

Michele Sala (ed.)

**GENDER, LANGUAGE AND
TRANSLATION.
REPRESENTATIONS AND
TRANSCODIFICATIONS**

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Michele Sala (ed.)

Gender, Language and Translation:
Representations and Transcodifications

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Contents

MICHELE SALA Gender, Representations and Transcodifications. An Introduction.....	11
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Part I

JANE SUNDERLAND When We Say 'Language and Gender' What Do We Mean by Gender?.....	25
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MICHELE SALA Language Research on Gender and Gender Research On Language. Paradigms, Perception and Representation	49
--	----

YO TABAYASHI What's Behind the Scenes/Texts? Transmission of <i>Kitchen</i> (1988) to English and Italian.....	105
--	-----

Part II

ROXANNE H. PADLEY "Tell me what you don't like about yourself" The Translation of Gender in <i>Nip/Tuck</i>	135
---	-----

GIULIA ADRIANA PENNISI What Gender-Neutral Legislation Owes to Grammar: The Concept of ‘Gender’ in Legal English and the Italian ‘Guidelines for Use of Gender-Sensitive Language in Legislation’	163
MICHELA GIORDANO / MARIA ANTONIETTA MARONGIU Let’s make gender equality a reality: Discourse, Metadiscourse and Translation in EU Informative Brochures.....	191
MARÍA LÓPEZ-MEDEL Madam Ombudsman: Use and Translation of Masculine Job Titles for Women in the EU.....	229
Notes on contributors.....	251

YO TABAYASHI

What's Behind the Scenes/Texts? Transmission of *Kitchen* (1988) to English and Italian

1. Introduction: Backgrounds, Purpose, and Methodology of the Research

We are living in a globalizing world where people, commodities, and money travel physically fast and, in some cases, virtually at an instant. Traveling people meet new people, new things, and new cultures away from their own homes. Alternatively, even at home without traveling, people meet new people, new things, and new cultures arrived from other parts of the world. Some encounters bring us culture shocks and even conflicts or misunderstandings, while others benefit us. The history of humankind unfolds that cultural exchange started a long time ago, getting us to know, appreciate, borrow, transform, or reject new cultures.

The topic of gender and translation has evolved mainly in the area of feminist studies such as Sherry Simon (1996), Luise von Flotow (1997), and even Judith Butler (2019), that commonly address relationships among women, language/writing/literature, and translation. Simon refers to the identity and subjectivity of female translators, who have been marked “double inferiority” as “the weaker figures in their respective hierarchies: translators are handmaids to authors, women inferior to men” (1996: 1) and proposes to bring translation into cultural studies. Flotow points out that “women always have to translate when they move into the public

sphere” (1997: 12). Butler stresses the Anglo-centeredness of translation and the importance of translation in gender studies (2019). Another perspective is empirical research in linguistics, such as Denisa Bordag and Thomas Pechmann (2008), which explores the so-called gender interference when translating from Czech (L1) to German (L2).

In contrast, my research falls in neither feminist nor linguistic discourse but in cultural studies, since it focuses on transmission/translation in a broader context. This paper examines a Japanese novella, *Kitchen* (1988), by Banana Yoshimoto, Japanese writing systems, and Japanese culture. Looking at the novella in three languages, Japanese (original), English, and Italian, as a case of cultural transmission, including gender, we strive to clarify that a text is already enmeshed and multilayered in meanings by previous cultural contacts before it gets translated. Then what is behind textual transmissions? What does the text transmit when translated into another language? How is gender related to cultural transmission?

We will first refer to a theoretical framework by Tatsunori Koizumi (2004) to understand what happens during cultural transmissions. Then cases of food culture, writing systems, and translation of *Kitchen* in English and Italian will be discussed to shed light on complicated and manifold processes of the cultural transmission. As for other material, literature reviews on translation studies, comparative cultural studies, and governmental documents will be utilized.

2. Transmission of Cultural Artifacts: Non-text and Text

Socio-cultural/anthropological studies covering tourism, food, music, etc., have addressed the topic of cultural transmissions. They have also examined authenticity, commodification, and domestication/localization of cultures, either tangible or intangible (Tabayashi 2020).

In this section, we will discuss patterns of cultural transmission with some non-textual/textual cases.

2.1. Non-textual transmission among cultures

Cultures are transmitted when people get in contact with other groups of people. The process often takes place in the order of importation, reception, diffusion, and adaptation/fusion (plus exportation in cases) (Tabayashi 2019). As for a theoretical framework, we refer to four patterns of cultural transmission (Koizumi 2004) to understand and categorize various cultural transmissions/transformations depending on the relationship between the sender/supplier and the receiver/demander of the culture transmitted.¹

As we see in Figure 1, cultural transmission needs two social groups: one is the “sending social group” (sender/supplier of culture); the other, “receiving social group” (receiver/demander of culture). Koizumi (2004: 160) names four forms of transmission as Imposition, Persuasion, Borrowing, Amalgamation, focusing on who voluntarily initiates the transmission. As we see the arrows in Figure 1, both “imposition” and “persuasion” are initiated by the sender, who wants another society to accept or “learn” his/her own culture. In this case, the transmission is sender-/supplier-oriented. In “imposition,” often seen under colonialism, for instance, the supplier imposes an allegedly “superior” culture, often with violence, regardless of the receiver’s will. In “persuasion,” such as Christianization by missionaries, the supplier persuades the receiver to “voluntarily” accept a new culture. Imposition and persuasion of culture are together regarded as “exportation,” a willful outbound drive by sending/supplying societies to others.

