LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

Real and Fantasy World Concepts in Children's Fantasy Translation

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Abstract:
In this article, I attempt to bridge the academic fields of literary geography and children's literature translation studies, thereby enriching the scholarly discourse surrounding the distinctions between the real and fantasy worlds within fantasy literature. Oziewics (2015), in his essays, characterises children's fantasy as a global phenomenon, asserting that children from any country and culture can readily immerse themselves in fantastical realms. However, the translation of children's fantasy literature is frequently perceived as a process of localisation, often involving a considerable degree of domestication, which may shift the concepts of real and fantasy world for a target reader. This study delves into the translator's strategies employed in translating food descriptions from fantasy realms, with a particular focus on Alexander O'Smith's English translation of food within the fantasy world of Vision, as depicted in Miyuki Miyabe's *Bureibu Sutōrī* /Brave Story/ (2003). The narrative follows the journey of Wataru, a Japanese boy, who finds himself transported to the fantastical realm of Vision. Here, he encounters diverse inhabitants and engages in everyday activities, including the consumption of fantastical cuisine and the pursuit of sustenance. These vivid descriptions offer valuable insights into the distinctive geography, climate, and culture of Vision's world. Given that the story unfolds from the perspective of a protagonist who hails from Japan, the representation of Vision's surroundings, the description of real-world food, and the portrayal of fantasy commodities are all categorised in accordance with conventional Japanese linguistic norms. Drawing upon a comparative analysis of O'Smith's translation strategies, I argue that the translation of food-related concepts significantly influences the overall depiction of Vision's fantasy world. Consequently, these translation choices bear a substantial impact on the reception and role of works like *Bureibu Sutōrī* (2003) within the target culture.

Keywords: Real and fantasy world; children's fantasy translation; fantasy food and foodways; Miyuki Miyabe's *Brave story*

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In this article, I employ translation analysis to investigate the relationship between the real world and the fantasy world in a home-away-home fantasy story. My argument suggests that the real world and the fantasy world may differ for readers of the original and readers of its translation. I have chosen food in a fantasy world as the primary focus, as it serves as a tool representing a foreign place. Food is a shared cultural element. Food is familiar to every child; it is easier to imagine than something like a sword or armor, which they have never used and have only seen in pictures. The topic of food is something anyone can relate to, and therefore, it plays an important role in fantasy world-building. Food enters our bodies and becomes a part of us. Consuming food from a fantasy world makes a character a part of that world, a member of the fantasy community that consumes the same products, even if only for a short period during their adventure.

While food itself is of a global nature, the description of food is geographically specific. Fantasy food, in particular, comes into being when compared with local real-life analogues. Therefore, the translation of fantasy food represents a severe case of domestication, which, in turn, greatly influences fantasy world re-building in translation, especially in determining what is considered the real world in a translated text. In the case of the original story, the concept of a fantasy world in a fantasy story is perceived through a comparison with the reader's real world. The concept of the real world becomes elusive in translation. Localised food descriptions in a translated text shift the real world from the world of the reader of the original story to the world of the reader of the translated text.

With this in mind, I investigate the manipulations that Alexander O'Smith applies to food descriptions in Miyuki Miyabe's *Bureibu Sutōrī* /Brave Story/ (2003) to describe food in the process of world re-building in translation. My goal is to contribute to the real world – fantasy world discussion by bringing translation to the forefront. Offering new perspectives on how literary-geographical worlds are produced, imagined, and perceived in translations, and dealing with the spatial relationships between authors/translators, texts, readers, and places, my writing is at the intersection of fields such as children's literature, fantasy translation studies, and literary geography.

