

# A Cross-Cultural Study of English Translations of Kajii Motojirō's Short Stories

Olha Kateryna

## 1. Introduction

Kajii Motojirō is not widely known to a broad readership in Japan, let alone in the West. Having left only 20 completed stories before his death from tuberculosis at 31, Kajii was considered a “minor” writer of the late Taishō – early Shōwa literary scene. The situation has somehow changed after World War II when his work started getting broader recognition. Still, although today his short story “Lemon” (*Remon*, 1925) is taught in high school, and there is a substantial amount of critical works devoted to him and his literature in Japanese, translations and studies in English are far too few. Moreover, many of the studies focus on Kajii's biography, adopting an author-centered approach, which was predominant in Japanese literary criticism until the 1980s. Stephen Dodd, who has conducted extensive research on Kajii Motojirō and translated most of his stories, argues that “Kajii's subjective literary presence was grounded first and foremost in his sick, TB-stricken physical body, and hence one cannot be studied without the other.”<sup>1</sup> While I cannot disagree with the first half of this statement, in this thesis, I will consciously break with a line of criticism that emphasizes autobiographical aspects of Kajii's writing, focusing entirely on the text of his short stories and their English translations.

Kajii's life and writing were both strongly affected by the tuberculosis epidemic, which ran rampant in Japan in late Meiji-Taishō period, and by aesthetic preferences of “White Birch Society” (*Shirakaba-ha*). However, some researchers, including Dodd, argue that Kajii possessed a distinctive literary style and unique, even though not strong, voice. One of the objectives of this thesis is, while not denying the importance of considering the era in which any writer was active, to illuminate some of the possible features of

Kajii's unique style within the textual level on his writing rather than to focus on historical background of his work.

Most of Kajii's over 20 stories are translated to English, a few more than once by different translators. However, there are no studies of Kajii's translated work so far. In this work, I analyze a few of his stories from a narratological perspective and compare them with a corpus of English translations. As a framework, I use Andre Lefevere's idea of translation as refraction rather than reflection, according to which the task of a translator is not to simply mirror the original in their language, but to decode and re-encode the text as a complex signifying system.<sup>2</sup> Thus, this work doesn't seek to evaluate the level of "correctness" in translation, which is derived from a concept of the reader as a passive receiver of "truth" embodied in the text. Rather than that, the goal of this thesis is to interpret the similarities and differences between the source text and target text on lexical and stylistic levels within a broader intercultural context.

## 2. The shadow world of "The Ascension of K, or K' s Drowning"

"The Ascension of K, or K's Drowning" stands out among other Kajii Motojirō's short stories due to its structure. The story takes the form of a letter written by the narrator to an unnamed second person addressee ("*anata*"). The narrator, having learned previously from the addressee about the death of K, their common acquaintance, tells a story of his first encounter with K, their brief friendship, and eventually his theory regarding K's death. The narrator thinks that K didn't drown, but ascended to the moon. Then the narrator explains the reason behind such a statement. On the night he first met K, K drew the narrator's attention by walking back and forth, looking at his own shadow cast by the moon. K later opens up that he is drawn to his shadow, which gradually starts showing signs of life if he stares at it long enough, eventually acquiring its own personality. According to K, his "usual self" grows detached, his feelings indistinct, and then the spirit of the "usual self" ascends to the moon, leaving the body behind. In the story, narrator retells this with a hint of sarcasm, presenting it as K's oddity. But in the end, narrator tries to recreate events of the night K drowned based on K's beliefs, painting a vivid picture of K's ascension.

Critical studies of this short story focus on a theme of a doppelgänger, or split personality, and revolve around K and his “shadow world” as well as the relationship between K, the narrator, and “*anata*.” For example, Shimamura states that the letter format is the narrator’s attempt to vindicate himself: K viewed the narrator as his “shadow” double, so the narrator’s leaving K was an indirect cause of K’s death.<sup>3</sup> Mizushima analyzes the functions of “*anata*” in the story, claiming that the addressee is a fictional character, brought in so that the narrator could make a confession regarding K’s death.<sup>4</sup> Murai stands aside from the mainstream research as he focuses on epistolary features of the story, concluding that K and the narrator are two sides of one split personality and can communicate only by writing a letter to a third party.<sup>5</sup> This way, even though there is some research on style and structure, the previous studies are mostly character-centered rather than text-centered.

Throughout the story, the narrator retells K’s beliefs while trying to distance from them, which can be seen in his constant evaluation of K’s words and behavior as “odd” or “strange” (“*kii*,” “*fushigi*”), which, in turn, serves as an emphasis of the narrator’s normalcy. He refers to the time he first met K as a “strange encounter” (“*kiina shotaimen*”) and “strange incident” (“*kiina jiken*”), to K himself as a “strange figure” (“*kiina hitokage*”), and eventually to his own theory about K’s death as “odd thing” (“*kiina koto*”). The fact that words “strange,” “odd” are repeated multiple times throughout the story leads to a suggestion that the narrator needs to reaffirm his normalcy not only to the addressee (or the reader) but to himself, which creates a narrative tension in the story, raising questions about narrator’s reliability.

Critics’ opinions regarding the narrator’s reliability or normalcy are divided. Shimamura states that “I” was able to go back to the “real world” while K stayed in a world of fantasy. On the other hand, Mizushima states that the narrator, similarly to K, is “mentally unstable.” The scene where K ascends to the moon has been viewed as a hallucination or a sign of “troubled personality.”<sup>6</sup> These theories are based on no other than the ambivalence in the narrator’s language, and next I examine this ambivalence and the way it is translated into English.

