" and "masu" conjugations) as well as more formal terms in his

word choice (such as "yotei" for "plan") to show both respect and a recognition of the pas-

senger's "power" therein. Naturally, the captain holds the most power of anyone onboard in

the strictest sense, but due to the societal context of the *Aurora*, he finds himself conceding to

and even exalting the passengers as a result.

While the above examples presuppose an understanding of proper discourse and the

linguistic ability to wield it to one's advantage, the *Aurora* is staffed by crew members from a

variety of locales and different linguistic backgrounds in turn. Providing both world-class

cuisine and comedic relief alike, Chef Vlad Herzog's appearance in the text is especially

memorable, in part due to the fact that he's described as speaking with "some kind of Tran-

sylvanian accent," suggesting that in both the source text and translation, his first language is

almost assuredly neither English nor Japanese, a fact that both the source text and translation

signal linguistically through his dialogue.

> ENG: "You want that I what?" he had whispered politely to Mr. Lisbon. "You
>
> want that I cook duck? Duck? Duck?" (Oppel 64)
>
> JPN: 「あなたは、わたしになにをしてほしいのですか？」ヴラッドさ
>
> んは、リスボンさんにむかって上品な口調でささやきかけた。「カモ
>
> 料理を出してほしいのか？カモ？カモですか？」(Harada 94)
>
> LIT: "What do you want me to do?" Vlad turned to Mr. Lisbon and whispered.
>
> "You want me to cook a duck (lit. put out a duck dish)? Duck? Is it duck?"

While Vlad's English in the source text is readily recognizable as both foreign-influ-

enced and grammatically-incorrect, the Japanese that Vlad uses in the translation is, at least

in the strictest sense, correct. However, in order to convey Vlad's foreign accent, the transla-

tion has Vlad use stereotypical "foreigner" speech to convey a lower level of familiarity with

the language, as well as a mix of polite and plain forms while addressing Mr. Lisbon in the

section above.[8] Taken together, this suggests that Vlad's grip on the language, while functional enough to communicate, is rather shaky, and by extension, his seemingly limited understanding of the distinction between polite and casual speech in Japanese implies a degree of unfamiliarity with the cultural rules dictating discourse in the language. While he's loved (and feared) by the ship's crew in spite of this, Vlad presents the interesting case of a "doubly-foreign" identity, that, for all intents and purposes, only serve to reinforce the examples above as "proper" discourse.

And yet, while the above examples serve to define the "rules" upon which discourse is carried out aboard the *Aurora*, those rules can also be broken. While Matt's register towards Kate in the early part of the novel is unmistakably polite, as the two spend more time together, they begin to grow closer and form a friendship that directly contradicts the tenets of appropriate discourse that govern the *Aurora*. From the fifth chapter of the novel onward, whenever the two are alone with each other, Matt finds himself using plain language towards Kate, conscientiously reverting back to polite language whenever others might take notice. In effect, then, this politeness becomes a sort of performance upheld between the two, a subversive discourse masquerading in the guise of socially-acceptable dialogue. As if to highlight the subversive quality of their language and relationship, at the very end of the fifth chapter, even Matt finds himself stumbling with the ingrained standards of discourse when talking with Kate.

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[8] Japanese has a tendency to leave out the topic of a sentence when it can be inferred from context, so Vlad's usage of "anata" (you) in the sentence above, while technically not wrong, seems designed to replicate the common mistake of Japanese learners repeatedly calling out the same topic in every utterance related to it, despite the lack of a need to do so in natural Japanese.

ENG: I laughed, "I'm sure it will, miss." "I wish you wouldn't call me 'miss.'" "What should I call you?" "Kate, of course." "If I start calling you Kate now when it's just the two of us, I might slip up in public and that'd be seen as impertinent" (Oppel 89)

JPN: 僕は笑った。「まちがいありませんね、ケイトさん」　「さんづけはやめてくれない？」　「じゃあ、なんて？」「ただのケイトでいいわよ」　「二人だけの時はそれでもいいけど、人がいるところで口をすべらせたら、礼儀知らずだと思われてしまう」(Harada 128)

LIT: I laughed. "There's no doubt about it, Kate-san." "Won't you stop putting -san on my name?" "Then what should I call you?" "Just 'Kate' is fine." "That's fine when it's just the two of us, but if I mess up (lit. make my mouth slip) where there are people around, they'd think I was disrespectful (lit. ignorant of respect)."

While a certain shift in formality is still noticeable in the original English, in the Japanese above, when Matt addresses Kate with "san[9]," he (seemingly automatically) reverts back to the polite conjugations that he'd been using when speaking with her until that chapter, before immediately returning to plain forms whenever Kate calls him out on it. While this slip-up on Matt's part serves to highlight the tensions accompanying such subversive shifts in register, on a larger level, the performative component that Matt and Kate willingly bring into

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[9] "San" is a gender-neutral honorific in Japanese roughly equivalent to the English "Mr." or "Ms./ Mrs."

their discourse falls hand in hand with the translation's broader concerns as a performance of the original. In other words, by modifying and adapting their discourse to the standards of the "audience" present, they enact a sort of "translation" in which their true intentions and relationships are protected and encased by their use of socially appropriate forms towards one another. What's more, while Matt believes that a mistake on his part would suggest that he was "impertinent," that is, somehow lacking in proper manners, in the Japanese, the term he uses is "礼儀知らず" ("reigishirazu"), or literally, "ignorant of respect." In contrast to "impertinent," this particular translation brings with it the added notion that, if he were to make such a social blunder, Matt's problem wouldn't lie so much in his lack of proper courtesy, but rather, his lack of knowledge, or "ignorance," regarding proper discourse standards. This, in turn, serves to both highlight the heightened importance placed on appropriate polite discourse in Japanese spheres, as well as the notion that the use of proper polite speech where necessary is something that an individual would naturally "know," rendering any deviation from such expectations not so much a personal choice to be frowned upon, but rather, the result of a sort of societal "ignorance" on the individual's behalf.