1 There are many studies on the mobility of culture. However, generally, they focus on the migration of people and its effects on the host community and the immigrants themselves rather than the cultural transmission itself. See *Cultural Mobility* edited by Stephen Greenblatt *et al.* (2010).

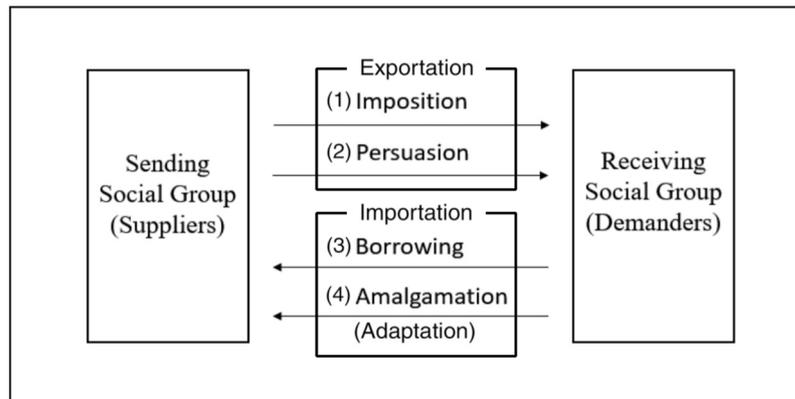


Figure 1: Four Forms of Cultural Transmission (adapted by the author from Koizumi 2004: 160)

Transmission such as “borrowing” and “amalgamation,” on the other hand, is receiver-/demander-oriented. The receiver/demander wants a culture and then imports or borrows it. However, as we noted before, culture usually changes after having contact with other cultures. Therefore, complete “borrowing” is unlikely to happen. For instance, many languages have borrowed words from other languages. However, they often change the pronunciation and spellings and coin new terms to express the same idea in their ways as French “ordinateur personnel” and Japanese “pasokon,” both meaning “personal computer.” Amalgamation, more likely known as adaptation, mixture, or fusion, is a type of transmission in which the sender’s original culture transforms, gets adapted in, and fuses with the receiver’s local one. The process of borrowing first, and then amalgamation, of culture, is considered “importation,” a spontaneous inbound drive by receiving/demanding societies, from sending/supplying ones.

To exemplify the process more in detail, let us look at food as a case of non-textual transmission. As for the case of exportation (outbound), imposition is hard to find anymore because, under recent emphasis on equality, democracy, human rights, and multiculturalism,

an imposition by force cannot be allowed at least *de jure*. Therefore, we would better visit the past, say, right after the end of WWII. At that time, Japan underwent an extreme shortage of food and malnutrition. Then, “Licensed Agencies for Relief in Asia” (LARA) authorized by the US president, sent a gift of skim milk and flour, which were abundant in North America (Christian World Service). Thanks to the more than 16,000 tons of relief, school lunch in public schools started in 1947 after a one-year trial in Tokyo and its vicinity prefecture.² This generous gift was much appreciated, but it is critical to understand that bread and milk were new to the pupils since a few had ever had them either at home or western-style restaurants. Many school boards, let alone parents nor pupils, did have no other choice than to accept the lunch even if they disliked the tastes as if they were told, “You must eat this, as you all are malnourished.” We think this is an example of imposition, no matter how generous the offer was.

Conversely, cases of persuasion are easier to find. In Japan, we import flour, dry pasta, and other ingredients directly from Italy, and we eat pasta and pizza in restaurants or at home.³ Such ethnic cuisine from other countries allures and persuades us, whispering, “It is good, why don’t you try some?” Naturally, the exotic dishes attract the receiver who would look happy to be persuaded.

Having overviewed the sender-/exporter-initiated transmission so far, now it is time to consider the receiver-/importer-oriented drive, borrowing, and amalgamation. Japanese have borrowed many kinds of culinary styles and habits from Euro-America as well as China.

2 First school lunches were provided for children from low-income families in a Buddhist private elementary school in Yamagata prefecture (northern part of Japan) in 1889 and gradually spread over the country. In 1947 school lunches for all pupils began, though they were short of staple food, and children had to bring cooked rice from home. Then around 1952, they became complete also with bread. For detailed information, see National Institute for Educational Policy Research.

3 The dishes seem to have been more like American than Italian, since general “Italian food,” not more specific cuisines with names of the regions such as Toscana or Romana, was born in Little Italy in New York (Cinotto 2013). For instance, in Japan, the Americanized pizza, with tomato sauce, grated cheese, and tabasco, also spread earlier and more quickly than Italian pizza at Italian restaurants with Italian chefs after the 1960s.