Taking a closer look at the lexical level of this short story, I would like to bring attention to the word “shadow,” as it is the central element of K’s belief

system and therefore appears quite often in the text. Two words correspond with “shadow” (“*kage*,” “*hitokage*”) in the source text. When the narrator leaves his room and goes to the beach, he sees shadows (“*kage*”) everywhere around him (“so I left the inn and, stepping through shadows of tangled pine trees, emerged onto a sandy beach,” “the pulley for rolling up the dragnet cast vivid shadows onto the white sand.”) Later he sees K on the beach, though not knowing his name at that time the narrator refers to him as “*hitokage*,” which is translated as “the figure,” “outline,” or simply “he” (Dodd’s translation),<sup>7</sup> and “silhouette” or “person” (Ogawa Moy’s translation).<sup>8</sup> This way, Japanese word “*hitokage*,” which is repeatedly used throughout the episode on the beach, a total of ten times, is replaced with counterparts other than “shadow,” more than one per one translation. “*Hitokage*” can mean both an outline, a silhouette of the person, and a shadow cast by a person, and this ambiguity allows for different interpretations. However, the deliberate repetition of the key component “*kage*” as a word itself or as a part of the word “*hitokage*” creates a web of hidden meanings in the source text, which is not conveyed in translation.<sup>9</sup> In particular, the narrator, through the process of retelling his memories of K and their time spent together, gets drawn into the process of narration and starts reliving K’s beliefs while trying to deny this fact on the conscious level. To put it in other words, the act of narration, or an act of telling the story, leads the narrator to lose control over the way he is telling the story. The resulting repetition of the word “*kage*” creates tension, foreshadows the ambiguous ending, and, together with narrator’s trying to emphasize his normalcy, creates an aura of ambivalence around the narrator and the dichotomy of real versus surreal.

The same ambivalence can be seen in a final passage of the story. Here, a scene of K’s drowning is narrated differently in source text and translation. Let us take a look at Dodd’s translation first.

K’s mental faculties *sharpened* as his illness *intensified*, and it would seem that his shadow really did *become* a “visible reality” that night. Shoulders *emerged*, a neck *appeared*, and, along with a slightly dizzy sensation, a head finally *began to materialize* from among the “signs.” *As time passed, little by little* K’s spirit *rose up*, following the flowing

moonlight back toward the moon. K's body *gradually lost control* of consciousness, and his empty steps took him ever closer to the sea. The shadowy part of him *finally* took on a complete personality. K's spirit *ascended further*. *And then* his bodily frame, guided by his shadowy self, must have walked into the sea like a mechanical doll. *Next thing*, the high waves of low tide *brought him down* in the sea. If at that moment his bodily frame had come back to its senses, his spirit would also have *returned* to his body. [...]

When K's body did fall, it was *carried out* to the sea. Still his senses did not *return*. The next wave *dragged* him back to the shore. His senses still did not *come back*. He was *carried out to the sea* once more, and hurled again against the shore. But his spirit *continued its ascent* to the moon. (emphasis added)

This passage contains multiple verbs and phrases describing change (sharpened, intensified, appeared, began to materialize), movement (rose up, ascended, brought him down, returned, dragged, come back, etc.), the passage of time, and order of action (as time passed, little by little, gradually, finally, and then, next thing). These action words create a feeling of not rapid, yet strong, unyielding, and overpowering force moving the character (and a reader) along to a climactic point. The action sequence is temporally linear, and all sentences are written in past tense, which perfectly corresponds with the context of a letter.

To compare, let us take the same extract from Ogawa Moy's translation.

As a result of his illness, K's spirit was greatly sharpened, and I think that on that night his shadow truly became "something that could be seen." His shoulders emerged, and experiencing something like a vague dizziness, his head at last appeared from that "sensation." Then a certain time elapsed, and as K's spirit ran counter to the flow of moonlight, it slowly rose in the direction of the moon. His body gradually lost control over consciousness, and his unconscious paces, step by step, gradually approached the sea. The shadow K at last came to assume a character of its own. And his spirit ascended high up into the heavens. And then, his

skeleton was guided by his shadow, and like a mechanical puppet, did he not walk into the sea? Next, the high wave of the low tide toppled K into the sea. And if, at that time, his senses had been restored to his skeleton, his spirit would have returned with it to the original body. [...]

K's body toppled and then was carried onto the open sea. His senses were not yet restored. The next wave dragged him toward the beach. His senses still had not returned. Again he was thrown back to the sea, and again he was thrust toward the beach. On top of that, his spirit ascended toward the moon.

These two translations are consistent in the use of past tense and a variety of action words, creating a linear action narrative, which prompts the reader forward in time. The second translation, however, has fewer time order words and inconsistent sentence structure, lacking in the sense of movement compared to Dodd's version.

Both translations demonstrate considerable differences from the source text, which is cited below.

K 君は病と共に精神が鋭く尖り、その夜は影が本当に「見えるもの」になったのだと思われます。肩が現われ、頸が顕われ、微かな眩暈の如きものを覚えると共に、「気配」のなかから遂に頭が見えはじめ、そして或る瞬間が過ぎて、K 君の魂は月光の流れに逆らいながら徐々に月の方へ登ってゆきます。K 君の身体は段々意識の支配を失い、無意識な歩みは一步一步海へ近づいて行くのです。影の方の彼は遂に一箇の人格を持ちました。K 君の魂はなお高く昇天してゆきます。そしてその形骸は影の彼に導かれつつ、機械人間のように海へ歩み入ったのではないのでしょうか。次いで干潮時の高い浪が K 君を海中へ仆します。若しそのとき形骸に感覚が蘇ってくれば、魂はそれと共に元へ帰ったのであります。[中略]

K 君の身体は仆れると共に沖へ運ばれました。感覚はまだ蘇りません。次の浪が浜辺へ引摺りあげました。感覚はまだ帰りません。また沖へ引去られ、また浜辺へ叩きつけられました。然も魂は月の方へ昇天してゆくのです。<sup>10</sup>