Thus, while the individual effect of such politeness levels varies greatly from character to character and scene to scene, the addition and subsequent manipulation of politeness levels throughout the work ultimately serves to preserve and protect the cultural context of the source text by "encasing" it in domestic forms. Furthering this are the claims of the novel's translator, Masaru Harada himself, on his personal blog, in which he notes that 「性格や人間関係といった情報は、物語とともにすでに原作の中にあるのですから、それを

できるだけ壊さないような日本語を選択してやる」 or rather, " since information per-

taining to (characters') personalities and (human) relationships are already in the original

text, I choose Japanese to preserve it (lit. Japanese that won't destroy the original text) as

much as possible" (Harada, 翻訳者の部屋から). In Harada's own words then, translation

becomes an act of both preservation and narrative consistency whereby choosing appropriate

expressions that protect "personalities and relationships" ultimately becomes key to convey-

ing the work itself. By mere extension, then, the "added" nature of the grammatical and soci-

etal implications these politeness levels bring to the work on the whole serve to hearken back

to Venuti's concept of the "domestic remainder," ultimately producing "textual effects that

signify only in the history of the domestic language and culture" through their appearance in

the novel (Venuti 473). And yet, it's through the use of such additions that the translation

finds itself able to convey the cultural context of the source text, and the network of power

and politeness-sans-"san" circulating beneath its surface.

5. エアボーン〜空に生まれし者たち (Airborn ~ Those Born in the Sky)

From the expanse of the skies, to the spectacle of flight, and even his own daily existence in the air, a good deal of attention in the novel is paid to the many ways Matt renders nearly every aspect of his life aboard the *Aurora* into a distinctive, but personal text, layering personal meaning onto his world and surroundings like wallpaper. Furthermore, Matt utilizes such textualizations as a way to position himself in relation to the world around him, using both his own experiences and psyche to grant significance and meaning to his life in the skies. As such, these overlapping layers that Matt engages in not only serve to grant the work a sort of "unity of image," but also to provide readers with a keen look into the workings of Matt's character.

Lying at the core of the novel's narrative, however, is the cloud cat— namely, the "crippled" cloud cat that lives alone on the island, meriting both a close examination of its significance within the novel, as well as an exploration of its role in the larger framework of young adult literature. While the discovery of the species as a whole is no doubt one of the novel's turning points, it's the severed life that the lone cloud cat on the island leads that resonates most deeply with him, ultimately becoming a physical representation of his growth over the course of the novel. As the 空気より軽い or "lighter than air" Matt Cruse, Matt believes himself to hold a deep connection with the skies, and while onboard the *Aurora*, finds himself able to dream of his father and himself flying together beside the ship, something he's unable to do anywhere else *(*Harada 291). As such, almost as soon as he comes to learn of their existence, Matt begins to render the cloud cats, "airborn" heirs to the power of flight

and a majestic life in the sky alike, into yet another text, all the while projecting his identity

and anxieties alike onto the winged creatures as the novel progresses.

And yet, out of all the cloud cats in the novel, it is the crippled cloud cat's existence

that most clearly strikes at the vulnerable core of Matt's psyche: the fear of being

"grounded." As he himself confesses, he believes that "不幸" (fukou) or "misfortune" will

"catch up" with him if he ever stops flying, seeing life aboard the *Aurora* as a way to escape

the sorrow of his father's death (Harada 269). Naturally, then, the image of the crippled cloud

cat, "landlocked" on the island, directly reflected all of his fears, an avatar for the suffocating

terror of being trapped and helpless, with no choice but to face all his sorrows alone (Oppel

183).

Perhaps the most notable element, however, is that this anxiety seems rooted in the

cloud cat's twisted wing, a "defect" that caused the creature to plummet to the island only

moments after its birth[10]. With one of its wings twisted beyond its natural use, the cloud cat is

not only literally cast out of the company of its kind, but banished to the island and stripped

of the liberating power of flight that wings allow. Matt himself "feels sorry" for the creature

and its "unnaturally stunted" wing, noting that "any creature of flight would not be leaping

from tree to tree; it would be soaring high above them," despite the creature's astonishing

adaptation and survivalism (Oppel 181).

The cloud cat, then, much like the translation itself, finds itself separated from its

original domestic context, a survivor adapted to an entirely new and foreign way of exis-

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[10] Cloud cats give birth in the air, as noted in the journal of Benjamin Molloy, Kate's late grandfather
(Oppel 79)

tence. And yet, for Matt, who'd textualized flight into the very fabric of his being with his claims of being "lighter than air," the unease that Matt feels towards the creature seems to stem from a fear of loosing the control that flight brings. With Matt himself having born "halfway over the Atlanticus" on an airship, he and the cloud cat share the commonality of being "airborn," or, as the Japanese version puts it, 空に生まれし者たち, literally "those born in the sky"—a phrasing informed by the fact that Japanese can't replicate the pun between "airborne" and "airborn" (Oppel 52; Harada 459). Matt and the cloud cat thus share a deep-seated connection via their shared "aerial" births that allows him to readily project his own feelings onto the creature. As such, Matt finds himself able to turn the cloud cat into a living, breathing textualization of his own life, a physical representation of his own struggles playing out independently before his eyes. With this close connection further strengthened by Matt's own perceptions of flight, then, the cloud cat's wings gain special significance to Matt, in so much as they serve to enable flight and, by extension, affirm all the textual associations surrounding flight for Matt. With one of the creature's wings "unnaturally stunted" and never able to extend to its full length, however, the twisted wing instead presents a subversion of Matt's textualization of flight, piercing his web of constructed associations to become an anchor for Matt's insecurities and anxieties regarding himself (Oppel 181). Furthering these concerns is the fact that the very reason the cloud cat is "landlocked" on the island is due to its crippled wing, seemingly confirming Matt's fears that, without flight, he would too share in the cloud cat's fate, effectively "landlocked" by his own sadness.

