[研究論文]

Highways and Shortcuts in Translating Japanese Literature: Revisiting Nida's Formal and Dynamic Equivalence

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Kawabata Yasunari, Japan's first Nobel prize-winner for literature, published his first major work of fiction 『伊豆の踊子』 *Izu no odoriko* in 1926, when he was in his mid-twenties. It is a coming-of-age tale and a largely innocent love story, based on the author's real-life wanderings among the spa towns of Izu Peninsula in central Japan as a student.

At the beginning of the story, the student narrator unexpectedly comes across a troupe of travelling entertainers in a teahouse—a group that he has met earlier in his journey—and has an awkward encounter with the dancing girl who is the focus of his interest. On a pretext he takes up with the troupe and travels with them down the centre of the Izu Peninsula, befriending the dancer's elder brother. He is attracted to the dancer, but when he sees her naked in a communal outdoor bath, he realises she is still just a child, and suddenly feels nothing but pure affection for her. They share a number of experiences together, though conversing little, and her attachment to him grows. When he has to return to Tokyo on a ferry from Shimoda, she forlornly sees him off at the wharf, waving a white cloth until she has disappeared from view.

Early in the story, the narrator character is asked by his travelling companions, the itinerant entertainers, to make a choice between taking a steep shortcut over a mountain, or the easier, but naturally longer, highway route. He chooses the former, and in so doing comes to learn more about the character of the dancing girl with whom he is infatuated.

The act of translating—as with writing in general—is all about choices (constrained or otherwise), which at the discourse level are paradigmatic (choosing among potential words) and syntagmatic (choosing among potential word orders and then combining these word

selections),[1] and through these choices the 'character' of the text is formed. A direct spatial analogy is the Cartesian grid, with lexical choices lined up vertically on the y-axis—the paradigm—and combination choices arranged horizontally on the x-axis—the syntagm. Every word choice renders moot—and mute—all other potential lexical choices; every concatenation or ordering of multiple word choices closes off other potential avenues of development, and emphasises some lexical elements at the cost of others. There are many paths to the same nominal end in literary translation—the "desirable result", as Newmark phrases it, being the reproduction of the "equivalent effect" of the original in the mind of the target-language reader (1988: 48).[2]

One may gain the impression that many professional translators are probably not greatly concerned about how they get from A to B—from source text to a translation—as long as the paths they find or construct prove sound enough for the purpose. In fact, they may feel that spending too much time looking down at their footwork (i.e., engaging in textual analysis) could lead to a stumble and a step off the path into blind alleys. Added to that, the possible paths that one can take between Japanese and English are potentially more numerous than those between two much more closely related languages such as French and English, simply because the linguistic and cultural 'distance' is greater.

Let us consider this issue of difference for a moment. English and Japanese are alike in that they are magpie languages, borrowing extensively from others, although these days it is probably truer of Japanese than of English. English has largely switched to providing shiny objects, as it were, for other languages to collect. However, beyond this eclectic linguistic acquisitiveness, the similarities between English and Japanese dissipate significantly.

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[1] See Lidov (1999: 53–55) for a discussion of Saussure's, Barthes' and Jakobson's uses of these terms. Jakobson replaced Saussure's 'paradigm' and 'syntagm' with 'selection' and 'combination'.

[2] See also Landers: "The prevailing view among most, though not all, literary translators is that a translation should reproduce in the TL reader the same emotional and psychological reaction produced in the original SL reader." (2001: 49.)

The greatest syntactic difference is that English verbs follow the subject (SVO), whereas Japanese verbs follow the object (SOV). The effect such different orders have on literary style should not be underestimated. In English, the object or complement is anticipated, whereas in Japanese, the verb is. Hence, because of the differing channels of thought of their languages, the English reader is constantly encouraged to guess *that which something is being done to* while the Japanese reader anticipates *what is being done to it*. Compare 'I kissed … a frog' to 蛙に…キスした *kaeru ni ... kisu shita*, which, preserving the original syntax, would translate as '(I) frog to … kiss did'.[3] Leech and Short describe this phenomenon as "end-focus", whereby

> there is a general tendency for given information to precede new information: that is, for the speaker to proceed from a starting point of information which is assumed to be shared by the hearer, to information which is assumed to be 'news' to the hearer, and therefore communicatively more salient. (1981: 212)