K kun wa yamai todomo ni seishin ga surudoku togari, sono yo wa

kage ga hontō ni “mieru mono” ni natta no da to omowaremasu. Kata ga araware, kubi ga araware, kasukana memai no gotoki mono o oboeru todomo ni, “kehai” no naka kara tsui ni atama ga miehajime, soshite aru shunkan ga sugite, K kun no tamashii wa gekkō no nagare ni sakarainagara jojo tsuki no hō e nobotte yukimasu. K kun no karada wa dandan ishiki no shihai o ushinai, muishikina ayumi wa ippo ippo umi e chikazuite iku no desu. Kage no hō no kare wa tsui ni ikko no jinkaku o mochimashita. K kun no tamashii wa nao takaku shōten shite yukimasu. Soshite sono keigai wa kage no kare ni michibikaretsutsu, kikai ningyō no yō ni umi e ayumiitta no dewanai deshō ka. Tsuide kanchōji no takai nami ga K kun o kaichū e taoshimasu. Moshi sono toki keigai ni kankaku ga yomigaette kureba, tamashii wa sore todomo ni moto e kaetta no de arimasu. [...]

K kun no karada wa taoreru todomo ni oki e hakobaremashita. Kankaku wa mada yomigaerimasen. Tsugi no nami ga hamabe e hikizuriagemashita. Kankaku wa mada kaerimasen. Mata oki e hikisarare, mata hamabe e tatakitsukeraremashita. Shikamo tamashii wa tsuki no hō e shōten shite yuku no desu.

The passage starts with the narrator acknowledging his subjectivity, which is reflected in the choice of word “*omowaremasu*” (“it would seem that,” “I think that”). However, the subsequent sentences demonstrate a sudden shift to an omniscient point of view, implementing which narrator describes K’s drowning as if seen with his own eyes, therefore as a real event. This contrasts sharply with the narrator’s previous claim (not quoted here) that this is no more than a “tentative guess” based on intuition. This way, the narrator’s intentions regarding this final passage and the actual delivery differ significantly, which indicates that he is an unreliable narrator, an influenced narrator, or both. This ambiguity is not reflected in English translations.

The passage quoted above demonstrates some lack of equivalency on the level of grammatical structures as well. As previously mentioned, the story is written in the form of a letter and retells past events, so the usage of past tense is justified. However, the scene of K’s ascending (quoted above) is narrated in present tense. The narrator, having reached the limits of his knowledge of K’s whereabouts, tries to imagine what must have happened to

him, and the use of present tense helps to paint a vivid picture and emphasizes the effect of presence.

Such tense shifts can be attributed to either Japanese language tense ambiguity<sup>11</sup> or stylistic choices of an author/narrator. Bruno compares the language of classical literature (using “The Tale of Genji” as an example) with modern Japanese language, stating that tense ambiguity and tense shifts, which are quite common in Japanese narrative, have their origins in the absence of tense paradigm under which tense can be defined, originating in classical Japanese language.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, Matsuo Soga views such shifts as stylistic choices of an author, arguing that the author “frequently changes his point of view or his psychological encoding time for the sake of vividness” and such shifts “are considered quite normal and effective” in Japanese language.<sup>13</sup>

While Bruno’s theory is backed up with studies that prove that in colloquial Japanese, present and past tense are in many cases interchangeable, in literature any change in narration can have a specific function behind it. In the following chapters, I examine tense shifts in two other stories by Kajii Motojirō and the way they are translated into English. Next, I try to interpret my findings from a cross-cultural perspective.

### 3. Tense shifts and their function in other stories of Kajii Motojirō

“The Ascension of K, or K’s Drowning” is not the only work of Kajii Motojirō where the alteration of present and past tense can be viewed as a stylistic device, thus opening a possibility for a new reading. Shifts between present and past are also present in “Lemon” (“*Remon*”), the most famous Kajii’s work. Stephen Dodd, while discussing the social context of “Lemon,” notes the visual vividness of the objects on Maruzen shelves, stating that “the goods on display are described not through formal sentences but as a series of noun compounds punctuated with full stops and commas but without final verbs” and that “it is characteristic of Kajii’s writing that this list of desirable objects produces a predominantly visual impact.”<sup>14</sup>

This way, Kajii’s decision to describe the objects on sale in Maruzen with a list of nouns rather than full sentences is a stylistic device, which adds to visual clarity and the reader’s sense of presence. However, this is not the only

device with this function in "Lemon." Let us consider the following two excerpts, in which the narrator is altering his narration technique as compared to the whole story.

There, I came to a halt at a local greengrocer's. By way of introduction let me say that, of all the shops I knew, this greengrocer's was my favorite. There was nothing at all grand about the shop, but the beauty peculiar to a greengrocer's was most strikingly tangible. *The fruit was arranged on a fairly steep-angled base, which appeared to be an old black-varnished board. The array of fruit seemed coagulated into its present color and volume, as if the allegro flow of a gorgeously beautiful piece of music had been thrust before a Gorgon-like mask, with the power to turn those who looked on into stone. The greens were stacked higher the further back they went.* In fact, their carrot leaves were stunningly beautiful. The same was true of the beans and arrowhead bulbs steeping in water. (emphasis added)

But then, for some inexplicable reason, the feeling of happiness that had filled my heart gradually deserted me. I was no longer able to stomach the perfume bottles and pipes. Melancholy pressed in and I felt suddenly weary from my wanderings. I tried standing in front of the art-book shelves. I was struck by how I needed even more effort than normal to take out a single weighty book of paintings. *I did still try picking out one volume at a time and opening it, though I'd not the slightest desire to leaf painstakingly through the pages. And then, as if cursed, I pulled out the next volume. It was just the same. Even so, I couldn't feel satisfied until I'd given it a cursory browse. When I wasn't able to bear it anymore, I put them down on the spot. I couldn't even return them to their original places.* I repeated this several times. (emphasis added)