Plates, cutlery, and how to serve/eat a course of dishes in the restaurants or for a wedding reception are mainly brought from France to Japan, where wooden chopsticks and plates of various shapes and colors (and lacquerware) were predominantly used. These styles have been observed in important diplomatic receptions such as those hosted by the emperor (see Figure 2). On the other hand, more straightforward ways have spread for private meetings in classy restaurants or wealthy homes. Furthermore, all these plates/cutleries are available in tableware stores: some are still imported, others manufactured domestically. This transmission is initiated by the receiver/importer who adores/admires the new culture, saying, “This looks fantastic. Why don’t we try the same?” as in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2. Dinner set for Imperial receptions (Nagasako 2020: 31)

Lastly, we will discuss amalgamation, the most prevalent among the four, as borrowing seldom occurs alone and usually accompanies amalgamation. The sender-oriented transmission, such as imposition and persuasion, is even less likely to happen as examined. When importing food, many ingredients are not available in receiving societies. So, they cannot help using locally available or alternative material suited to their tastes, hoping “It should be tasty if we cook

this way.” Some dishes are imported initially from Western countries and adapted to Japan, like curry and rice (from India via the UK).

2.2. Textual transmission among cultures

After having reviewed food culture as an example of non-textual transmission, we would like to address textual transmission according to the same order of imposition, persuasion, borrowing, and amalgamation. Textual transmission is distinctly different from non-textual one like food since the source text is translated into another language when traveling beyond the border. That means less discretion or freedom remains to the translator than the chef cooking dishes imported from other countries.⁴ There would be another big difference between the two regarding access to the source. In the case of *washoku*, Japanese cuisines are now available in many parts of the world, transmitted and localized. So not only native Japanese but also many others who know the “source cuisine” distinguish differences between the “localized (targeted) cuisine” and the so-called authentic “source cuisine.” On the contrary, in translation from one language to another, neither as many people understand two languages, nor are interested enough in comparing the difference in expression between the two. Eventually, this issue seems left to the professionals.

However, the transmission of the text shares an interest with the non-text over domestication/localization, known as readability/fluency. Readability in translation has been discussed for hundreds of years. More recently, during the past thirty years, the issue of domestication and foreignization, the key terms Lawrence Venuti introduced in *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995), has been one of the main concerns in translation studies. “Domesticating translation” prioritizes readability/fluency for getting a larger audience in the local target market by disguising ‘transparency.’ On the other hand, “foreignizing translation” sticks to the original expression by resisting against “ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and

4 Of course, the translator has discretion in paragraphing, choice of words, adding a glossary, and so on., the topic we will return to in the discussion on *Kitchen*.

imperialism” at the cost of readability for local readers (Venuti 1995: 16). “Foreignizing translation” could be understood as a drive for authenticity, too, which eventually retains foreignness and exoticism. In the following section, therefore, it would be pertinent to examine the textual transmission according to the order of imposition through amalgamation as we have done for the non-text.

Translation of literary works is usually initiated in the process of persuasion and borrowing, and in the process of the actual translation, adaptation usually occurs. Hence, we would like to glance at cases corresponding to each process as examples of textual transmissions. Imposition, a willful outbound drive, is hard to find in the textual transmission, so allow us to pick up a historical or somewhat fictitious situation. A secret document in intelligible letters is found under a compelling condition such as a war or colonialism. Since it has possibly critical information, a commander may order a captive, “Translate it, or you’ll be punished!” For a more probable case of persuasion, an author, publisher, or broker, tempts a translator or the counterpart in the receiving society, “Will you translate it since it’s good?”

Having said that, spontaneous inbound drives for translation, borrowing, and amalgamation are everywhere, especially in the contemporary globalizing world. As for borrowing, a translator, publisher, broker, or fandom group for anime videos initiates the transmission, looking for a translation of the source text: “Wow, it looks cool. Can I/we translate it?” Lastly, amalgamation/adaptation (including localization/domestication) evolves while translation is undergoing. The borrowers mentioned above get stuck with difficulties expressing the original text as accurately as possible. Some borrowers=translators, choosing readability/fluency, would go for a domesticated expression, maybe murmuring, “It’s hard to translate this expression, for we don’t have its equivalent. Give it a try with another expression to get better understood.” This case demonstrates amalgamation. We must not forget, though, others, in contrast, would be determined to stick to the source text and adopt foreign-sounding/-feeling words over domesticated expression, possibly with a glossary. This drive for accuracy, or loyalty to the original text, lies in-between borrowing and amalgamation. It can be

understood as foreignization for the sake of authenticity as much as possible. Both types of borrowers=translators cannot be rigidly separated since they vacillate to take sides in each word, sentence, and structure. We will discuss in more detail domestication/foreignization later in the discussion of *Kitchen*.

2.3. Japanese writing systems

We have exemplified four patterns of cultural transmission of non-text and text in the previous sections. As texts are products of writing, the textual transmission is deeply related to writing. In this section, we will overview the Japanese writing systems as an example of long-term cultural transmission.