Martin (1975: 37) confirms the same principle operates in Japanese—"novel or critical information is saved for the end of a Japanese sentence"—but as the verb (or predicate) always comes at the end of a Japanese sentence, the reader/listener will still have to wait for the *action* (and any temporal or modal characterisations of that action, as well as whether it *did* or *did not* happen) till the end of the sentence,[4] while this is not the case in English. Furthermore, Leech and Short consider the reader's expectation of end-focus an important normative stylistic issue: "writing is less successful (all other things being equal) to the extent

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[3] Japanese can rephrase to more closely match the English order, but this so-called cleft structure (Martin 1975: 863) is marked: キスしたのは蛙だ *kisu shita no wa kaeru da* dir. 'what (I) kissed was a frog'.

[4] Compare the following sentences, in which modality, tense and negation are marked at the end of the sentence in Japanese and in the middle of the sentence in English. 彼女と話す。 *Kanojo to hanasu.* '(I) (will) talk to her.' 彼女と話すだろう。 *Kanojo to hanasu darō.* '(I) may talk to her.' 彼女と話した。 *Kanojo to hanashita.* '(I) talked to her.' 彼女と話しただろう。 *Kanojo to hanashita darō.* '(I) may have talked to her.' 彼女と話さなかった。 *Kanojo to hanasanakatta.* '(I) didn't talk to her.' 彼女と話さなかっただろう。 *Kanojo to hanasanakatta darō.* '(I) may not have talked to her.'

that it frustrates this expectation" (1981: 214). Thus there is likely to be pressure on the translator to satisfy the expectation of end-focus, even when this goes against the ST syntax.

Seidensticker makes his own observations on comparative syntax:

> An English sentence hastens to the main point and for the most part lets the qualifications follow after. A Japanese sentence prefers to keep one guessing. The last element in the sentence reveals whether it is positive or negative, declaratory or interrogative. "I do not think that …" begins an English sentence; "… this I do not think" ends a Japanese sentence, having coyly held off the fact of belief or disbelief to the end. (1989: 143)

Related to the grammatical ordering of lexical elements is the frequent, much-remarked absence of a subject in Japanese.[5] Repetition of pronouns, being grammatically unnecessary in Japanese, would appear unjustifiably marked (i.e., foregrounded) and clumsy in literary writing, and hence the Japanese author either largely dispenses with a subject marker, uses some epithet (such as 踊子 *odoriko*, 'the dancing girl'), or synthesises a combination of the two.

All these choices have implications for the English translator concerning *comprehension* and *rendering*. If the subject is absent, the translator must deduce it from the context and whatever verbal markers (such as in-group/out-group markers) may be present (a question of comprehension). Sometimes the Japanese writer wants to leave the subject deliberately vague, and then the poor translator is forced to make what could be seen as a 'vulgarly explicit' attribution, emphatically closing off one possible pathway (a question of rendering). On the other hand, if the Japanese makes frequent use of epithets, this has the effect in English that multiple pronouns have in Japanese—namely, it sounds clumsy in its repetitiousness. No matter how delightful a character the 'dancing girl' may be, and no matter how important the

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[5] Martin: "The frequency with which a subject is NOT explicitly stated […] may be as high as 74 percent of the sentences in a discourse […]." (1975: 185; original emphasis.)

'dancing girl' may be to the plot, there are only so many times the English reader wants to hear about the 'dancing girl' in the same sentence. Martin sums up the situation thus:

> In English we avoid repeating a noun once it has been mentioned, substituting an anaphoric pronoun after the first mention. In Japanese there is no stricture against repeating the noun any number of times; on the other hand, obvious elements [e.g., pronouns] are freely omitted from a sentence. (1975: 1075; my interpolation)

Thus the translator needs to come up with alternative epithets that can be cycled through to provide 'elegant variation'[6] (the dancing girl, the dancer, the girl, the young woman, etc.), and/or replace some with pronouns, which are unmarked in English. The moment one reaches for English's marvellous grabbag of synonyms, however, the form of the original is put at risk. If an author uses repetition deliberately, say for rhythmic or euphonic accentuation, swapping some words for synonyms will attenuate the effect. Thus the translator might be prudent not to convert something deliberately marked into something smoother to read, unmarked—and anodyne.