The first quote describes the interior of the greengrocer's, where the narrator has bought a lemon. Visual attributes of the lemon such as "pure and simple color, like lemon-yellow pigment squeezed from a tube and hardened into a form, and their stumpy spindle shape" were the reason the narrator has

bought it, so the description of the greengrocer's interior helps the reader to understand the narrator's actions and therefore to empathize with the narrator further. This is achieved, first, with the careful choice of adjectives and metaphors, and second, with the narration shifting from past to present tense. The narration in the paragraph starts in the past tense, consistent with the rest of the story, and changes to present tense in the sentences italicized above: "*datta yō ni omoeru*" (translated as "which appeared to be"), "*anna shikisai ya anna boryūmu ni korikatamatta to yū fū ni kudamono wa narande iru*" ("the array of fruit seemed coagulated into its present color and volume"), "*tsumarete iru*" ("the greens were stacked").

In the second quote, the narrator thoroughly describes his actions in Maruzen store. In the original text, the passage starts with past tense, changes to present, and then again to past, emphasizing repeated actions of the narrator (taking out a book, opening it, going through the pages). The sudden shift to present draws the reader's attention to the narrator's actions, and in narration, which moves forward in time, actions described in present tense seem timeless, giving a sense of eternal repetition.

Thus, the shift between tenses is another stylistic device which helps to create a vivid visual environment, to achieve a sense of presence and therefore sympathize with the narrator, and to develop a sense of being outside time, which allows for a fuller interpretation of the narrator's emotional state.

Another work in which the form of the narration becomes a storytelling technique is "Mire" ("*Deinei*"). This short story has been studied to a much lesser degree than "Lemon," although it is possible to distinguish a few tendencies in the sum of critical studies devoted to it. "Mire" tells a story of a day in a life of the protagonist/first-person narrator "I" ("*jinbun*"). "I" has received a money transfer from home, so he goes to a bank to claim it, steps into a barber's shop, visits a friend, then browses through secondhand bookstores, goes shopping in Ginza, later grabs a bite at Lion beer hall, buys soap and finally heads home. All these mundane actions leave the protagonist increasingly out of sorts. He goes from being "strangely angry" when the barber didn't wash his face properly to "as if I'd just carried out some heavy task" when he couldn't communicate his feeling to his friend to "incredibly stingy," desperate and "completely exhausted" during shopping and finally to

“hopelessly lost” in the end. He can't remember whether he wanted to buy the soap in the first place. Finally, as he walks home through a dark street illuminated mostly by moonlight and some “sporadic lightning,” one of the shadows around him – his shadow cast by the moon – catches his attention. As he watches the shadow, the narrator's sense of self begins to dissolve as he feels the shadow is the real him. After this encounter, the protagonist/narrator heads back home.

The first tendency in a body of previous research devoted to this short story is comparing it to Kajii's diary (which lists the events narrated in the story) and, therefore, studying the story in a context of the “I-novel” genre. Ninomiya, however, compares the text to both Kajii's diary and the early draft of the story, concluding that based on the differences, “Mire” can't be defined as an “I-novel.”<sup>16</sup> Nishio, on the other hand, analyzes the story both within and outside the genre, stating that the latter approach allows for a fuller interpretation of the last (third) part, in which the protagonist meets his shadow.<sup>17</sup>

According to Miyamoto, this third part, which is not mentioned in Kajii's diary and letters, is regarded as the essence of “Mire” by many researchers. Miyamoto goes against this tendency, analyzing all parts as equally important. She concludes that the narrator's long day represents a writer's journey from his home, which in this case serves as a metaphor for his ability to write, to the outside world, where he seeks meaningful interaction with others, and back home again.<sup>18</sup>

One tendency on which most of the researchers agree is a theme of “division,” or fragmented self. Hamakawa compares “Mire” to previously mentioned “The Ascension of K, or K's Drowning,” stating that both stories share the same type of “doppelgänger” phenomenon – seeing another identical self (“autoscopie spéculaire”).<sup>19</sup> Okamoto states that the narrator is in a state of constant conflict with his surroundings (such as a bank, a barber's, a friend's house, etc.), which makes him aware of his I (“*jibun*”). In chapter three, the narrator's “I” splits into subject and object of consciousness (literal translation: “observer” (“*miru jibun*”) and “observed” (“*mirareru jibun*”).<sup>20</sup> According to Okamoto, the experience of seeing himself from outside of the body has a healing effect, allowing the protagonist to come to terms with his inner side

– something that he fails to achieve through the interaction with others earlier in the story. Kiriya approaches a theme of doppelgänger in “Mire” from a different perspective, stating that the whole text metaphorically depicts the protagonist’s mental state, and that the reverse of subject-object dichotomy leads the protagonist to self-destruction.<sup>21</sup> Regardless of the interpretation, researchers agree that the culmination shows fragmentation of narrator’s self.

It is not possible to ignore a motif of doppelgänger in “Mire,” which is not only recurrent in Kajii’s writing, but, according to many critics, is defining in Taisho-early Showa literature in general (represented, apart from Kajii Motojirō, by Mori Ōgai, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, and Satō Haruo, as well as detective stories by Edogawa Rampo).<sup>22</sup> Also, there is no doubt that the scene where the narrator meets his shadows is the most significant part, giving meaning to the events described earlier in the story. However, I would like to investigate further how the narrator’s “self” manifests itself in the story even before the culmination and how the “self” is translated into English.

