

[研究論文]

Neither Girl Nor Woman: The Lexical Identities of *onna* and *musume* in *Izu no odoriko* and Their Implications for Translation

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Abstract

This paper explores the lexical identities of two key gendered terms in Kawabata Yasunari's 1925 novella *Izu no odoriko*—*onna* and *musume*—examining the semantic boundaries delineating them in the context of the story, and how these boundaries are interpreted in the English translations of the novella by Edward Seidensticker and J. Martin Holman. The paper then considers the implications of the observed subtly differing lexical identities between Japanese and English, suggesting how semantic equivalence between such basic terms as *onna* and 'woman' can never be taken for granted.

Introduction

Lexical identity refers to the semantic complex associated with a given expression at both denotative and connotative levels, as well as the morphology of the expression and its different inflections across the gamut of potential parts of speech that the expression can occupy. It is clear that most SL–TL¹ lexical differences are dealt with by an adjustment in the expressions chosen and the form that they take in the TT (target text), but the question is whether or not that adjustment results in a significant shift away from the original.

Three distinctions can be made under the rubric of lexical identity: among part of speech, lexicalisation, and lexical connotation. One can envisage them on a sliding scale of size of semantic unit, from the coarsest, part of speech, to the finest, lexical connotation.

First, when, for example, a concept exists primarily in noun form in one language, and verb form in another, we are talking of a difference in part of speech. As a general example of formal difference, the base form of lexical sets in English, particularly of Latinate words such as *develop*—*development*—*developmental*—*developmentally*, is the *verb*. That is, the verb form is usually the shortest lexical unit within the set for Latinate words, from which all other members are formed with affixes. While this length difference may not be so pronounced with Germanic-origin words, where nouns and verbs are often homonyms (e.g., *taste* (*v.*)—*taste* (*n.*)—*tasteful*—*tastefully*) or cognates of similar length (e.g. *sell*—*sale*—*saleable*—*saleably*), the adverb is still almost always the longest unit because it is formed by the addition of the (Germanic) suffix *-ly*.

However, in Japanese, it is arguable that the shortest unit is the *noun* (at least for Sino-Japanese compounds; cf. Donovan 2012). Adverbs, which are formed simply by changing the

¹ Source language–target language. Other abbreviations used in this paper: ST (source text); TT (target text).

ending of *i*-adjectives to *-ku* (e.g., 白い *shiroi* ‘white’ to 白く *shiroku* ‘whitely’) or *na*-adjectives to *ni* (e.g., 静か^な *shizuka na* ‘quiet’ to 静か^に *shizuka ni* ‘quietly’), are resultantly the same length as the original adjective, different from English. Thus I have observed in the two published English translations of Kawabata Yasunari’s 1925 novella 『伊豆の踊子』 *Izu no odoriko*, the case study for this paper, a shift between parts of speech, presumably either to match the length of the original utterance, to follow the general TL literary convention of concision,² or both. As this commonly results in a more compact and/or simpler element than the direct part-of-speech equivalent in the TL would have been, I term this technique ‘downshifting’.³ A possible example is how both Edward Seidensticker (Kawabata 1974/1997)⁴ and J. Martin Holman (Kawabata 1998) convert 白く *shiroku* ‘whitely’ in the opening sentence of *Izu no odoriko* to “white”.⁵

Second, when we consider the various denotative meanings attributable to words within the lexis of a particular part of speech, we are talking of a difference in lexicalisation. For example, ‘girl’ and ‘woman’ are both nouns describing females, ‘female’ being the superordinate term of which they are overlapping subsets (or hyponyms), but they have different lexical delineations (or ‘segmentations’), and these delineations in turn differ from their corresponding forms in Japanese—女の子・娘・少女 *onna no ko/musume/shōjo* and 女 (の人) *onna (no hito)* respectively.⁶

Third, and most subtly, when two languages possess terms that are analogous both morphologically and semantically, but differ slightly in their applications, boundaries and/or associations (for example ‘maiden’ and *shōjo*), we are talking of a difference in lexical connotation.