2.3.1. Three components of Japanese writing

Japanese writing consists of three components, *kanji* (Chinese characters), *hiragana*, and *katakana*, expressed as 漢字、ひらがな、カタカナ respectively in the Japanese language. Historically speaking, *kanji* was imported from China and spread in the 6-7th century to study Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Then, in the 9th century, looking for richer and freer expression, *hiragana* was created from *kanji*. Two centuries later, a novel entitled *The Tale of Genji* (1008, see Figure 3 below), known to be the first novel by a woman in the world, was written by Lady Murasaki, a court lady. The novel comprises *kanji* and newly established *hiragana*, without *katakana*, and the sentences are vertically arranged, as the images show. This oldest novel published (of course, by handwriting with a brush and ink) is already a product of cultural transmission, a showcase of borrowing and amalgamation.



Figure 3. *The Tale of Genji* (1008)

Regarding gender, here I am tempted to note that *hiragana* was mainly used by women until Kino Tsurayuki, a male writer, wrote *Tosa nikki* (Tosa Diary) around 935.⁵ Furthermore, he disguised himself as a woman, writing a diary with *hiragana*, since it was considered an inferior genre reserved for women. It is fascinating to know he wanted to express daily lives more in detail in this doubly negated way for a male. During Heian Era, when the court culture flourished, it was normative for men to write in *kanji*.

2.3.2. *Katakana as a case of amalgamation*

Like *hiragana*, *katakana* was invented from *kanji*, for the same purpose around the same period of the 9th century. Nevertheless, it has come to be used to indicate the foreign origin of words. When Japan started the business with Western countries in the 16th century, though in limited ways, numerous words were imported from the Portuguese and Dutch. These loanwords were written in *katakana* like italics in English.

5 Tosa is a region on Shikoku Island in southwest Japan.

More recently, its use for loanwords got institutionalized after WWII. In 1955 Monbusho (Ministry of Education, currently Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology) published *Gairaigo no hyoki, Shiriyoshu* (notation on borrowed words, a material) as the 27th issue of the collection series⁶ on Japanese language. Its preface gives a definition and brief explanation as indicated in (1) below:

- 1) Loanwords are mainly imported from western countries.
Loanwords are categorized into the following three types:
 - (1.1) Words which has been already integrated into the national language since long time ago, and the general public does not feel this as a loanword, such as たばこ(tobacco), かつぱ(kappa), and きせる(kiseru), etc.
 - (1.2) Words which still retains the feeling of a foreign language, such as オーソリティー(authority) フィアンセ(fiancé), etc.
 - (1.3) words which are ripe as a national language, but it still feels like a loanword, such as オーバー(overcoat), ラジオ(radio), etc. (National Language Council 1955: 3, my parentheses).

Contemporary native speakers of Japanese do not use some of the sample words anymore, and they already sound archaic. However, the rules shown in the material are still valid, and most of the literature published in Japanese, including textbooks, observe them for expressing loanwords.

2.4. Why and how does the amalgamation happen?

Why and how does this transformation take place? To answer the question, Figure 4 below would be helpful. The figure shows how a transmitted culture from other countries transforms itself and settles in the adopted culture. Three factors, spiritual environment, social environment, and natural environment, affect the transformation.

6 The collection aimed to improve the Japanese language and promote Japanese education (National Language Council 1955: 1).

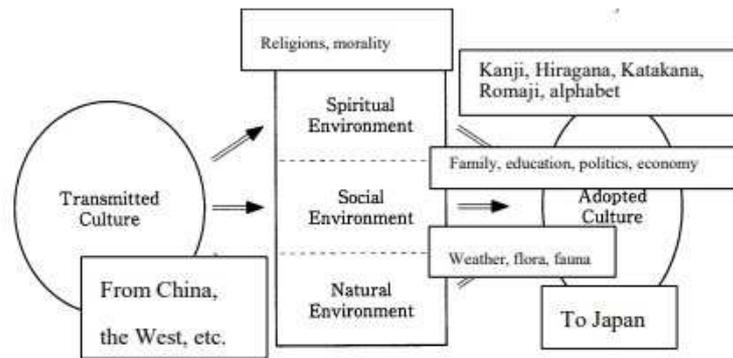


Figure 4. Transformation of the Transmitted of culture (adapted by the author from Koizumi 2004: 162)

Here we can grasp a transformation process of letters such as *kanji* transmitted/imported from China and the Roman alphabet from the West. Some cultures are adopted, but others are rejected because of various spiritual, social, and natural environments. *Kanji* stays with some amalgamation (Japanese *kanji* is different from that in China or Taiwan, and the current set is simpler than the one used before WWII). Remember *hiragana* and *katakana* are derived from *kanji*. Regarding the Romanized alphabet, contemporary Japanese occasionally write foreign words spelled in the source foreign languages such as “internet.” After WWII, children in elementary school started learning Romaji (Romanized Japanese) in the Romanized alphabet, as you see in the spelling of *hiragana*, *katakana*, and *kanji*. Currently, beginners of Japanese as well as the Japanese pupils also learn Romaji. In modernizing Japan in the 1870s, even the first minister of letters, Arinori Mori, unsuccessfully attempted to make English formal language from grade school to governmental offices to compete with Western countries.