Let us consider a few following excerpts from the source text and two English translations:

それは或る日のことだった。---

待っていた為替が家から届いたので、それ金に替えかたがた本郷へ出ることにした。雪の降ったあとで、郊外に住んでいる自分にその雪解けが億劫なのであったが、金は待っていた金なので関わらずに出かけることにした。

Sore wa aru hi no koto datta. ---

Matte ita kawase ga uchi kara todoita no de, sore kane ni kaekitagata Hongō e deru koto ni shita. Yuki no futta ato de kōgai ni sunde iru jibun ni sono yukitoke ga okkū na no de atta ga, kane wa matte ita kane na no de kamawazu ni dekakeru koto ni shita.

Dodd’s translation:<sup>23</sup>

One day it so happened that the money order I’d been waiting for arrived from home. I decided to kill two birds with one stone by taking a trip to Hongō at the same time as cashing in the money order.

There had been a snowfall earlier and, living in the suburbs, I didn’t much care for all the slush. But the money had been long in coming, and

I was determined to venture out regardless.

Rogers's translation:<sup>24</sup>

It happened one day.

The money order from home that I'd been waiting for arrived, so I decided to kill two birds with one stone: visit the Hongō district and cash it. I lived in the suburbs, and the thaw after a snowfall is tiresome to deal with, but this was money I had been waiting for, so I set off in spite of the snow on the ground.

The citation is the first paragraph in "Mire." The narrator starts with a description of the event which happened before the moment of narration (money transfer arrived) and proceeds to explain that he has been cooped up in his room due to his inability to write, explaining his psychological state during the last few weeks. As this part precedes the story timeline, it can be seen that it is understandably narrated and translated in past tense with no disparities.

お茶の水から本郷へ出るまでの間に人が三人まで雪で滑った。銀行へ着いた時分には自分もかなり不機嫌になってしまっていた。赤く焼けている瓦斯暖炉の上へ濡れて重くなった下駄をやりながら自分は係りが名前を呼ぶのを待っていた。

Ochanomizu kara Hongō e deru made no aida ni hito ga sannin made yuki de subetta. Ginkō e tsuita jibun ni wa jibun mo kanari fukigen ni natte shimatte ita. Akaku yakete iru gasu danro no ue e nurete omoku natta geta o yarinagara jibun wa kakari ga namae o yobu no o matte ita.

Dodd's translation:

By the time I reached Hongō from Ochanomizu, already three people had slipped on the snow. When I got to the bank, I was in a pretty bad mood. I rested my heavily sodden wooden sandals on the scorching red gas stove and waited for the clerk to call my name.

Rogers's translation:

By the time I got to Hongō from Ochanomizu I had seen three people slip in the snow. When I got to the bank I myself was in a rather foul mood. I waited for the clerk to call my name, putting my geta, now wet and heavy, on top of a gas stove, glowing red from the heat.

This is the first paragraph of chapter two, in which the narrator finally leaves his room and heads to the bank. Unlike chapter one, where the narrator reflects on his inability to write, lack of focus, and some moments from daily life from the past two weeks, chapter two picks up where the first paragraph of the story left off, namely the bank transfer. If this can be considered a starting point of the story timeline, then after chapter one has deviated from it towards the past, chapter two continues in the supposed “present” timeline. However, it’s crucial to notice that even the “present” events are narrated in past tense, as can be seen in the quote above. Needless to say, this is not unusual, as first-person novels are often narrated in past tense.

Next, let us consider a quote from the last paragraphs, which is a culmination of this short story.

影の中に生き物らしい気配が現れて来た。何を思っているのか確かに何かを思っている --- 影だと思っていたものは、それは、生なましい自分であった！

自分が歩いてゆく！そしてこちらの自分は月のような位置からその自分を眺めている。地面はなにか玻璃を張ったような透明で、自分は軽い眩暈を感じる。

「あれはどこへ歩いてゆくのだろう」と漠とした不安が自分に起こりました。……

Kage no naka ni ikimono rashii kehai ga arawarete kita. Nani o omotte iru no ka tashika ni nanika o omotte iru --- kage da to omotte ita mono wa, sore wa, namanamashii jibun de atta!

Jibun ga aruite yuku! Soshite kochira no jibun wa tsuki no yōna ichi kara sono jibun o nagamete iru. Jimen wa nanika hari o hatta yōna tōmei de, jibun wa karui memai o kanjiru.

“Are wa doko e aruite yuku no darō” to bakutoshita fuan ga jibun ni okorihajimeta ...

Dodd's translation:

Signs of a living creature seemed to emerge from the shadow. What might it be thinking? It had to be thinking of something. I'd thought of it as a shadow, but it turns out to be the living me!

I'm walking along! It's as if the me right here has taken the place of the moon and is looking down at another me. The ground is transparent, as if spread with crystals. I feel slightly dizzy.

"I wonder where it's walking to?" A vague unease began to rise within me.

Rogers's translation:

There was the suggestion of something that seemed alive emerging from the shadow. It was assuredly thinking of something; what was it thinking? What I had thought was a shadow was the real me! I shall walk on! And this me, here, looked down upon the other me from a moonlike height. The ground was limpid, as under a crystal cover; I felt a touch of vertigo.

I began to sense within me a nebulous unease: "Where do you suppose it's walking off to?"

The paragraphs above are the culmination of the narrator's journey home. He enters a dimly lit alley, and as he walks, he starts to calm down, his all-day lasting anxiety and feeling out of sorts disappears. At the same time, he feels strange affection towards one of his shadows – the one cast by the moon. While he watches it, he feels like the shadow is more real than him.