As Matt's dreams of flying alongside his father suggest, however, flight is seen as an act of connection for Matt, a way to commune with his father, "soaring around the world" in

Matt's dreams after his death (Oppel 210). For Matt then, flying brings with it not only the

paternal, reassuring presence of his father, but a security in self and station, as well. Thus, for

Matt, being severed from the skies is tantamount to losing both his father and the security

this same connection brings, further deepening his textual ties to the crippled cloud cat.

Complicating matters is Matt's relationship with the *Aurora* itself, a personified entity

within the world of Matt's rampant textualization. Matt himself calls the *Aurora* one of "the

two females" in his life (with the other being none other than Kate DeVries), rendering the

ship itself unmistakably feminine in his mind (Oppel 217). While the ship's other crew mem-

bers (including Captain Walken) follow nautical tradition and refer to the *Aurora* with femi-

nine pronouns, Matt goes on to declare the *Aurora* his "home," making it clear that the very

concept of "home" for Matt brings with it feminine associations (Oppel 336). What's more,

when he finally confesses his fears to Kate midway through the novel, declaring that he

"needs" the ship, and that without it, "nothing's good anymore," it becomes readily clear that

the *Aurora's* mere presence serves as a psychological safety blanket for Matt. If he were to

lose the ship, not only would the nurturing, maternal embrace of his "home" be lost to him,

but in the process, he'd lose access to his father as well, given that he's only able to dream of

his father while afloat onboard the *Aurora* (Oppel 189). Thus, if he were to lose the *Aurora,*

and by extension, his ability to "fly," Matt would lose everything anchoring him to any sem-

blance of happiness, powerless before the sadness and misfortune he'd been fleeing from.

With such high stakes, this fear of losing flight naturally finds its way into Matt's per-

ceptions of the crippled cloud cat. While he voices only wistful sympathy when first encoun-

tering the creature and its sorry state, it soon becomes clear that Matt's subconscious connec-

tion with the cloud cat is far deeper. Having read about the crippled cloud cat's botched aerial birth in Benjamin Molloy's diary, after meeting the creature first hand, Matt becomes the newborn creature in a dream, a "slick wet bundle of bone and hair… in the sky, falling." And yet, just like the cloud cat, he finds his "wings would not move," despite the fact that "every bit" of his body was "born to do this" (Oppel 207). With Matt unable to fly in this "mango-scented nightmare,"[11] it immediately becomes clear that the crippled cloud cat's mere existence signals Matt's deepest fears of powerlessness and abandonment, all because it couldn't do what it was "born to do" (Oppel 207).

With these same factors informing Matt's web of textualization vividly presented in both the source text and translation alike, it becomes necessary to examine and dissect the exact mechanics by which Matt comes to associate himself with and onto the crippled cloud cat. A brief analogy could help illuminate these dynamics, as Matt's systematic use of textualization is reminiscent of another work concerned with the (literally) wallpaper-like application of textual significance to one's surroundings: the famous short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. While written over a century before *Airborn*, Gilman's story proves to be particularly relevant to interrogating the textualization processes Matt utilizes over the course of the novel. In both celebratory and subversive fashion, Gilman's story presents the outcome of an individual pouring textual meaning onto material realities, only for the text to take on a life of its own and "affect" the individual in turn. As is well known, the narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper" progressively renders the titular wallpa-

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[11] "Hydrium," the gas used to keep airships afloat in the world of the novel, is described as smelling like mangoes.

per in her room into "a woman stooping down and creeping behind the pattern," utilizing the wallpaper to, as Barbara Seuss notes in "The Writing's On the Wall," "to become, in her mind, literally one with it," and thereby embody within herself the liberating antithesis of the male-defined "rationality" that tried to imprison her in the first place (Gilman 20) (Suess 92). Likewise, Matt pour so much of himself, so much of his psyche into the cloud cat, that Matt "becomes" the creature in a sense, even taking the creature's form in his dreams. As a result of this psychological alignment then, the creature's return to the skies at the novel's end effectively constitutes the resolution of Matt's own insecurities. Put another way, then, despite Matt's authorial position towards the cloud cat as a text, ultimately, Matt finds himself deeply affected by that same text in turn, a writer turned reader by the unexpected life his textualization took on.

As the novel progresses, however, Matt's experiences on the island gradually push him to consider the same textual structures he'd taken for granted, allowing him to slowly, but surely come to understand both his fears and his own textualization processes towards the cloud cats and the world at large. Presenting the climax for Matt's growth and the novel alike, the novel's semi-final chapter sees Matt facing off against Szpirglas himself atop the ship with the fate of the *Aurora* and all those onboard at stake. And yet, when Matt finds himself plummeting from the ship in the resulting battle, and only barely managing to hold onto one of the fins, he's forced to confront all of his insecurities, as well as the reality behind all the textualization he'd built up around himself as the legendary "lighter than air" Matt Cruse.

"I could not fly. I had crashed. I was not lighter than air after all. I'd fallen,

and a great shame seeped through me. I was heavy as stone. All my life I'd

told myself I was light and could outrun sadness. I could fly away and keep

flying forever. But I could never catch up with my father. […] He was gone,

well and truly gone, and now everything had caught up with me: all the years

of sailing away from my family, and my sadness" (Oppel 337-338).