While at first sight it would seem that the part-of-speech differences pose the greatest challenge (considering issues of length, among others), shifting among different parts of speech, as the above *shiroku* “white” example suggests, is relatively straightforward; in fact it is often the most subtle lexical incompatibilities that cause translators the most difficulty,

² Cf. George Orwell’s so-called “rules” of good writing in his 1946 essay ‘Politics and the English Language’, among them: “(ii) Never use a long word where a short one will do. (iii) If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out” (1970: 170).

³ Laviosa refers to “simplification” (along with explicitation and normalisation) as one of “the three principal universals” of translation studies (2002: 43ff.).

⁴ Hereafter, when there is a distinction to be made, I shall refer to Seidensticker’s earlier translation as Seidensticker 1, and his later revised translation as Seidensticker 2 (abbreviated to S1 and S2 respectively). Holman’s translation is abbreviated to H.

⁵ ST: 「道がつづら折りになって、いよいよ天城峠に近づいたと思う頃、雨脚が杉の密林を白く染めながら、すさまじい早さで麓から私を追って来た。」 S2: “With alarming speed, a shower swept toward me from the foot of the mountain, touching the cedar forests white as the road began to wind up into the pass.” H: “About the time the road began to wind and I realized that I was finally near Amagi Pass, a curtain of rain swept up after me at a terrific speed from the foot of the mountain, painting the dense cedar forests white.” The change of course also avoids the awkwardness of ‘whitely’, but the adverb is a possible form, appearing in literature.

⁶ The fact that Japanese often uses the derivative term for girl 女の子 *onna no ko* lit. ‘woman child’, a hyponym of *onna*, at least as often as the synechdochical kinship term 娘 *musume* lit. ‘daughter’, 少女 *shōjo* ‘maiden’, and the more formal 女子 *joshi*, and has a seemingly redundant form like *onna no hito* lit. ‘woman person’ as an alternative to *onna*, bespeaks the wide lexical field of the term *onna*.

since they may defy ready replacement and thus are likely either to be lost, or rendered awkwardly. The word 女 *onna* may be translated as ‘woman’ in English without a moment’s thought, but when the ostensible plural form 女たち (also 女達) *onna-tachi* is used to mean ‘women and girls’, as it is in *Izu no odoriko* on occasion (see Table 2),⁷ it becomes clear that lexicalisations differ in their denotative semantic boundaries (let alone those of lexical connotation).

Lexical connotation is in effect a question of stylistic choices. Presented with a ST in which the same term is repeated many times within a short space of text, many translators avoid reusing the same term in the TL, as if to do so would be a stylistic faux pas, in line with the Fowler brothers’ observed strictures of “elegant variation” in English writing (H. W. & F. G. Fowler (1922)).⁸ The exemption to this approach will be when the translator determines that the original author is deliberately using the repetition as a stylistic device, one which should accordingly be reflected in the TT.

I shall now consider how the denotative and connotative elements of lexical segmentation affect Japanese-to-English translation in *Izu no odoriko*, as exemplified in the treatment of the terms *onna* and *musume*.

1. 女 *onna* ‘woman’

Perhaps the single biggest issue of interlingual difference in lexical segmentation in *Izu no odoriko* arises with this term. Certainly, one can find examples where the Japanese and English senses, and the translators’ choices, coincide:

Table 1

| ST | Direct Translation | Seidensticker 2 | Holman |
|---|--|--|---|
| 180. ⁹ 女の金切声が時々稲妻のように闇夜に鋭く通った。 | A <u>woman’s</u> shrill voice sometimes pierced the dark night like lightning. | Now and again a shrill <u>woman’s</u> voice came across the darkness like the crack of a whip. | Occasionally a <u>woman’s</u> high, piercing voice rent the night like a thunderbolt. |

However, such agreement is rare. In the majority of instances, SL and TL usage differs, and more often than not so do the translators’ choices, hinting at the difficulties involved in reconciling those differences with the demands of the text. Here is a key example:

213. 仄暗い湯殿の奥から、突然裸の女が走り出して来たかと思うと、脱衣場の突鼻に川岸へ飛び下りそうな格好で立ち、両手を一ぱいに伸して何か叫んでいる。

⁷ Martin notes that “the meaning of the [plural] suffixes [e.g., *-tachi*] is not plurality of the noun itself; but rather the reference is to a COLLECTIVE that includes—or centers on—the noun.” (1975: 145; original emphasis; my interpolations.)