The Japanese language has complicated writing systems, already enmeshed with loanwords, transformed from the source words, and expressed in *katakana*. Loanwords in *katakana* do not have foreignizing effects after some time of borrowing. Usually domesticated in pronunciation, they become “transparent” and are

recognized as Japanese words. Japanese keeps *katakana* even after the markedness of the imported origin of a loanword fades away. In English, on the other hand, loanwords drop the italics as they get integrated into the target language and outgrow their markedness, eventually becoming “transparent” as in *sushi* to sushi.

3. *Kitchen* (1988): textual transmissions and behind the scenes/text

Kitchen is a Japanese novella published in 1988 by Banana Yoshimoto, the then-emerging female writer at 24. It gets translated into more than thirty languages: the first translation was in Italian (1991), followed by English (1993) and other languages. The story revolves around a young woman, Mikage Sakurai, after the death of her grandmother. Mikage feels herself pretty much an orphan since having been bereft of her parents some time ago. The story is simple, and her writing style sounded fresh and continues to be so, narrated from the first-person point of view. Thus, the book was received with great enthusiasm as well as critically acclaimed. She won two awards for a novice writer on this novella, and it has been attracting many readers, writers, and researchers, some of whom are from translation studies such as Harker Jaime (1999) and Eric Margolis (2021).⁷ This is why we will scrutinize *Kitchen* to explore textual transmissions with a scope of behind/beyond the written text.

3.1 What do the book covers of the novella tell?

A book cover, a “paratext,” entices the reader in general, and even some scholars like Hiroko Furukawa (2012: 215). Referring to

7 Harker praises the translation by Megan Backus as a “middlebrow translation strategy” (1999: 27), while Margolis criticizes it for being unable to present Yoshimoto’s “fluid and constantly moving” descriptions (2020).

Venuti's terminology, Furukawa pertinently maintains that the cover of *Kitchen* in the first UK edition (1993) with a weeping geisha girl is seemingly "foreignizing" but in fact "domesticating" by emphasizing a "typical Japanese image" generally shared by British readers (2012: 232). Then what about an Italian version, which was published prior to English translation? This time it would be worth checking out the covers and the text information of three editions (in Italy, the USA, and the UK).

First, let us focus on the cover of the original (1988). Figure 5 shows its photo, and Table 1 reads the information on them.

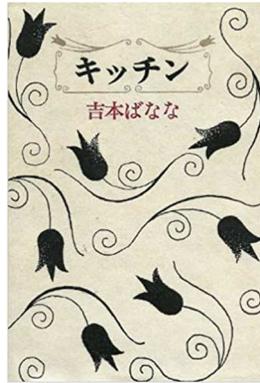


Figure 5. Original edition (1988)

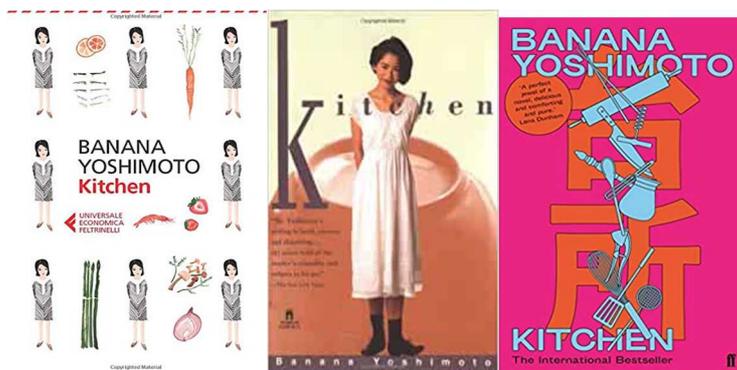
	Original	Types	Japanese	English
Title	キッチン	<i>katakana</i>	台所	kitchen
The author's family name	吉本	<i>kanji</i>		
The author's first name	ばなな	<i>hiragana</i>		banana

Table 1. Text information on the cover of the original

The text tells us the title and the author's (pen)name, aligned horizontally, which is not a traditional but prevalent way of today.⁸

⁸ The text inside is vertically aligned as *The Tale of Genji*, and pagination goes from the right end to the left, the opposite way to western books. This style is still standard for literary works, but many books in business and other areas

The cover displays all three components: the title in *katakana*, the author's family name in *kanji*, and her first name in *hiragana*. The small space on the cover, thus, generously unfolds the multilayered and rich Japanese writing systems, the fruit of cultural transmission, with illustrated flowers in black and white.



Figures 6. Italian, American, and British editions from the left to right

Then, what do other editions tell us? Even though the information on the cover is the same in each edition, with short excerpts from book reviews in the English version, it is worth paying attention to differences among them in Figure 6. The US version does not convey any foreignness or exoticism except for an Asian-looking girl since “kitchen” is originally English. As there are many Asian-Americans (including writers) in the US, no sign is apparent that this is a translation from Japanese. The UK version (paperback) with *kanji* 台所 on the background of the cover barely saves foreignness/exoticism. However, it would be hard for English-speaking readers to recognize the source language since China and Taiwan also use Chinese characters. The Italian version, in contrast, retains foreignness/exoticism by using the word “kitchen” without

follow the western style.

translating it to “cucina,” meaning both kitchen and cooking.⁹ And yet, it would not be easy for Italian readers to guess from where the book is. Just glancing at the title, they may think it is a translation from English.