It should be noted that the protagonist first notices that shadow has "signs of a living creature," then ponders what the shadow might be thinking about, thus attributing a thought process – not just a sign of a living creature, but a sign of a human being – to it. Next, the narrator feels like the shadow is not just any living creature/human being, but his other self. This realization leads the narrator to experience himself both as an observer (the subject of thought) and the observed (object), which is a culmination of his state of disharmony with his environment and, according to different critics, has

either therapeutic or self-destructive meaning.

At this point, as can be seen in a quote in Japanese, narration style changes as the narrator shifts from past to present tense. As previously discussed, this shift alone doesn't necessarily have a deep meaning in Japanese language. However, in "Mire," the change from "*namanamashii jibun de atta!*" to "*Jibun ga aruite yuku!*" marks the narrator's attribution of human-like features to the shadow and therefore acknowledging it as his double and, therefore, serves as a stylistic device. Before the shift, thoughts, feelings, and experiences of "*jibun*" are narrated mostly in past tense. Narrating "*jibun*" in present tense signals about the change in point of view, both literally (the narrator is watching "the real him" as if from above) and metaphorically.

This stylistic device is reflected in Dodd's translation, where the movements of the "other (shadow) self" are narrated in present tense: "I'm walking along!". However, in Rogers's translation the tense shift is omitted, thus creating a linear first-person narrative without timeline disruptions.

This way, it can be concluded that there are inconsistencies between the texts in Japanese and their English translations. These two chapters focused on grammatical constructions of source texts and target text rather than lexical equivalence between them and demonstrated that the shift between present and past tense was one of the stylistic devices in works of Kajii Motojirō. In the following chapter, I will try to distinguish specific tendencies behind the translation choices mentioned above and discuss the meaning these choices have from a cross-cultural perspective.

#### 4. Translation of Kajii Motojirō and cultural orientations

A discussion about translation is not possible without a discussion about language and, in particular, the dichotomy of reality and language. Humans' perception unavoidably deletes, distorts, and generalizes reality in a similar way a cartographer deletes irrelevant parts of the landscape and enlarges relevant structures. This metaphor was introduced by Bandler and Grinder on 1970th and Korzybski in the 1960<sup>th</sup> 25 and implies that, similarly to the way a cartographer filters out unnecessary information to create different maps for different needs, we unconsciously generalize, distort and delete aspects of objective reality based on filters. Hofstede proposes three levels on which

reality is filtered in human perception (he calls them “mental programs”): the most basic is the level of human nature (inherited and universal, the level on which we interpret reality based on our senses), the level of culture (learned and specific to a group of people) and the level of personality (inherited and learned, specific to an individual).<sup>26</sup> Katan completes this pyramid of levels with language, stating that “in communicating our understanding of the world, a further filter, language, constrains and distorts reality.”<sup>27</sup>

The way perception is generalized, distorted, and deleted depends on orientation, which can be general (also known as learning styles) and culturally formed. This chapter further focuses on cultural orientations that can clarify patterns in translation of grammatical category of time from Japanese to English language. Many authors came up with different vectors, or taxonomies, of cultural orientations. For the sake of brevity, I will omit those irrelevant to the current study and focus on two: environment and time.

#### 4.1. Environment

Walker at al distinguish three types of orientation regarding how cultures relate to their environment: control, harmony, and constraint.<sup>28</sup> Some cultures might feel in control of their environment, actively changing it, while others might feel restricted by it or try to mediate with it. What is essential, environment here is not limited to its physical representation, but includes any forces and factors which can influence an individual's life, such as other people, societal issues, destiny, luck, or God.

In “The Ascension of K, or K's Drowning,” the central theme is the phenomenon of *doppelgänger*, and, therefore, loss of control. K feels that the shadow is “like opium,” which means he cannot resist watching it and thinking about it, eventually coming to an acute awareness that the shadow is more real than him. K loses control over the world of imagination he created for himself, which leads to his death.

However, as argued in chapter one, the narrator's words and narration techniques present a deeper level to this story. Narrator says he is skeptical of K's ideas and presents his hypothesis on what happened to K only as a “tentative guess.” Still, throughout the story, and through the process of narrating the story, the narrator loses control over it. This is reflected in the overuse of the word “*hitokage*” and “*kage*” (“shadow”), which hints that the

narrator starts sharing the “shadow world” with K, as well as in the shift from past to present tense in the final part of the story, in which K’s drowning is not narrated as a memory but rather a scene happening right in front of the narrator. Here, the narrator loses control of the world he has created, and the subject-object relationship between the author (narrator) and his creation (the story) gets reversed. The fantastic element in this story is not in the image of K’s soul slowly rising towards the moon but in the ambiguity of worlds, experiences, and subject-object vectors.

In both English translations, however, this ambiguity is not present. The narrator in English translation never loses control of the story, which can be attributed to decisions of the translator as a cultural mediator, and thus cultural differences. Anglo-American culture is control-based, which, according to Walker, manifests in the idea that an individual has total control over his or her life, and the environment can be changed to fit an individual’s needs.<sup>29</sup> This way, the ambiguity of “truth” and “reality” in Japanese original is mediated to reflect and fit in the map of the world of the target audience.

#### 4.2. Time

Differences in representation of time in source text and translation can also be explained from the perspective of time orientation, specifically time focus. Time orientation refers to the way individuals perceive the nature of time the way they use it. Walker at all distinguish single-focus and multi-focus cultures, with the former focusing on one particular issue, subject, or relationship, while the latter focus on engaging in multiple activities simultaneously.<sup>30</sup> Single-focus cultures will approach a task as a series of steps and therefore perceive time linearly. On the contrary, multi-focus cultures place greater emphasis relationship between tasks, issues, or subjects.