⁸ Indeed, when I revised this sentence I changed my second use of “repeat[ing]” to “reusing” to avoid the repetition.

⁹ ST numbering refers to the sentence numbering in Kawabata (1985). The use of § before a number denotes ‘sentence’. To enhance readability, I have not included page numbers for the translations.

Dir.: *From out of the dim bathroom, suddenly a naked woman came running, and, at the edge of the changing area stood in a pose as if to jump down to the riverbank, stretching both hands all the way and yelling something.*

S: One small figure ran out into the sunlight and stood for a moment at the edge of the platform calling something to us, arms raised as though for a plunge into the river.

H: Suddenly a naked woman ran out from the rear of the dark bathhouse. She stood at the edge of the changing area as if she might come flying down the bank. She was shouting with her arms outstretched.

The treatment of *onna* is especially sensitive since, in what can be seen as the crux of the novella, the author is creating an emotive sketch from the student narrator's reaction to the sudden appearance of the naked dancing girl. At this moment the narrator realises that the girl is younger than he thought, fundamentally changing his attitude towards her. By using the word *onna*, Kawabata cleverly signals the ambiguity of their relationship. *Onna* means 'woman', but this is not a womanly figure waving at him artlessly, rather that of a child. However, for a moment of psychological confusion she represents a primal female figure, resolving at last into a girl. Seidensticker latches onto the ambiguity, rendering *onna* as the neutral, albeit androgynous, "figure" and erasing subsequent deictic markers by using compressed forms ("and [~~she~~] stood" ... "[~~she was~~] calling" ... "[~~her~~] arms raised") that would otherwise have established the gender within the sentence. Holman translates *onna* directly as "woman" and reinforces the gendering with two uses of "she", which begin the following two short sentences.

Another example provides further clues to the semantic boundaries of *onna*:

441. すると踊子は唐突に女の名前を二つ三つあげて、私に見当のつかない話を始めた。

Dir.: *Having done this, the dancing girl suddenly cited two or three women's names, and began a talk that I could not follow.*

S: She mentioned two or three girls' names that meant nothing to me, and rambled on with a string of reminiscences.

H: The dancing girl mentioned two or three girl's [*sic?*] names and began talking about something I could not follow.

Here it is particularly interesting that Kawabata uses 女の名前 *onna no namae* 'women's names' in a situation where the dancing girl is evidently talking about her school friends, who are girls rather than women. This suggests how the Japanese concept of 'girl' can at times be seen as a diminutive of 'woman' rather than a separate concept, in the same way that 男の子 *otoko no ko* 'boy' is a diminutive of 男 *otoko* 'man'.¹⁰

¹⁰ A completely separate issue, which will not be addressed in this paper, is why 女の子 *onna no ko* only appears twice in the ST (§58, 590), while *musume* (see below) is used 18 times to mean 'girl'.

§441 above provides a rare example where the translators agree on how to treat *onna*. A comparison of the lexical spread of Seidensticker's and Holman's renderings of *onna* across the complete list of instances¹¹ reveals the extent of overall divergence:

Table 2: Instances of 女 *onna* in the ST and their translations

| ST | Seidensticker | Holman |
|---|-------------------|----------------------|
| 15. 女 <i>onna</i> 'woman' | women | female [as modifier] |
| 21. 若い女 <i>wakai onna</i> 'young women' | young women | older girls |
| 24. 若い女 | ∅ | girls |
| 54. 女 | travelers | female [as modifier] |
| 61. 女の <i>onna no</i> 'woman's' | women | woman's |
| 92. 女達 <i>onna-tachi</i> 'women' | the women | the women |
| 98. 女たち <i>onna-tachi</i> 'women' | women | women |
| 112. 女 | woman | girl |
| 115. 女 | woman | her companion |
| 140. 女 | ∅ | girls |
| 174. 女の | women's | women's |
| 177. 女の | women's | women's |
| 180. 女の | woman's | woman's |
| 213. 女 | figure | woman |
| 229. 女達 | the two of them | they |
| 246. 女達 | the performers | the girls |
| 311. 女ども <i>onna-domo</i> 'women' | they | the girls |
| 312. 女たち | the three of them | the girls |
| 317. 若い女 | young women | girls |
| 322. 女 | women | girls |
| 441. 女の | girls' | girl's |
| 454. 女達 | the women | the girls |
| 455. 女 | women | women |
| 457. 女達 | the women | the women |
| 476. 女達 | the other women | the other women |
| 529. 女 | women | women |
| 555. 女達 | the women | the women |