Returning to our metaphorical fork in the road, one can say that a translator like Seidensticker has an instinct for the shortcut: he likes to translate by omission. He readily acknowledges that in three of his translations of Kawabata's works he translates the polysemous verb 思う *omou* 'think' in "nineteen instances […] by nothing at all. I do not feel apologetic about the nineteen" (Seidensticker 2002: 123). He is interested in elegance, concision, and, above all, rhythm, for he senses these qualities are what marks literature:

> Explanation takes time, and taking time slows down the rhythm, and when you are concerned with a

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[6] Leech and Short (1981: 244) call such an English cohesive device "elegant variation", presumably after Fowler and Fowler (1922), although ironically the Fowlers call the device a "vice" (1922: 211), stating that "'elegant variation' is generally a worse fault than monotony […]." (1922: 217.) Seidensticker himself was aware of the term (2002: 123), although "not […] when I was at work on the translations".

literary work, the rhythm is extremely important. (Richie 2000a: 21)

Thus it is natural for him to relocate the source literature in such a familiar linguistic landscape as English rhythmic patterning, rather than trying to 'explain' it through additions or superficially imitating its ST form. One can again use Nida's term 'dynamic equivalence' to approximate Seidensticker's agenda. He is more concerned with capturing the spirit of the original, both in terms of content and style, than paying obeisance to the letter of it. He looks for cultural equivalents where available, and uses linguistic shortcuts where they are not.

However, the biggest potential weakness of Seidensticker's selective approach can be observed in his first translation of *Izu no odoriko*, which appeared in volume 195 of *The Atlantic* magazine in December 1954. Large sections of text have been excised, ranging from entire scenes to single adjectives. Seidensticker claimed that the cuts were due to space limitations, but only restored the missing text in his 1997 version—and even then, not completely. Seidensticker is on record as regretting both the omissions and his not signalling the cuts, but for decades this bowdlerised version was the only representation of *Izu no odoriko* available to English readers, and when they read it, they were hardly viewing Kawabata's work in anything like its entirety.[7]

Contrast this with Holman's inclusive, arguably 'pedestrian' approach, where he hews more closely to the path of the original, tending to produce longer, more comprehensive sentences that may at times, however, sound bland. In Nida's rather overgeneralising terms, Holman translation makes greater use of 'formal equivalence', tending to preserve the form, lexical and syntactic, as much as possible. Ironically, however, his title for *Izu no odoriko*, *The Dancing Girl of Izu*, is longer, more expansive and more explanatory than the original.

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[7] Watson (1991) imputed more sinister motives to Seidensticker's omissions, claiming that he worked with the CIA to censor elements of the text that might run counter to US propaganda in the early years of the Cold War, but Seidensticker, though Richie (2000b), denied this, saying "the cuts were solely for reasons of layout".

With Seidensticker's title *The Izu Dancer*, the going, as it were, is harder, with a steeper learning curve required of the reader to grasp that 'Izu' is a place name, while it is relatively clear in Holman's formulation. Similarly, the gender of Seidensticker's dancer is ambiguous, whereas it is clear in Holman's. But arguably the *dancer* is svelter, smaller, purer, and carries herself with more propriety than the worldly and potentially seductive 'dancing girl'. And, ironically again, the title is closer in syntax to the original than Holman's.

I shall next update Nida's categorisations of translation approaches and apply them to Seidensticker's and Holman's overall translation viewpoints. Nida's binary pair of dynamic and formal equivalence, much like Schleiermacher's foreignisation and domestication, has grown increasingly unsatisfactory as translation studies has developed and widened its own perspective through sociological and historical contextualisation to include such macro-level approaches as intertextuality,[8] but it still remains an important starting point, and, further, a 'weigh-station' to which to return from time to time to test the viability of theories that emerge from such top-down polysystem approaches.[9]

In his ambitiously titled book *Towards a Science of Translating* Nida explains dynamic equivalence as creating an equivalent effect for the TL reader to that induced in the SL reader when reading the ST:

> One way of defining a D-E translation is to describe it as 'the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message.' This type of definition contains three essential terms: (1) *equivalent*, which points toward the source-language message; (2) *natural*, which points toward the receptor language; and (3)

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[8] Hermans: "Apart from the relation between source and target texts there [are] other relations to be explored: between different versions of the same or similar originals, between translations and non-translated texts, and between translation and discourses about translation. […] Lefevere used system concepts to point up literary "control mechanisms". These he described in terms of poetics, patronage and ideology, which he regarded as more important constraints on translation than linguistic differences." (1999: 42-3.)