3.2. “Foreignization” and “domestication” in the translation of the novella

The cover designs of *Kitchen* exhibit not only a short text of the title and the author’s name but also multilayered cultural transmission in translation. The Japanese text information consisting of three types of characters on the cover connotes the history of cultural contacts behind the cover. The cover designs suggest a degree of readability and foreignization. Then, we can expect further findings in the body text of the novella. Now let us focus on the terms “kitchen,” “Linus,” and “futon” to understand what is behind the scenes of translation.

3.2.1 The word “kitchen” in three languages

As demonstrated, the word “kitchen” in the three editions gives us a hint for cultural transmission. Throughout the novella, meaning a kitchen, Yoshimoto primarily uses *kanji* “台所” (*daidokoro*, Yoshimoto, 1988: 7) as used on the cover of UK edition, except for another term “厨房” (*chubo*, Yoshimoto, 1988: 57) only once for depicting a restaurant, and *katakana* “キッチン” (*kicchin*, Yoshioto, 1988: 70) only once other than the title. The term *daidokoro* has been used since earlier than the word *kicchin* appeared around the 1960s. That was when the “dining kitchen,” a combined space for dining with a table and chairs and cooking, was introduced.¹⁰ Since *chubo* refers

9 The latest paperback edition of “Universale Economica Ragazzi,” published in 2020, illustrates an Asian-looking young woman sleeping on the pillow on the hardwood floor in the kitchen surrounded by heaps of cooking utensils. The backside of the cover shows the book is in the collection for 12 years old and above.

10 Before then, *daidokoro* and the dining space with a low table and thin

to a professional cooking workspace, we should pay attention to the part where *kicchin* appears, comparing with its counterparts in English and Italian translation (cf. (2) and (3) and relative translations).

- (2) 私と台所が残る。(Yoshimoto 1988: 8, my emphasis)
 (2.1) Now only the kitchen and I are left. (Yoshimoto 1993: 4, my emphasis)
 (2.2) Siamo rimaste solo io e la cucina. (Yoshimoto 1991: 9, my emphasis)
- (3) 夢のキッチン。(Yoshimoto, 1988: 70, my emphasis)
 (3.1) Dream kitchens. (Yoshimoto, 1993: 43, my emphasis)
 (3.2) Le cucine dei sogni. (Yoshimoto, 1991: 45, my emphasis)

Regarding the term kitchen, difference emerges only in the article and forms of singular/plural in the English edition so that we do not find much foreignness in the text. With many other loanwords from the USA in *katakana*, the English version somehow looks like a reverse translation from English to Japanese and again to English. The translation thus sounds natural, assuring local readers of readability. In contrast, the Italian version uses *la cucina* (singular) and *le cucine* (plural) for the vernacular word *daidokoro* in *kanji*, differentiating it from the loanword kitchen in *katakana*, and as a result, being more faithful to the original.¹¹ Adding a glossary at the end of the book, however, the Italian version also guarantees readability while hanging on to foreignness.

3.2.2 Transmission behind the text: “futon” and “Linus”

As we have discussed in the previous section, the translation is a transmission of the text between languages, but non-textual transmission already undergoes behind the text. In the English translation, foreignness is not apparent since the original Japanese

11 Speaking of faithfulness, we confirm that paragraphing in Italian translation is the same as in the original, while it is much altered in English. Furukawa adequately mentions that the number of paragraphs is reduced to 430 in English from 516 in the original (2012: 217).

already accommodates many loanwords from English, sounding familiar to English readers. Following Furukawa calling Mikage, the protagonist, “a young Americanized Japanese woman (2012: 232), we are more likely to find “Americanized” the novella as a whole and Japanese society back then. Nevertheless, typically Japanese culture also travels to other countries. The quote below illustrates the importation of American culture (“Linus”) and the exportation of Japanese culture (“futon” meaning Japanese bedding) in the text and behind.

- (4) ...しんとひかる台所にふとんをひいた。ライナスのように毛布にくるまって眠る。
(Yoshimoto, 1988: 9, my emphasis)
- (4.1) I pulled my futon into the deathly silent, gleaming kitchen. Wrapped in a blanket, like Linus, I slept (Yoshimoto, 1993: 4-5, my emphasis).
- (4.2) [. . .] stesi il futon nella cucina silenziosa e splendente. Dormii raggomitolata nella coperta come Linus [. . .] (Yoshimoto, 1991: 10, my emphasis).