This division corresponds to Hall’s ideas of monochronic and polychronic time. Hall, who wrote extensively about the concept of time, notes that some western cultures and the U.S. have a monochronic orientation. According to Hall, monochronic time is “almost tangible”<sup>31</sup> – it can be “spent,” “wasted,” “saved,” and “lost.” In cultures with this time orientation schedules are prioritized over human relationships. In cultures with polychronic time, on the other hand, relationships are more important than schedules, and multiple tasks are done simultaneously. Hall names U.S. culture extensively

monochronic, while Japanese culture combines both orientations. According to Hall, Japanese are monochronic in some aspects of their life, such as dealing with foreigners or technology, while in other aspects, and especially in interpersonal relationship, Japanese sense of time is polychronic.<sup>32</sup> Culture and language are inseparable, so the difference in time perception is reflected in language. As mentioned above, the category of time is ambiguous in Japanese language, which points to a lesser concern with temporality, adequate time references, and linear narratives in Japanese comparing to English.

In "Lemon," the narrator shifts between tenses, or omits semantically insignificant verbs and complements, leaving only nouns, thus eliminating grammatical category of tense from the passage altogether. The scenes at the greengrocer's and the bookstore are narrated "outside of time" in Japanese source text, which corresponds with the theory above regarding the non-linear polychronic sense of time in Japanese culture. On the other hand, English translation has a consistent past tense narrative, replacing tense shifts and undefined tense in the original text, and points to the linear tense perspective of the translator and target culture.

In the case of "Mire," translators handle the tense shift differently. Dodd recreates the stylistic device of tense shift and uses present tense in the sentences where the narrator's division of self can be clearly seen, while Rogers uses past tense throughout the whole passage. This difference raises a problem, or a question, of equivalence, which has been predominant in translation studies until the 1980<sup>th</sup>, although different translation theories concerned themselves with the question of equivalence from different perspectives. Gentzler distinguishes equivalence of aesthetic experience of the early era of translation studies, linguistic structural/dynamic equivalence of structuralists, and corresponding literary function of the source text and target text.<sup>33</sup> These schools, or approaches, in translation studies focus on similarities between source texts and target texts. In contrast, after the "cultural turn" in the 1980th translation studies become more focused on differences and how they are handled in translation. For example, cultural approach demonstrates how translation can be manipulation, allowing translators to force their ideology on a reader, a mimicry, adopting dominant discourses in the target culture, or a tool to establish a nation's identity among

neighboring cultures.<sup>34</sup> After the “cultural turn” in translation studies, differences between the source text and the target text, or between two translations, are no longer a priori a lack of equivalence, but material for discussion about culture.

This way, the differences in translation of tense and, therefore, temporal linearity in two English translations can be attributed to both linguistic and cultural differences. On the one hand, there are studies which demonstrate tense/aspect difference between English and Japanese language and tense ambiguity in Japanese language. On the other hand, the fact that the culmination of “Mire” was translated differently by different translators proves that the linguistic tense is closely interlinked with a concept of time in a specific culture, and a translator who translates between Japanese and English language should be aware of this cultural gap.

## 5. Conclusion

This thesis analyzed three short stories by Kajii Motojirō from a few different perspectives. In chapter two, I analyzed narratological features of “The Ascension of K, of K’s Drowning.” The analysis of the narrator and the structure of this story showed that repetition of the word “*kage*” (shadow), unreliable narration, and tense shift, which were not reflected in translation, are stylistic devices used to emphasize the vague line between real and surreal in this story. As can be seen from the title, which contains both real and surreal ending, blurring a line between reality and the imaginary world was indeed the narrator’s goal.

In chapter three, I focus on shifts from past tense to present tense in “Lemon” and “Mire.” “Lemon” is the most extensively researched Kajii’s short story and thus has some studies devoted to language. Researchers note that Kajii achieves visual vividness in descriptive narration, which I also attribute to tense shift and tenseless, as lacking any grammatical forms, narration. In “Mire,” shifts between past and present tenses are used to demonstrate the protagonist’s division of self, where the out-of-body experience is narrated in present tense while the rest of the story is in past tense.

The fact that English translations of the narrator’s experience with his shadow are translated inconsistently prompted an attempt to analyze these

differences from a cultural perspective. In chapter four, I move past the linguistic level and use a pre-existing framework in cultural studies to redefine the differences between all three source texts and multiple translations as differences in cultural orientations.

As a result of this attempt, it is possible to make the following conclusion. First, cultural differences can be seen even in texts which do not present culturally untranslatable elements. There is no text outside culture. In case of some texts, a translator would have to mediate surface differences, such as dress manners, greetings, and rituals, while with other texts, translators would have to interpret differences in thinking, beliefs, and, among others, orientations of power, time, space, environment. In case of Kajii's stories, differences in perception of environment and time, reflected in original and English translations, are most striking.

Second, both original Japanese text and translations are reader-oriented. Japanese texts work on a level of subtle shifts between real and surreal, reality and fantasy world, which can be called a distinctive feature of these three stories, if not Kajii's writing in general. This ambiguity is expressed through narrative devices, thus being an object of interpretation of the reader. The reader, being led by the narrator's unreliability, is left to decide for himself how to interpret the ending and, therefore, the title of "The Ascension of K, or K's drowning." On the other hand, translations of Kajii Motojirō are reader-oriented as they reflect the cultural orientations of the target culture.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Stephen Dodd, *The Youth of Things: Life and Death in the Age of Kajii Motojirō* (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 2.
- <sup>2</sup> Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, third edition (London, Routledge, 2002), 8.
- <sup>3</sup> Teru Shimamura, *Kajii Motojirō "K no shōten (arui wa K no dekishi)"(yomu)*, in *Japanese Literature* (Japanese Literature Association, issue 39(1), 1990), 68-71.
- <sup>4</sup> Yū Mizushima, *Kajii Motojirō "K no shōten (arui wa K no dekishi)": "Watashi" no nijūsei ni tsuite*, in *Seijo Kokubungaku* (Seijo Kokubungakkai, issue 28, 2012), 93-103.