[9] "The polysystem concept, which views literature as a network of elements which interact with each other, is meant to serve as a tool for investigating why translators behave in this or that way, or why some translations prove more successful than others." (Hermans 1999: 32.)

closest, which binds the two orientations together on the basis of the highest degree of approximation.

(1964: 166; original emphasis)

Let us examine those three key terms more closely. The term 'correspondence' is often preferred to 'equivalence', since the latter can be misleading or unhelpful.[10] People may consider equivalence "as a statement to the effect that a particular meaning, form or structure in language A is the same as (or can be equated with) a particular meaning, form or structure in language B" (Shore 2001: 251). However, what, or who, determines what is "the same" and what is not? As Pym points out, a circular logic is at work: "translation equivalence is what is observed to be equivalent" (in Baker & Saldana 2008: 99). Correspondence, on the other hand, does not imply some sort of mathematical equivalence, and allows for multiple possible correspondences that are equally valid (Shore 2001: 252). Furthermore, there is an implication in Nida's explanation that "*equivalent* […] points toward the source-language message" that a given word in the SL has a fixed, unnegotiable meaning, yet we know that lexical meaning is ever-evolving. Moreover, determining whether one term in the TL is 'equivalent' to the ST term is so context-dependent that we cannot achieve this determination simply by working out what the SL message is.[11]

Second, Nida says "natural […] points toward the receptor language". 'Natural' is of course as vague a term as 'equivalent': is the degree of 'naturalness' determined by how 'invisible' (unobtrusive) the translator is, how un-translation-like the text reads, or how fluent, artistic, or convincing it appears? Venuti considers Nida's use of the term problematic for a

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[10] Hermans: "The more closely one looks at what constitutes 'equivalence' in translation, the more problematical the notion becomes. […] A strict application of the concept as it is used, say, in mathematics, is obviously unworkable. It would imply reversibility and interchangeability, and we know that translation is a one-directional event involving asymmetrical linguistic and cultural worlds. Weaker definitions suggesting similarity rather than synonymy led to the use of terms like correspondence, congruence or matching." (1999: 47-48.)

[11] Venuti: "Meaning is a plural and contingent relation, not an unchanging unified essence, and therefore a translation cannot be judged according to mathematics-based concepts of semantic equivalence or one-to-one correspondence." (1995: 18.)

more serious reason, namely cultural hegemony:

> [W]hen Nida asserts that "an easy and natural style in translating, despite the extreme difficulty of producing it […] is nevertheless essential to producing in the ultimate receptors a response similar to that of the original receptors" […], he is in fact imposing the English-language valorization of transparent discourse on every foreign culture, masking a basic disjunction between the source- and target-language texts which puts into question the possibility of eliciting a "similar" response. (1995: 21)

Finally, 'closest' is another vexed modifier, for, like 'natural', it is extremely difficult to quantify what might constitute Nida's ideal "highest degree of approximation". Thus his succinct and superficially attainable "closest natural equivalent to the source-language message" transpires to be a highly problematic definition of a so-called dynamic-equivalent translation.

To alleviate such problems, I shall refer to what Nida labelled 'dynamic-equivalence translation' as 'TL-orientated translation' (Landers 2001: 51). This term has the advantage over 'dynamic equivalence' of, first of all, foregoing the questionable noun 'equivalence'. Such a translation does not seek equivalence so much as capturing the 'spirit' of the original—and spirit is a purposely vague, yet lively, term. It implies a reinvigoration of the original text in a form that chimes with the language, culture and era of its new audience. That Seidensticker's translation is orientated towards his native language is evidenced in the many changes he makes in his updated translation of 1997. These range from subtle shifts in punctuation to alterations in phrasing and word choice. At the same time, he remains unafraid of omitting elements of the original text where he feels they impede his vision of the text for the non-Japanese reader. Further, 'natural' is replaced by 'effective', where the effect and affect of the original are conveyed so as to produce a corresponding (but never entirely equivalent) response in the TL reader. In a TL-orientated translation, the idea of a 'closest'

translation is antithetical to the *skopos* (Vermeer's term for a 'goal') [12] of an effective translation.