In the original, the name of a famous character in the Peanuts comic books, ライナス appears in *katakana*, while both translations use its original spelling “Linus.” The Peanuts was imported and translated into Japanese in the 1960s, and many goods like stationery or tote bags featuring its characters have been selling very well. Therefore, when *Kitchen* was published, most Japanese under their 30s should have known what the name meant. In the novel, the word “Linus” with a “blanket” helps portray a scene where the protagonist sleeps. The name gets naturally transmitted to the English reader without any foreignization since the character, always with his favorite old blanket, was created in the USA. Supposedly, few English readers are likely to notice the importation and exportation of the word and might recall that the novella is set in Japan. Hence “Linus,” the character, travels from the USA to Japan, returns to English-speaking countries, and goes to Italy with the book. A similar example is “Denny’s” (1993: 91), a chained diner brought from the USA. In contrast, specific proper names of a doughnut place and convenience store are replaced

with general “doughnut shop” (1993: 147) and “all-night minimart.” (1993: 46).¹²

Linus’s case exemplifies an importation of the comic strips from the USA prior to the exportation of *Kitchen* from Japan to other countries. The importation of comic books is “borrowing” accompanied by “amalgamation” when translated into Japanese. The exportation of the novella is “persuasion” to readers abroad. Nonetheless, Linus in *Kitchen* in English can be understood as his coming home or reverse importation without any witnesses of English readers. This transmission process concerning Linus, a character of comic strips, i.e., a non-textual cultural artifact, would apply to our second case, “futon,” the Japanese bedding.

The transmission of “futon” is more straightforward than “Linus” since it indicates exportation from Japan abroad. The process is neither imposition nor persuasion because only the term “futon” reaches the reader inside the book and does not physically travel as an object. Then we would be advised to come back to the word “futon” in the citation above. Spelled as in Romanized Japanese (though *hiragana* is used in the original) in both translations, the word is neither italicized nor annotated. Does this mean Italians and Americans are familiar with the word, do not regard it as a loanword anymore, and know what it means? It would be advisable to consider what the reader pictures when they see the word. With the same signifier “futon,” the signified may differ from a country to another.

In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “futon” is defined as “a Japanese bed-quilt”.¹³ The first entry is 1876, but the following entries convey more what it is:

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- 12 The glossary in the Italian edition enters “Danny’s” (1991: 91), “Mister Donut” (1991: 143), and “Family Mart” (1991: 51) but not “Linus.” This suggests that in the early 1990s, all the stores were not so familiar with Italians, while Linus was known. The first translation of the Peanuts comic strips appeared in the early 1960s in the newspaper and in book form. Interestingly, they have a magazine titled *Linus* -- anthologies of translated American comic books.
- 13 The dictionary shows two types of pronunciation, but unsurprisingly both are different from the one in Japanese.

1885 E. S. MORSE *Japanese Homes* (1886) 212 The *futons*, or comforters, are [...] hung over the balcony rail to air.

1891 B. H. CHAMBERLAIN & W. B. MASON *Handbk. Travellers Japan* 8 Beds are still rare; but good quilts (*futon*) are laid down on the mats.

1959 *Encounter* Jan. 20/2 Their *futon*—the wadded quilt stuffed with cotton-wool which serves the Japanese for a bed.

However, we do not assume the reader of *Kitchen* looks for the word in the dictionary. Instead, the word is known as a sofa-bed, at least in the USA, as seen in the citation below (my emphasis) and Figure 7.

1984 J. DENTINGER *First Hit of Season* vii. 46 An empty vodka bottle stood on the floor by the futon sofa.

2012 E. LAYBOURNE *Monument 14* (2013) xxviii. 290 Sahalia was still lying with Astrid on one of the futon couches.



Figure 7. Futon available in the USA

The foldable sofa-bed is popular and available at any furniture store, so the American reader can imagine Mikage sleeps on the sofa, not the futon mattress directly on the floor. If the American reader pictures the furniture in the kitchen, the scene would significantly differ from the one the original describes.

Italian translation, on the other hand, has a glossary, as we mentioned. In the glossary in Italian edition reads “Futon: l’insieme di materasso e trapunta che costituisce il ‘letto’ giapponese. Il futon si stende direttamente sul pavimento e di giorno viene piegato e riposte negli appositi armadi” (1991: 149). The definition represents an accurate idea of what it is, such as a set of a mattress and a quilt that make up the Japanese “bed.” The futon lies directly on the floor, and during the day, it is folded and stored in the appropriate wardrobes. For native Japanese, the description in the glossary sounds more accurate than in the *OED*. So, thanks to it, Italians, even with insufficient knowledge of Japanese culture, can access the real “futon” without searching for the word in dictionaries.

The history of the word in Italy dates back to 1912 as the entry of “Orientalismi” shows in *Treccani*: Futon <<sottile materasso imbottito di cotone>> (1912).

Contemporary definitions in *Treccani* and *Lo Zingarelli* also read:

futòn s. m. [dal giapp. *futon*]. – Materasso giapponese di scarso spessore, imbottito con materiali naturali, che si pone direttamente sul pavimento o su un supporto rigido (*Treccani*).

futón [vc. giapp. 1939] s. m. inv.: grossa trapunta che si può stendere sul pavimento o su un basso supporto rigido e usare come materasso (*Lo Zingarelli*)

The definitions are almost identical, mentioning the hard frame for lower beds like Figure 8 instead of the sofa-bed in the USA.