At this moment, Matt fully sees all the holes in the web of textualization he'd con-

structed around himself, but ultimately comes to accept the irreversibility of his father's

death and the futility of his desire to "outrun sadness." And yet, just a moment later, Matt

catches sight of the crippled cloud cat, plunging from the top of the ship only to finally begin

to fly on its own, "trying out its wings, playing with this new thing called flight" (Oppel

339). The creature's wing was still just as twisted, but it had managed to fly "despite its

crimped wing" (Oppel 338). Mirroring Matt's own growth, the cloud cat had achieved flight

despite its wound, finally at home in the skies. With the crippled wing standing in for the

emotional devastation that his father's death brought, this moment ushers in an awakening

for Matt. The cloud cat's flight physically demonstrates that, while his father's death was

permanent, Matt no longer has to try and run away from sadness, allowing him to "fly" with-

out fear, at peace with his loss at long last. Sure enough, after Szpirglas meets his end at the

claws of a flock of cloud cats, Matt fights to make it back inside and guide the ship to safety,

imagining his father's spirit, "still free in the air, passing through me and shunting me along,

guiding me back on course" (Oppel 341). Finally, when Matt takes the wheel and sets the

ship back on track to safety, he's congratulated on his efforts by Captain Walken himself;

"You were born to it, Mr. Cruse, no question. You're flying now" (Oppel 343).

With those same words, then, Matt is unquestionably validated, finally allowing him

to claim what he was "born to." With Matt at peace with both his identity and his father's

death, he finds himself able to dream of his father without the safety blanket of the *Aurora* at

last, noting that "as long as I could still dream about him, I knew everything would be all

right. I didn't need to be aloft to find happiness. It could find me wherever I was" (Oppel

351-352).

Given their textual relationship, then the cloud cat's return to the skies despite its bro-

ken wing proved to be the key to Matt's ultimate validation and personal resolution, signaling

(and in some ways, even sparking) the culmination of Matt's growth over the course of the

novel. As Roberta Trites notes in *Literary Conceptualizations of Growth*, "many authors map

embodiment onto maturation by employing embodied metaphors to describe psychological

growth in children and adolescent's literature (Trites 21). As a reflection/text for Matt's own

development, then, the physicality of the cloud cat's wing provides an apt parallel to the

emotional devastation lingering from the death of Matt's father. As Trites goes on to mention,

physical representation of growth can "help readers perceive psychological growth by sup-

plying physical images that readers readily understand," and in that regard, the permanence

of the cloud cat's crippled wing proves especially salient, especially considering the crea-

ture's ultimate success at overcoming its trials to fly at last among its flock (Trites 21). Suc-

cessfully flying in spite (or perhaps, because of) of its crippled wing, the cloud cat physically

demonstrated that, despite the fact that his father's death would forever be a part of him, he could still fly all the same, confident and assured in his identity and position.

And yet, while the novel sees both Matt and the crippled cloud cat "flying" again by the novel's end, the fact remains that neither one would've been able to overcome their respective wounds without their shared encounter on the island. The foreignness of the island for Matt was the same for the cloud cat during its time aboard the *Aurora*, the domestic sphere of Matt's "home," creating a clash between the domestic and the foreign that ultimately allowed both of them to "fly." Matt textualized the crippled cloud cat as the embodiment of all his insecurities, "translating" his feelings onto the creature. But somewhere along the way, strangely, miraculously, the crippled cloud cat stopped being a "floating signifier" for Matt's worries, and instead broke free from this textualization, no longer content to be landlocked by its past. When the cloud cat finally began to fly then, Matt found their roles reversed. The "translation" had taken on a life of its own outside of its source, and in this same spark of life, so too had Matt, the "source," been deeply affected by his own translation of his feelings and insecurities upon the cloud cat. It was only through their encounters together, then, that Matt and the cloud cat, the domestic and the foreign, source and translation, were able to be moved, and even transformed by the other's presence. As if to become a parable for the exchange between the source text and the translation, then, Matt and the cloud cat's relationship is not merely unilateral, but instead, a live, charged current surging between the two of them that leaves both parties forever changed, allowing the two 空に生まれし者たち to at last fly the skies they were born to.

6. Sky-High Expectations: Hearing from Harada & the Narrative Before the Novel

Pictured from left to right, 1.) The novel's Japanese cover, 2.) The Japanese back cover, & 3.) The novel's 2004 US hardback cover.

As if to understate both the presence and influence of the translator in the text, *Airborn*'s Japanese cover sees Harada's name printed in considerately smaller text beneath Oppel's name on the cover's far left side. While this placement seems to contend that the translator's role is to simply "uphold" and support the larger, more prominent position of the original author, the fact remains that Harada's presence inside and outside the translation is at once both readily noticeable and an indispensable element to any examination of the translated text.

As an intermediary between Oppel and the imagined readership Harada envisioned when he began translating the novel, Harada's influence and personal relationship to the text present themselves throughout the work. Visibly "parting the curtains," so to speak, in the theatre of the domestic to inform readers with his use of furigana and yakuchū at times, while silently regulating and adapting the novel to varying domestic standards at others, Harada is,

in a sense, the "director" for the novel's staging in the theatre of the domestic. With this same almost-authorial responsibility to realize and convey the novel in Japanese resting almost exclusively in his hands (with the rest, as my interview with him suggests, resting with his editors), then, Harada's work with, and expectations of the text position him as no mere messenger, but rather, an undeniable part of the novel itself, despite what the font sizes might suggest.[12]

First and foremost, however, are Harada's own conceptions of the novel. As a work he chose to translate on his own, his personal fascination with the novel plays a key role in understanding the narrative that he adds to the text with his involvement. Noting in my interview with him that he believes that, even now, "modern adolescent literature writers have yet to produce a story as interesting as *Airborn*," his personal investment and attachment to the novel are readily clear. What's more, one of the principal reasons Harada translated the text in the first place was that he "thought the novel would be quite popular." For Harada then, the translation of the novel was marked by considerable expectations towards its reception among Japanese readers.