How, then, does Nida's contrasting definition of 'formal' or 'functional equivalence' hold up to similar examination? Formal equivalence, he says,

> attempts to reproduce several formal elements, including: (1) grammatical units, (2) consistency in word usage, and (3) meanings in terms of the source context. The reproduction of grammatical units may consist in: (a) translating nouns by nouns, verbs by verbs, etc.; (b) keeping all phrases and sentences intact (i.e. not splitting up and readjusting the units); and (c) preserving all formal indicators, e.g. marks of punctuation, paragraph breaks, and poetic indentation. (1964: 159)

The term 'reproduce' has held up better over time than other earlier terms such as 'mimic', 'copy' or 'mirror', because it embodies the possibility of (organic) renewal as well as imitation. One must be constantly reminded that formal equivalence is never identity. Given that caveat, a translation can indeed find similar grammatical units (using a verb for a verb, for example); keep multi-word structures intact; and preserve formatting. Looking at Holman's translation, we see he has made a considerable effort to match the lengths of his sentences to those of the original; he has tended to retain lesser adverbial phrases where Seidensticker has often apparently deemed them unimportant; and he retains proper nouns such as place names, no matter how obscure. One example from the ST and its translations serves to illustrate all of these contrasts:

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[12] "Collaborating in the communicative act in such a way as to promote the achievement of the *skopos* is the main and foremost task of the translator." (Vermeer 1994: 11; original emphasis.)

ST (Numbered by Sentence)	Direct[13] Translation	Seidensticker Translation Version 2	Holman Translation
一人伊豆の旅に出てから四日目のことだった。	Dir. 'It was the fourth day since (I) had set out alone on my journey of Izu.'	I had spent three nights at hot springs near the center of the peninsula, and now, my fourth day out of Tokyo, I was climbing toward Amagi Pass and South Izu.	It was the fourth day of my solitary journey down the Izu Peninsula.
修善寺温泉に一夜泊り、湯ヶ島温泉に二夜泊り、そして朴歯の高下駄で天城を登って来たのだった。	Dir. '(I) had stayed at Shuzenji Spa for one night, at Yugashima Spa for two nights, and had climbed up Amagi in high-slatted *geta*.'		I had stayed at Shuzenji Hot Spring one night, then two nights at Yugashima. And now, wearing high clogs, I was climbing Amagi.

Seidensticker combines the two ST sentences into one, while Holman retains them. Seidensticker conflates the two spa-town stays into one, omitting the names of both places, while Holman faithfully enumerates them. Where Seidensticker omits the adverbial descriptor 朴歯の高下駄で *hōba no taka-geta de* 'in high *geta* with (magnolia-wood) supports', Holman includes it relatively intact, if culturally converted ("wearing high clogs").

Consistency of word usage has been the subject of translation fads in the West. In Seidensticker's translatorial prime in the mid-twentieth century, under conventions such as the aforementioned 'elegant variation', reusing the same word, especially in close textual proximity, was deemed a stylistic infelicity. Instead the translator was to translate a recurring ST term with a number of different synonyms: clearly a TL-orientated approach. On the other hand, Holman's generation is apparently more concerned with using the same expression consistently, assuming that the original author kept using it for a reason.[14] This can, of course, lead to a certain awkwardness in the TT.

The third point, reproducing "meanings in terms of the source context", echoes the

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[13] 'Direct' is preferable to 'literal' when referring to a translation that hews as closely as possible to the source text in terms of syntax and lexis while remaining grammatical in the target language.

[14] Literary translator of Japanese Howard Hibbet (in Richie 2000a: 46)): "The other fault or virtue which is nowadays much more fashionable is failing to improve the work, or trying not to eliminate whatever in it might seem strange. […] It is not merely a question of fidelity in the sense of putting everything in, or mirroring the structure or lack of structure, or faithfully rendering the tone, but it is also a question of fidelity to the source language."