Figure 8. Futon available in Italy

Considering the definitions and the history of the word, we can grasp that Italian and American readers were generally unfamiliar with a futon in the original sense. Since few westerners sleep directly on the floor and know the tatami mat on which the futon is put, it would not be easy to imagine the bedding as depicted in *Kitchen*. However, the primary difference between the two editions unfolds their standing position concerning readability and foreignization. English version values readability more without interrupting the flow of reading and lets the reader picture the scene as they like. Inversely, Italian translation is loyal to the original, letting the reader stop, think about the meaning, and go to the glossary.

3.3 Gender in *Kitchen*

We have overviewed the cover and the text information the novella transports, concentrating on the words like kitchen, Linus, and futon. Before closing this discussion, we would like to examine gender representation in three languages to capture what is behind the text.

Mikage, the heroine, narrates the story from the first-person point of view. Being a young woman, she often uses colloquial/gender-neutral language. Another main character, Eriko, is a trans woman who was born as a male. In the last message to “her” (originally his) son, “she” confesses the difficulty of writing as a man, involuntarily revealing “her” femininity by using final particles typical for women. However, though gently sounding, the English translation does not deliver the speaker’s gender as in the original.

- (5) 私ね、この手紙だけはきちんと男言葉で書こうと思ってかなり努力したんだけど、おっかしいの。恥ずかしくてどうしても筆が進まないの。私、こんなに長く女でいても、まだどこかに男の自分が、本当の自分がある、これは役割よって思ってたのに。でももう心身共に女、名実共に母ね。笑っちゃう。(Yoshimoto, 1988: 84-85, my emphasis)
- (5.1) Just this once I wanted to write using men’s language, and I’ve really tried. But it’s funny—I get embarrassed and the pen won’t go. I guess I thought that even though I’ve lived all these years as a woman, somewhere inside me was my male self, that I’ve been playing a role all these years. But I find that I’m body and soul a woman. A mother in name and in fact. I have to laugh. (Yoshimoto, 1993: 52)

In contrast, the Italian translation expectedly displays “her” gender as female. This part is printed all in italics to let the reader know it is the will letter.

- (5.2) *Avevo pensato di scrivere questa lettera al maschile, e mi sono sforzata di farlo ma, strano, mi vergognavo e la penna si rifiutava di scrivere. Anche se sono donna ormai da tanto tempo, credevo di essere ancora, in una parte di me, uomo, veramente uomo. ‘Questo in fondo è solo un ruolo,’ mi dicevo. Invece ormai sono donna, corpo e anima. Sono tua madre in tutti i sensi. Che discorso! Mi viene da ridere.* (Yoshimoto, 1991: 56-57, my emphasis)

Here the characteristics of target languages control the translation, no matter how the translator strives for sticking to the original. Especially grammar is the toughest since the translator should follow it, at least, to make the sentence intelligible. The impossibility to carry all the significance embraced in the original is destined for all translations. No wonder Margolis writes “How the English Language

Failed Banana Yoshimoto” (2021) though he sounds a bit too critical, overlooking the limitation meant to any translation.

We have come a long way to grasp what is behind the text when it is transmitted to another language, concentrating on *Kitchen* as a showcase. The book covers, with the text information, and the body text confirm the multilayered cultural transmission in and behind the text. The original consists of *hiragana*, *katakana*, and *kanji*, and displays rich transactions among cultures/languages, embodied in such words as kitchen, Linus, and futon. The words show the exportation processes (persuasion) and importation (borrowing/amalgamation) from each perspective, depending on where you stand. They exhibit, furthermore, an inclination of each translation toward readability or foreignness with the destined limitation of textual transmission.

4. Brief concluding remarks

Our journey to reach here was rather long, and finally, we are ready for brief concluding remarks. We have discussed the transmission of cultural artifacts of non-text and text, referring to Koizumi as a theoretical framework and scrutinizing exportation (imposition and persuasion) and importation (borrowing and amalgamation) with examples of food, writing systems, and *Kitchen*, a novella. For decoding the novella in terms of textual transmission, we compare its three editions, Japanese (the original), English, and Italian, concentrating on a couple of words, “kitchen,” “Linus,” and “futon.”

Now we are reminded of our research questions posited in the beginning: what is behind textual transmission? What does the text transmit when translated into another language? How is gender related to cultural transmission? To answer the questions, let us sum up the primary finding of this research. We discovered that a text is already enmeshed and multilayered in meanings by previous cultural contacts before it gets translated. Undoubtedly, translation, in general,

is not only a matter of text but involves/is based on the process of many other cultural transmissions. Concerning gender, we pointed out some differences in expression depending on the languages, both source and targeted, in the case of *Kitchen*. In addition, as passing, we saw *hiragana* letters and the genre of diary belonged predominantly to women. Due to the limited space, this paper could not elaborate on how non-textual transmission relates to gender, though our argument above suggests that it might have lesser involvement. My future research will focus on the issue as well as the process in which an imported culture like “Linus” develops in the receiving countries, representation of gender, etc. Hopefully, we have clarified the process and scope of textual transmissions behind and beyond the scenes/written text.

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