Over the course of the interview, Harada also addresses the question of different readerships, and the impact of his own impressions in the selection and translation of the novel." Harada goes on to mention that the appeal he thought the novel would enjoy in Japan wasn't based on "elements that are charming to readers just because they're Japanese," but rather, the fact that it's a "balanced, universal work." Specifically citing the novel's "dynamic story

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[12] The smaller font used for Harada's name on the cover seems to go hand-in-hand with the long running notion of "invisibility" that Lawrence Venuti discusses in his work, *The Translator's Invisibility*, wherein a translation gives "the appearance… that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the 'original'" (*Invisibility* 1).

progression, the setting of its characters, and the airships" as proof for this claim, Harada's

own fondness for the work is readily apparent (Harada Interview 57). And while Harada later

confirms the translation's lack of commercial success, noting that "the sales didn't match up

with these expectations," the fact remains that both these expectations and Harada's own

view of the text as a "balanced, universal" work play a key role in the narrative of expecta-

tions and assumptions surrounding the release of the translation itself (Harada Interview 62).

This same narrative of expectations and readings placed on the text before its release

helps illuminates the function of the novel's cover as a text in its own right as well. Of spe-

cial consideration is the fact that the novel's Japanese cover seems to play off Harada's own

particular reading of the text (although Harada wasn't the artist behind the cover), employing

both a radically different art style and a different scene altogether from the first US cover for

the novel. Depicting an airship flying high above in the dawn skies from the perspective of

an unidentified ship sailing far below, the US cover utilizes both a photorealistic art-style and

the elevated image of the airship to seemingly hearken back to the "technological sublime,"

surrounding airships, described as "a perception combining fear of and fascination with a

machine, all the while endowing it with almost sentient features" (Syon 11). Pushing

prospective readers in an upward gaze of awe towards the airship before they even open the

first page, the US cover privileges both flight and the technological awe of the airship, with-

out any hint of the novel's other "fantastic" elements.

On the other hand, the novel's Japanese cover utilizes a watercolor-esque style,

changing the cover's perspective to that of a distant onlooker and depicting the *Aurora* sailing

over a coastal city surrounded by lime-green ocean. Compared to the US cover, the amount

of detail is noticeably reduced (with objects in the distance reduced to only blurs and shapes), but the color scheme is far more vivid in turn, as if to suggest a deliberate turn away from the darker, almost cinematic staging of the US cover. What's more, while the US cover lacked any illustration on the back cover, the Japanese cover depicts the undiscovered island where the better half of the novel takes place, with the picture itself visibly connecting to the edges of the front cover. Showing Kate's grandfather's hot-air balloon, the pirates' black airship and emerald seas riddled with strange, blurred sea creatures, the back cover gives dedicated attention to the novel's more "fantastic" elements, as if to deliberately pull the novel's Verne-esque influence to the surface, despite the ellipsis of such literary DNA in the US cover. Through this particular choice, not only does the Japanese cover suggest a different value system for what narrative elements are most "representative" of the text, but by its vivid representations of whimsical, Verne-esque imagery, the cover resonates with Harada's labeling of the text as a "balanced, universal work" that appeals to all cultures by merit of its adventurous spirit and "dynamic story progression." Taken together then, while the US cover was seemingly more concerned with cinematic spectacle and awe-inducing display (and indeed, the novel was seemingly still set to eventually become a movie as of 2012)[13], the Japanese cover remains far more suggestive of classic adventure narratives and all the embedded assumptions of universality within.

What's more, while Harada readily identifies what he saw as the universal appeal of the novel as one of his factors in translating the text, in my interview with him, he mentioned that the "target audience" he'd envisioned for the translation was "upper elementary students

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[13] See ("Airborn the Movie: Take Two")

(11, 12 year olds), and added that "personally, I wanted boys to read the novel" (Harada Interview 56). While his target age demographic for the novel roughly aligns with that of the English source text, it's worth noting that, when asked about possible factors influencing the translation's regrettably-low sales, Harada specifically pointed to trends in media consumption by Japanese adolescent males as one of the reasons why. Noting that part of the translation's lower sales might've stemmed from the fact that "this is a work boys would like more," Harada posits that "perhaps 10-15 year-old boys have simply reached the point where they're not reading all that many books anymore" (Harada Interview 62) By Harada's own estimation, part of this lies in both the differences in established readerships between Japan and America, as well as the hegemony of new forms of media for adolescents:

> "I've felt this for a while, but since there's such fine manga and anime in Japan, perhaps there's no need to chase after printed works to experience a thrilling story. In America, young adult novels have their own set of readers, but in Japan, I think those readers have drifted towards manga, video games, and anime" (Harada Interview 69).

Even in translation, Harada's disappointment is quite clear, and for him at least, the culprit behind this disappointment is the increasing trend towards "manga, video games, and anime" that offer "a thrilling story" without all the presumed burdens of a full-on novel, a sentiment he's felt "for a while." The translation's reception, then, carries with it an air of betrayal (compounded by the notion that translation itself is a sort of betrayal as suggested by

the Italian apothegm "traduttore, traditore" or "translator, traitor"), in that the very same audience Harada hoped to have read the novel was, by Harada's own estimation, the very same group that sealed the novel's fate in Japan. While the novel's sequel, *Skybreaker*, was also translated by Harada, the series' final entry, *Starclimber*, has yet to be translated into Japanese (and most likely never will be), with Harada noting that the sales of the previous two works are "probably it [the reason why *Starclimber* hasn't been translated] in all likelihood" (Harada Interview 63).