- <sup>5</sup> Hideo Murai, *Studies on Epistolary Forms: Epistolary Novels by Motojirō Kajii*, in *Annual Memoirs of the Otani University Shin Buddhist Comprehensive Research Institute* (Otani University Shin Buddhist Comprehensive Research Institute, issue 15, 1998), 3-11.
- <sup>6</sup> Masahiko Watanabe, *Kindai Bungaku no Buunshinzō* (Kadokawa Sensho, 1999), 124-125.
- <sup>7</sup> Kajii Motojirō, *The Ascension of K, or K's Drowning*, translated by Stephen Dodd, in *The Youth of Things: Life and Death in the Age of Kajii Motojirō*. (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 185-190.
- <sup>8</sup> Kajii Motojirō, *The Ascension of K – or the Drowning of K*, translated by Naomi Ogawa Moy, in *Kajii Motojirō: An Anthology of Short Stories Translated Into English*, (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 1977), 95-105.
- <sup>9</sup> Hamakawa brings attention to the fact that the word “hitokage” was used “unnaturally” to describe K when the narrator had already known K’s name: Katsuhiko Hamakawa, *Kajii Motojirō Ron*, (Kanrin Shobō, 2000), 68.
- <sup>10</sup> Japanese texts are cited from *Shōwa Bungaku Zenshū*, vol. 7, edited by Yasushi Inoue, Yamamoto Kenkichi, Mitsuo Nakamura, Junnosuke Yoshiyuki et al. (Shogakukan, 1989).
- <sup>11</sup> There is a significant number of studies in the field of descriptive linguistics which deal with tense ambiguity in Japanese language. A lot of these studies focus on the form “*te iru*”.
- <sup>12</sup> Annabelle T. Bruno, *The Semantic Nature of Tense Ambiguity: Resolving Tense and Aspect in Japanese Phrasal Constructions* (University of Kentucky, 2017). Theses and Dissertations – Linguistics, 24. [https://uknowledge.uky.edu/ltt\\_etds/24](https://uknowledge.uky.edu/ltt_etds/24)
- <sup>13</sup> Matsuo Soga, *Tense and Aspect in Modern Colloquial Japanese* (University of British Columbia Press, 1983), 16-17.
- <sup>14</sup> Stephen Dodd, *Self and Other in the Writings of Kajii Motojirō*, in *Representing the Other in Modern Japanese literature*, ed. Rachel Hutchinson, Mark Williams (Sheffield Centre for Japanese Studies/Routledge Series, 2007), 106-107.
- <sup>15</sup> This and following quotes from “Lemon” are from Kajii Motojirō, *Lemon*, translated by Stephen Dodd, in *The Youth of Things: Life and Death in the*

- Age of Kajii Motojirō*. (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 143-148.
- <sup>16</sup> Tomoyuki Ninomiya, *Kajii Motojirō 'Deinei' ron – seiritsu katei to sōkō kara no saikō –*, in *Essay on Modern literature: Kindai Bungaku Shiron* (Hiroshima Daigaku Kindai Bungaku Kenkyūkai, issue 43, 2005)
- <sup>17</sup> Rei Nishio, *Kajii Motojirō 'Deinei' ron – shishōsetsu to 'miru' koto –* in *Gobun Ronsō* (Chiba University, Div. of Japanese and Eurasia Culture Studies, issue 25, 1998), 63-72.
- <sup>18</sup> Emiko Miyamoto, *Kajii Motojirō 'Deinei' ron – Keikichi no zassetsukan to sakuhin sekai –* in *Fumizuki* (Fumizuki Kankōkai, issue 3, 1998), 28-34.
- <sup>19</sup> Hamakawa, *Kajii Motojirō Ron*
- <sup>20</sup> Keitoku Okamoto, *Sakuhin o yomu: Deinei*, in *Kokubungaku Kaishaku to Kanshō* (Tokyo, Shibundo, issue 64(6), 1999), 72-75.
- <sup>21</sup> Kingo Kiriyaama, *Kajii Motojirō ron – "Deinei" no seiritsu to sono isō*, in *The Journal of Kokugakuin University* (Tokyo, Kokugakuin University, issue 81(12), 1980), 66-74.
- <sup>22</sup> Baryon Tensor Posadas, *Double Visions, Double Fictions: The Doppelgänger in Japanese Film and Literature* (University of Minnesota press, 2018).
- <sup>23</sup> Kajii Motojirō, *Mire*, translated by Stephen Dodd, in *The Youth of Things: Life and Death in the Age of Kajii Motojirō* (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 149-157.
- <sup>24</sup> Kajii Motojirō, *Mire*, translated by Lawrence Rogers, in *Tokyo Stories - A Literary Stroll*, edited by Lawrence Rogers (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 2002), 3-13.
- <sup>25</sup> David Katan, *Translating Cultures: An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters and Mediators* (Manchester, St. Jerome, 1999), 87.
- <sup>26</sup> Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (London, McGraw-Hill, 1991), 6.
- <sup>27</sup> Katan, *Translating Cultures*, 89.
- <sup>28</sup> Danielle Medina Walker, Thomas Walker, Joerg Schmitz, Terence Brake, *Doing Business Internationally: The Guide to Cross-Cultural Success – Second Edition* (New York, McGraw Hill, 2002), 60-62.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.
- <sup>31</sup> Edward T. Hall, Mildred Reed Hall, *Hidden Differences: Doing Business*

*with the Japanese* (Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1987), 16.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>33</sup> Edwin Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories* (London and New York, Routledge, 1993), 144.

<sup>34</sup> Susan Bassnett, Andre Lefevere, *Translation, History and Culture* (London, Pinter, 1990), 57-88.

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