Note that many instances of *onna* are explicit plural forms, with the suffixes *-tachi* or *-domo*, adding another level of complexity to their lexicality, although plurality is the only area in which the translators tend to agree on their renderings. There is considerable use of “woman”/“women” as a translation for *onna(tachi)*, but this does not necessarily match the singular/plural markers in the ST, and the translators rarely use the same form, except for the nine cases in which they both use “women”. Seidensticker uses the term “woman”/“women” 18 times out of 27 occurrences in the ST, and Holman only 12 times. Holman appears to favour “girl” much more than Seidensticker, using it 11 times to Seidensticker's one. Let us

¹¹ I exclude here the set epithet 四十女 *yonjū-onna* ‘woman in her forties’, which both translators render consistently as “woman (in her forties, etc.)”. (Nine instances: §100, 103, 117, 123, 132, 136, 226, 274, 276.) This expression is considered in detail below.

now compare the translators' treatment of the companion term 娘 *musume*.

2. 娘 *musume* 'daughter/girl'

Musume differs from *onna* in that it has two main denotations, the base meaning 'daughter' and the derived sense 'girl' (with both reflected semantically in the *kanji* character 娘, whose lefthand component is the 女偏 *onna-hen* 'woman radical'). In fact, the former meaning does not appear at all in *Izu no odoriko*, though the older woman is referred to as the mother of the girl Chiyoko. Once again, the translators lexicalise the term across the range of girl ↔ woman, as this juxtaposition of representative examples shows:

104. 「高等学校の学生さんよ。」と、上の娘が踊子に囁いた。

Dir.: "He is a high-school student!" the oldest girl whispered to the dancing girl.

S2: 'He's a high-school boy,' one of the young women whispered to the little dancer, giggling as I glanced back.

H: "He's an upper-school student," the oldest girl whispered to the dancing girl.

126. 娘達は一時に私を見たが、至極なんでもない顔をして、少し羞かしそうにしていた。

Dir.: The girls once looked at me, but, making a face of extreme indifference, were acting a little embarrassed.

S: The younger women looked at me silently and a little shyly, as if the matter were no concern of theirs.

H: The girls all glanced at me at the same time. They stopped talking, their faces seemingly indifferent. Then their gaze turned to embarrassment.

267. 彼女は中の娘と一つの床に寝ていた。

Dir.: She was sleeping with the middle girl in one bed.

S1: The dancing girl lay almost at my feet, sharing a quilt with the youngest of the women.

H: She was sharing a futon with the middle girl.

301. もう一人の百合子と云う十七の娘だけが大島産れで雇いだとのことだった。

Dir.: Only the other girl called Yuriko was Ōshima-born and was an employee.

S: The other girl, Yuriko, was a sort of maid. She was sixteen, and the only one among them who was really from Oshima.

H: The other girl, Yuriko, seventeen years old, was the only native of Oshima. She was employed by them.