With the deflated reaction of Japanese readers effectively spelling the premature end of the series in Japan, the gap between Harada's own lofty expectations and the translation's actual reception is undeniable. The novel's appearance in Japan was proof of a successful translation in its own right, but as a commercial release, the work was anything but. Just as Harada's own expectations for the translation served as a text in their own right, the novel's disappointing sales offer commentary upon the text's final (resting) place in the Japanese market as well.

Whereas Harada's translation anticipated both financial and popular success, and perhaps even a reversal of the same trends he later attributed the novel's low sales to, the ultimate reality of the translation's reception crushed these same hopes, all the while seemingly reaffirming his previously-held suspicions towards other forms of media. Just as the Japanese cover tried to call upon classic adventure literature and the presumed "universality" therein, so too did the translation (and by extension, the very act of Harada translating the novel) call upon readers to form a new home for the novel in Japan.

As a translation, then, *Airborn* bears the distinction of being at once a soaring example of successful English to Japanese translation, and a "failure" as a commercial enterprise. Like the novel's own "crippled" cloud cat, the Japanese translation was born in the skies of the English original's success, expected to soar on its own as a matter of mere common sense. And yet, for some reason— be it a dwindling readership or the likes of video games such as *Final Fantasy* or popular anime such as *Naruto*— it didn't. It fell. But, as my own writing here hopefully proves, after almost a decade since its original release, the translation is still alive and yes, even kicking, on the island of obscurity it landed on, just waiting for an airship to latch onto.

Conclusion: *Airborn* at Anchor

One shore to another. One language to another. Put that way, the journey sounds simple, placidly calm even. But as the issues and points raised here evince, the reality is anything but. From the implications of the yakuchū to the tie of textualization binding together Matt and the cloud cat, the novel and all it's Verne-esque adventure serve as a "treasure island" of commentary and insight into the translation process.

The title of this thesis, 浮在 (Fuzai), much like the translation's term for sky pirates, and even the cloud cats themselves, is an invention to the very end. Combining the kanji for "float," 浮, with 在 for "exist," I hoped to express the idea of a "floating existence" between two shores, a space of impossibility and transition where anything can happen precisely because of that. The word's pronunciation, however, hearkens back to an entirely real word: 不在 (Fuzai). As one of the most authoritative Japanese dictionaries, 大辞林 (Daijirin), puts it, 不在 (Fuzai) refers to 「その場にいないこと。家にいないこと。」 that is, "not being in a place. Not being at home," a sensation the novel's Japanese translation is certainly familiar with (Matsumura). As a novel in translation, *Airborn* finds itself at once in a "floating existence" and "away from home," a nuance I hope to convey via this choice.

All in all, while *Airborn*'s Japanese translation finally survived to anchor at safe shores, the fact remains that it found itself deeply and profoundly changed by the journey. From its many "performances" to its waltz with impossibility, the translation ultimately becomes no mere vessel for meaning, but an entity of its own. Just as the crippled cloud cat's plunge from the *Aurora* in turn plunged Matt into finally confronting his own identity, the

translation, supposedly the receptive target in the exchange, instead pours meaning back into the source text, a live-wire exchange electrifying and informing both texts.

Flying together as one, yet two distinct entities at the same time, *Airborn* is therefore perpetually "floating" between shores, navigating the distance and impossibility therein with all the skill, grace and resourcefulness of a cloud cat. Always "away from home" but never lost, *Airborn* continues to sail towards dawn.

Appendix: Interview with Masaru Harada, Japanese translator of *Airborn*

-The following interview is taken from an email exchange between myself and Mr. Masaru Harada, the novel's Japanese translator, with Harada's express permission to attach the interview to my thesis. This exchange was conducted in Japanese, and I've reproduced both my questions and Harada's responses in the Japanese original for reference. Following each section, I've attached my own translation of the questions and Harada's responses in English.

１。「エアボーン」の翻訳のいきさつについて少し教えてください。アメリカでは Airbornは２００４年に出版されましたが、２００６年に原田さんの翻訳が出版されました。原田さんはどうしてAirbornの翻訳を引き受けることになさいましたか？それとも、直接、小学館に雇われて翻訳されたんですか？

"Airborn"は書評誌、たぶん、"Horn Book Magazine"で存在を知り、取り寄せて読みました。とてもおもしろかった。そこで、調べてみると、同じOppel氏の『シルバーウィング』を翻訳出版した小学館が、翻訳の優先権をオプションとしてもっていることを知りました。そこで、わたしのほうから小学館にアプローチして、翻訳させてもらえることになったのです。

CC: Tell me a little bit about how you came to translate *Airborn*. *Airborn* was published in 2004, and your translation was published in 2006. Why did you decide to undertake the novel's translation? Or were you directly employed by Shōgakukan to do the novel's translation?

MH: I found out about *Airborn* through a book review magazine, probably the "Horn Book Magazine," ordered a copy, and then read through it. It was quite interesting. Afterwards, when I looked into it, I found out that Shōgakukan, having already published Mr. Oppel's "Silverwing," had first claim to the novel's translation as an option. From there, I approached Shōgakukan on my own, and they allowed me to translate the novel.