"*equivalent*, which points toward the source-language message" in Nida's definition of dynamic equivalence, though presumably such ST semantic reproduction is thought to be privileged in formal equivalence. Perhaps this focus on the source context amounts to avoidance of 'cultural equivalence', whereby obscure cultural references are replaced by something more familiar to the TL reader, or its attenuated manifestation, a kind of generalisation in which superordinates replace culturally specific terms. For instance, in translating a section of *Izu no odoriko*, where Seidensticker renders obliquely ("Their instruments put away tidily in a corner, the performers started a game on another board. It was the simpler game of lining up stones."), Holman is more explicit about both instruments and games: "The girls placed their drums and samisen in the corner of the room, then started playing a game of 'five-in-a-row' on a Chinese chess board".[15]

The term 'SL-orientated translation' clearly privileges the source text in each translating decision. In this case, it seems that Nida's formal equivalence is closer to SL-orientated translation's *skopos* than dynamic equivalence is to that of TL-orientated translation. But one must be careful that formal equivalence is not used as an excuse for failing to interpret the "meanings in terms of the source context". If a translator is uncertain of the meaning beneath an author's utterance, the easy and ostensibly reasonable choice is simply to translate the superficial form. But if the result is opaque rather than dense, vague rather than richly ambiguous (polysemous), neither the original text nor the TL reader has been well served.

Can we say one approach is better than the other? The translators' methodology can reflect personal taste, or, as Toury (1995: 54) terms them, "idiosyncrasies", but this is insufficient to assess their techniques. Paraphrasing Newmark (1998: 48) above, an effective translation could be defined as one that conveys the essence of the original text while remaining

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[15] The ST reads 女達は太鼓や三味線を部屋の隅に片づけると、将棋盤の上で五目並べを始めた。Dir. 'When the women (and others) had put away such things as the *taiko* drum(s) and shamisen(s) in the corner of the room, they began *gomokunarabe* (five-in-a-row) on a *shōgi* board.'

accessible to the target reader. But what does 'the essence of the original' mean? Surely it comes down to the degree of success in reconstructing content and form, or, in other words, the subject matter and the author's (purposive) presentation of it.

Frank, Kittel and Greiner appositely sum up the dilemma, or necessary compromise, underlying TL- and SL-orientated approaches to translation:

> In the TL oriented translation, perlocutionary effects on the TL audience are considered more important. In order to efficiently communicate an intended message, the translator has to resort in such cases to remodelling of the original locution and the original message and make them subordinate to the intended communicative effect. In consequence, then, the source-centered translation may contribute towards sustaining the original SL semantics but limit the intelligibility of the original by the TL reader, while the target-orientated translation may be more communicatively efficient with the TL readership, but at the price of losing the semantic identity of the original message. (2004: 306–307; original punctuation)

Given the fundamental morpho-syntactic differences of Japanese and English, it would be easy to abandon detailed consideration of form, and rather focus on content, and that is what many translators appear to do, largely allowing the rules of English syntax and their own 'voice' to determine the presentation of the original content, and presumably losing something significant in the process. At the same time, slavish reproduction of formal characteristics is no substitute, as noted above, for capturing the essence of the original. Despite their evidenced respective orientations towards the ST and TL, Seidensticker's and Holman's translations appear in the case study to be examples, albeit disparate ones, of a kind of 'middle way' between Nida's two poles of extremity. Comparing their approaches reveals useful insights into the translation process, as well as tracing out the locus of translatorial acceptability.

To conclude this paper, I shall return to an earlier motif. One way to view translators is as guides along unknown paths. They have trodden the ground before us, and those with no

maps (i.e., lacking facility in the original language) must implicitly trust their guidance. The route they lead us along gives an impression of the territory. The territory always remains the same, but a different guide will give a different impression of it. According to the sensibilities of our guide, sometimes the highway is the best route; other times it may be the shortcut. What matters is whether the route chosen does justice to the terrain. For when it comes to *literary* translation, it is not just getting us from A to B that counts, but also, to paraphrase Seidensticker in *The Izu Dancer*, the 'flavour of the journey'.