Let us compare Seidensticker and Holman's diction across the complete set of translations of *musume*:

Table 3: Instances of 娘 *musume* in the ST and their translations

| ST | Seidensticker | Holman |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| 20. 娘 <i>musume</i> ‘girl’ | beauties | girls |
| 101. 上の娘 ... 中の娘 <i>ue no musume ... naka no musume</i> ‘eldest girl’ ... ‘middle girl’ | the two younger women [conflated] | The oldest girl ... The middle girl |
| 104. 上の娘 | one of the young women | the oldest girl |
| 126. 娘達 <i>musume-tachi</i> ‘girls’ | the younger women | the girls |
| 155. 芸人の娘 <i>geinin no musume</i> ‘entertainer girls’ | one of the women | the entertainers ... one of them |
| 223. 娘盛り <i>musume-zakari</i> ‘girl in her prime’ | girl | young woman in her prime |
| 224. 上の娘 | the older of the two young women | the oldest girl |
| 229. 上の娘 | the younger woman | girl |
| 238. 娘が三人 <i>musume ga sannin</i> ‘three girls’ | S1 the younger women S2 they | the three girls |
| 249. 娘たち ‘girls’ | the women | the girls |
| 251. 娘達 ‘girls’ | the women | the girls |
| 267. 中の娘 | the youngest of the women | the middle girl |
| 272. 上の娘 | the older of the young women | the oldest girl |
| 293. 上の娘 | the older of the young women | the oldest girl |
| 301. 娘 | girl | girl |
| 341. 娘達 ‘girls’ | the women | the girls |
| 347. 生娘 <i>kimusume</i> ‘maiden’ | no one has touched her | an innocent virgin |
| 389. 娘達 | S1 the girls S2 the three younger ones | the girls |

Out of the total of 18 instances there is a high level of consistency within each translator’s set of lexical choices. The clear difference between them—Seidensticker’s ‘woman’ (12 uses out of 18) vs. Holman’s ‘girl’ (16 out of 18)—indicates not only how the translator chooses to lexicalise *musume* in the context of this story, but also perhaps its lexical relationship to *onna* in the same context. One wonders whether Seidensticker is influenced by the lexical range of *onna-tachi* elsewhere in the text and has decided to preserve the connection between the older woman and the other females by putting them all on a continuum of ‘woman’: if so, the girls are in effect defined by the presence of the older woman in their midst. On the other hand, Holman continually assigns the normal equivalent ‘girl’ to *musume*, effectively ignoring those cases where he translates *onna* as ‘woman’ when it refers to the girls. Hence in summary there is apparently a strong relationship between the terms *onna* and *musume* in Seidensticker’s mind, but not in Holman’s.

§21 gives us another way of looking at the lexicalisation of *onna* when the group is referenced:

21. 踊子の連れは四十代の女が一人、若い女が二人、ほかに長岡温泉の宿屋の印半纏を着た二十五六の男がいた。

Dir.: The dancing girl’s companions were one woman in her forties, two young women, plus a man of

twenty-five or twenty-six who wore the livery of a Nagaoka spa inn.

S2: Two other young women were with her, and a man in his mid-twenties, wearing the livery of a Nagaoka inn. A woman in her forties presided over the group.

H: The dancing girl was accompanied by a woman in her forties, two older girls, and a man of about twenty-five, who was wearing a jacket with the insignia of Nagaoka Hot Springs on it.

We can view the females of the group on a continuum of age, from the dancing girl at the lowest-age end of the range, to the woman in her forties at the other end. In §21 it appears that Seidensticker's point of reference is the oldest female: not only does he refer to this woman as a "woman in her forties", but also characterises the others as "young women", and in fact minimises the dancing girl's presence in the sentence to "her". On the other hand, Holman appears to make the dancing girl his point of reference when referring to the group as a whole, as he contrasts the "woman in her forties" with the "two older girls", the deictic 'older' referring back of course to contrast with the "dancing girl" who is mentioned at the beginning of the sentence. Thus if one may talk of differing lexical 'centres of gravity', in reference to the females as a group, Seidensticker's is the oldest female, while Holman's is the youngest. In keeping with the unstable nature of the translations of *onna*, this pattern is not consistent across all examples (cf. §92, 98 and 457, where both translators use "women").

Further, the far greater range of translations of *onna* above compared to those of *musume* suggests that *onna* is much more problematic for the translators, at least within the context of this text, with its unwieldy grouping of one adult woman and three post-adolescent or pubescent females. One could posit as a general rule of thumb that longitudinally consistent translations suggest that a given term is relatively easy to translate, while great variation among them may indicate a problematic term.