ちなみに、「エアボーン」の「役者あとがき」では、原田さんはオッペル氏と質問のメールを送ったと書かれていましたが、どんな質問をされたんですか？　オッペル氏との対話後、「エアボーン」の翻訳が変わったと思いますか？

　質問の内容は、固有名詞の読み方や、どう解釈したらよいかわからなかった箇所です。ですから、翻訳の方針などに影響はありませんでした。

CC: Incidentally, In the "Translator's Afterword" section of *Airborn*, you said that you'd emailed Mr. Oppel with questions, but what sort of questions did you ask him? After your conversations with Mr. Oppel, do you think the translation of *Airborn* changed?

MH: The questions mainly revolved around place names I wasn't sure how to pronounce or sections that I wasn't sure how to interpret, so I don't think they had any impact on the direction of the translation.

２。「エアボーン」は、小説を読みやすくするために、ふりがなや訳注が使われていますが、どんな読者やグループを対象、またはご希望として考えていたのですか。

　小学校の高学年（11歳、12歳）以上を読者対象に想定していました。わたし個人としては、とくに男の子に読んでほしいと思っていました。ふりがなについては、基本的に総ルビ（すべての漢字にルビ、つまりふりがながつくこと）という方針が編集者から知らされていました。となると、漢字が多くても読めるわけですが、逆に、テキストがごちゃごちゃして読みづらくなると考え、むしろ漢字の使用は少なめにした記憶があります。

CC: *Airborn* uses furigana and yakuchū to make the novel more accessible, but what sort of readers or groups were your target? Were there any such demographics you hoped the novel would be read by?

MH: I imagined upper elementary school students (11, 12 year-olds) and up as the target audience. Personally, I wanted boys to read the novel. As far as the furigana is concerned, I was told to go in the direction of "Sou-rubi" (that is, attaching ruby, in other words, furigana, to each kanji) by my editors. With that, even if there were a lot of kanji, the novel could still be read, but on the contrary, I remember thinking that the text would only get scrambled and harder to read in turn, so I limited the use of kanji in the novel.

それから、Airbornはご存じのとおり元々は英語で書かれたファンタジー小説です

が、日本の読者にとって、Airbornという小説の中で、どんなところが魅力的だと思

いますか？

　とくに、日本の読者だからここが魅力的だ、という点はないと思います。逆に、

ダイナミックなストーリー展開や、登場人物の設定、飛行船というガジェットなど、

バランスのとれた普遍的な作品というのが評価できるところ。ユーモアもあります

し。魔法や呪文によるファンタジーではないところもいいですね。SF的なところも

ある。飛行船を舞台の冒険活劇、というだけでワクワクするじゃありませんか。

CC: Also, as you know, *Airborn* is originally a fantasy novel written in English, but to Japanese readers, what elements do you think might've been especially charming?

HM: I don't think they're any elements that are charming to readers just because they're Japanese. On the contrary, with devices like the novel's dynamic story progression, the setting of its characters, and the airships, I think the fact that it's a balanced, universal work is worthy of recognition. It's funny at times too. I like the fact that it's fantasy without magic and spells too, though. It also has science-fiction-esque points, too. Doesn't just the thought of an action drama set aboard an airship just get your heart pumping?

３。原田さんの翻訳では、cloud catを日本語にするのに、漢字で「雲猫」と書かれましたが、ふりがなで、「クラウドキャット」と読むように著されました。なぜ「雲猫」の読み方は、翻訳にも英語の発音を使うことになさいましたか？

　記憶は確かではありませんが、わたしは漢字を使わずに、「クラウドキャット」としたかったように思います。たしか、編集者が、神秘的な感じがあるので、「雲猫」という漢字を使いたいと言ったのではなかったかと……。ただ、わたしとしては、「雲」も「猫」も、漢字をじっと見ていると、どこか東洋的な匂いを感じてしまいます。あくまでわたしの感覚ですが……。そういう言葉を、主人公たちが、そのまま「くもねこ」と発音することに、ある種の違和感を感じ、音としては英語の「クラウドキャット」にしたかった。その結果、折衷案としてこういう表記にしたように記憶しています。

CC: In your translation, in rendering "cloud cat" into Japanese, you wrote out 雲猫 in kanji, and with the furigana attached, indicated that it be read it as "kuraudo kyatto." Why did you choose to utilize the English pronunciation of the word even in the translation?

MH: I can't recall for sure, but I think I wanted to write it just as "kuraudo kyatto" in katakana without using kanji at first. Certainly, my editors might've said they wanted to use 雲猫 because it had a mystic feel to it, but…. Still, for me, when I stare at both 雲 and 猫, I feel something of an oriental air in the kanji. This is just my perception, however… I felt a

certain out-of-place quality in having the protagonists just pronounce the word as "ku-moneko," so I decided to make the word's pronunciation "kuraudo kyatto" just as it was in the original English. As a result, I recall settling on the word's final form in the translation as a compromise.

そして、原田さんは小説中、キャラクターの会話に様々な敬語を使われましたが、敬語のない英語で書いて有る小説を日本語に翻訳するには、何か問題や難しいところはございましたか？

　英語には敬語はない、とおっしゃいますが、やはり、多少は、ていねいだったり、乱暴だったりはするわけですから、そういう部分はそれなりに対応しています。ちょうど、わたしのブログの中で、『エアボーン』のマットとケイトのやりとりについての記事がありますので、参照してください。

http://haradamasaru.hatenablog.com/entry/2015/04/13/083058

　また、一般的に、敬語は英語よりも日本語のほうが使うことが多いので、敬語をまったく使わないと読者は不自然に感じてしまいます。この問題は、海外の作品を日本語に翻訳する際のとてもデリケートな部分で、場合によっては、原作者が配慮する必要のないことに、翻訳者は配慮しなければならないのです。あくまでも場面に応じてですが、登場人物たちには、日本人作家が書いたらどうするだろうか、と

考えて、それなりの言葉づかいをさせるようにしています。国による文化や制度の

ちがいを、翻訳の中でどう消化するか、という問題ですね。もちろん、やりすぎる

と、原作のもっていた雰囲気が変わってしまう可能性がありますから、あくまでも、

場面や人間関係を判断した上での操作です。

CC: Furthermore, throughout your translation, there's all sorts of polite language being used, but considering you were translating from English, which is distinctly lacking in polite language, did you encounter any problems or troublesome areas in the process?

MH: You said that English doesn't have polite language, but to an extent, people will speak politely sometimes, and a bit more roughly other times, and it's those same points that correspond to Japanese polite language in their own way. As a matter of fact, I have an article on my blog about Matt and Kate's exchanges, so please have a look.

http://haradamasaru.hatenablog.com/entry/2015/04/13/083058

Again, generally speaking, since Japanese has more polite language than English, it would end up feeling unnatural to readers to not use polite language at all. This is quite a delicate issue when it comes to translating foreign works into Japanese, and depending on the situation, the translator may need to pay close attention to areas where the original author had no need to. This depends on the scene itself the most, but I think about what a Japanese author might write for the characters, and try and have them speak in a way that would mirror that.

It's a question of how to handle differences in cultures and systems depending on one's country. Of course, if you overdo it, there's a chance the original work's atmosphere could change, so it's an operation to undertake only upon considering the scene and the human relationships therein.

４。この前のメールで、「「エアボーン」日本では残念ながら、それほど多くの読者に読まれているわけではない」とおっしゃいましたが、伺ってもよろしいなら、それはどうしてだと思いますか？原田さんは「エアボーン」の続編の「スカイブレイカー」も翻訳されましたが、この二冊の小説の売り上げについてどう思われましたか。「エアボーン」の評判はいかがでしたか？

　わたしはこの作品は相当人気が出ると思って翻訳していました。が、その期待に沿うような売れ行きではありませんでした。増刷されていません。なぜかはよくわかりません。今でも、こんなにおもしろい冒険物語はほかに現代の児童文学作家は書いていないと思っています。

　これはあくまで推測ですが、男の子に好まれるような作品だからかもしれません。10歳から15歳くらいの男の子は、あまり本を読まなくなっているのかもしれませんね。また、以前から感じているのですが、日本にはとても優れたマンガやアニメがあるので、ワクワクするようなストーリーを味わうには、活字を追う必要がないからかもしれません。アメリカでは、ヤングアダルト小説が一定の読者を得ているよ

うですが、日本では、そういう読者層がマンガやゲーム、アニメに流れているよう
に思います。

CC: In my previous email to you, you said that "Unfortunately, *Airborn* wasn't read by all that many in Japan," but if I might ask, why do you think that is? You translated *Skybreaker*, the sequel to *Airborn* as well, but how do you feel about the sales of these two novels? How was *Airborn* received?

MH: I thought that the novel would be quite popular and translated it as such. However, the sales didn't match up with those expectations. The novel's never been reprinted. I'm not entirely sure why. Even now, I think that modern adolescent literature writers have yet to produce a story as interesting as *Airborn*.

      This is only a guess and nothing more, but perhaps part of it might lie in the fact that this a work boys would like more. Perhaps 10-15 year-old boys have simply reached the point where they're not reading all that many books anymore. I've felt this for a while, but since there's such fine manga and anime in Japan, perhaps there's no need to chase after printed works to experience a thrilling story. In America, young adult novels have their own set of readers, but in Japan, I think those readers have drifted towards manga, video games, and anime.

そして、まだ現在翻訳されていないようですが、２００９年に出版されたスカイブ
レイカーの続編、Starclimberについては、小学館より翻訳の依頼等のご相談はござ

いましたか？　それとも、「エアボーン」と「スカイブレイカー」の売り上げのせ
いで、Starclimberの翻訳は計画されなかったのですか。

　小学館からは「スタークライマー」の翻訳依頼はありません。残念ながら、今も
そのプランはないようです。前二作の売り上げがよくないせいかと言われると、た
ぶんそうでしょう。

CC: Furthermore, while it's yet to be translated, have you received any translation requests from Shōgakukan regarding *Stairclimber*, the 2009 sequel to *Skybreaker*? Or was a translation of *Stairclimber* never planned due to the sales of the previous two titles?

MH: I never received any translation requests from Shōgakukan for *Stairclimber*. Unfortunately, even now there don't seem to be any plans to translate it. Now that you mention the sales, that's probably it in all likelihood.

原田さんは「フランケンシュタイン家の双子」と「フランケンシュタイン家の亡霊」
も翻訳されましたが、その後、オッペル氏は他の小説も書かれました。原田さんは
ケネス・オッペル氏との今までの関係で、オッペル氏の他の小説が日本語に翻訳さ
れることになったら、その小説の翻訳も引き受けたいと思われますか。

『フランケンシュタイン家の双子』と『亡霊』は、わたしが東京創元社に企画をもちこんで翻訳したものです。基本的には依頼があれば引き受けたいですね。『エアボーン』のようなダイナミックな展開の物語が読みたいです。

CC: You translated Mr. Oppel's "This Dark Endeavor" and "Such Wicked Intent," but afterwards, Mr. Oppel wrote a number of other novels. Based on your relationship thus far, if one of Mr. Oppel's novels were to be translated into Japanese, would you want to be the one to translate it?

MH: I brought plans to translate "This Dark Endeavor" and "Such Wicked Intent" into Japanese to Sōgensha in Tokyo, and translated them afterwards. Basically, if there's a request, I always want to take it. I want to read stories with dynamic progressions like *Airborn.*

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