The analogy of a semantic 'centre of gravity' could be extended to incorporate the image of an atom about which electrons are flying. Electrons seek the lowest possible 'shell' within which they can spin in a stable orbit, but when excited by the application of energy, they jump to higher shell levels, before eventually returning to the stable level. Similarly, if a term has many potential shells or levels of representation (i.e., lexicalisations), it may be more likely to be unstable and oscillate between them when energised by its placement among other atoms of meaning (i.e., words or expressions). This image thus lends even greater resonance to the application of the term *multivalent*¹² (i.e., polysemous) with regard to translation.¹³

Given that the 'woman/girl'≈*onna/musume* lexical sets are a touchstone for lexical issues in the present discussion, it is worth looking at one more particularly involved example to finish this section:

¹² *OED*: "Having or susceptible of many applications, interpretations, meanings, or values."

¹³ One might similarly be able to apply the Heisenberg uncertainty principle to the issue of ambiguity.

Table 4

| ST | Direct Translation | Seidensticker 2 | Holman |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| 100. 四十女は子犬を抱いていた。 | <i>'forties woman'</i> | The older woman held a puppy, the two younger women carried large | The woman in her forties was holding a puppy. |
| 101. 上の娘が風呂敷包、中の娘が柳行李、それぞれ大きい荷物を持っていた。 | <i>'oldest girl ... middle girl'</i> | bundles, one wicker, the other wrapped in a kerchief. | The oldest girl was toting a cloth bundle. The middle girl also had a wicker trunk. |
| 102. 踊子は太鼓とその枠を負っていた。 | <i>'dancing girl'</i> | The girl had her drum and its stand. | The dancing girl had a drum and frame on her back. |
| 103. 四十女もぼつぼつ私に話しかけた。 | <i>'forties woman'</i> | The older woman presently joined in the conversation. | Little by little, the woman, who seemed to be in her forties, began to talk to me. |

If the ‘woman in her forties’ plays a slightly forbidding, proscriptive role in the story of *Izu no odoriko*, acting as she does as a representative of societal mores in the way she chaperones the dancing girl, and is bluff rather than effusive in her dealings with the narrator’s class-hopping interloper, her presence looms equally in a linguistic sense. Not only does the character influence Seidensticker’s approach to the rendering of the non-epithetic *onna*, as we have seen above; it also presents something of a translation conundrum in the mouthful that is ‘woman in her forties’. In a clear editing oversight that reflects this awkwardness, Holman first refers to her as the “woman in her forties” (§100) and then only three sentences later notes redundantly “Little by little, the woman, who seemed to be in her forties, began to talk to me.” But from this point on in the text, Holman relegates 四十女 *yon-jū onna* lit. ‘forties woman’ to “the older woman” or “the woman”. Seidensticker, characteristically, expunges the age reference, referring to her exclusively as “the older woman” or “the woman” after introducing her approximate age in §21. Holman’s more frequent use of ‘girl’ for *onna* may serve to emphasise the age gap between the females.

Seidensticker also has little time for the middle females, conflating ‘oldest girl’ and ‘middle girl’ into “the two younger women” and thereby deeming the “older woman” to be the lexical determiner of the set ‘female’. Holman keeps “oldest girl” and “middle girl”, allowing him to shade smoothly into “dancing girl” in the next sentence and thereby characterise her position in the age hierarchy.

Thus the overall contrast to be drawn between the translations is Seidensticker’s focus on ‘woman’ and Holman’s on ‘girl’, which, as indicated above, sets the tone for the rest of the text in their dealings with *onna* particularly.

Conclusion

‘Lexical identity’ can refer both to the characteristics of a particular language and to how its users—including translators—perceive these. As the sliding scale of lexicalisation shifts from

denotative to connotative meaning, the translator's decisions increasingly come down to personal decisions about stylistic felicity. At the same time, however, the lexical segmentation of a particularly pervasive term such as *onna*—which is, uncoincidentally, an aspect of characterisation in the ST—can reveal translators' assumptions about the characterisation both of the term and the person it represents in the story, assumptions which involve personal reactions to the text in that they are likely to be more unconsciously than consciously determined.

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