Translating food, translating a fantasy story

In general, eating and the names of food are essential themes in children's books. They play a significant role to the extent that the portrayal of an imaginary world can be perceived as pleasant or unpleasant based on the quality of food depicted. For instance, in

Potter's *The Tale of Two Bad Mice* (1904), Tom Thumb and Hunca Munca discover that the food in the dollhouse is actually made of painted plaster. As a result, their perception of the dollhouse deteriorates, leading them to destroy the plastic food and most of the furniture inside. In Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* ([1950] 2008), food serves as a tool for educating the children, as seen when Edmund is seduced by the Turkish delight, and it also provides entertainment. Keeeling and Pollard state that some uses of food in children's literature are to understand the relations between the child and food meaning to understand the working of the world of young' (2020: 192).

Therefore, food can be regarded as one of the aspects of a spatial narrative, a tool for describing a fantasy realm. Food acts as a vessel conveying crucial information about the geography, biology, economics, and culture of the author's fantasy world. For instance, there exists no place on Earth other than 'Wonka's factory, owned by a man called Mr. Wonka, the greatest inventor and maker of chocolates that there has ever been' (Dahl 1998: 7), where one can find 'square candies that look round' (106). With such details as food and culinary commodities 'fantasy realms presented in a realist mode, cohesively structured, empirically detailed, and logically based, often accompanied by scholarly apparatus such as footnotes, glossaries, appendices, maps, and tables' (Saler 2012: 64). Food, in this regard, has a unique implication compared to its inedible counterparts – it has the potential to be reproduced in real-life settings in a similar way it has been described in a book. While magical items, such as invisibility cloaks that make the wearer invisible and magic wands that allow the bearer to wield magic, described in fantasy books are unlikely to find themselves in the hands of real-world people, the menus of various real-life theme parks offer the experience of consuming apparently authentic commodities from fantasy realms. For example, an unofficial internet poll conducted by Universal Studios in California in 2019 showed that the number one activity for visitors to the Harry Potter area is drinking Butterbeer. Learning about the fantasy world through food is an interest that lasts a lifetime, from childhood to adulthood.

The academic discussions with fantasy literature in human geography on the aspect of spatial narratives have been ongoing since the late twentieth century when the academic discourse on fantasy worldbuilding has shifted towards fantasy cartography, a discipline that examines the design of maps that visually represent imaginary worlds. These maps are often based on real-world cartography and correspond to the narratives within fantasy literature. However, fantasy cartography alone cannot fully satisfy the needs of fantasy readers. As Saler points out, there is a 'historically novel practice by which an imaginary world is transformed into a virtual world, enabling individuals to dwell in it communally and relate it to actual life' (2012: 66). Therefore, it is worthwhile to explore fantasy worldbuilding from a broader geographical perspective, including examining the relationship between landscapes in fantasy writing and other aspects such as fantasy culture in its various manifestations, including fantasy food.

One of the currently discussed topics on fantasy worldbuilding is the distinction between the real world and the fantasy world. This is not a novel topic, as it has been in scholarly discussion in literary geography and fantasy cartography for some time: 'There is a whole genre of literary maps dedicated to tracing the real-world setting of the fictional events, or the location of events once thought to have been real but now recognised as

fiction' (Padrón 2007: 256). Translation, in this context, offers a new perspective as the perception of a fantasy realm and its unique geographical features can vary depending on the translator's approach. According to Saler, fantasy worlds created since the late nineteenth century are 'understood to be explicitly fictional' (2012: 69). But 'they are also taken to be real, often to such an extent that they continue to be 'inhabited' long after the tale has been told' (69). Oziewicz (2015) emphasises the global nature of fantasy worlds, theorising them as a shared space accessible to children from any country and culture. While this discussion holds true when referring to the original work, in some cases, when a work of fiction is translated, the target readers encounter both the fantasy world and the world in which the main characters were born and raised, which can be as exotic as the fantasy realm itself. 'Thinking of fiction as an interaction between writer, text and reader, fiction can be understood [... as] the product of interrelations, [that] emerges in the dimension of coexistence, and is always in a state of becoming' (Hones 2014: 32). Therefore, my goal in this writing is to examine the relationship between the writer/translator, text, and reader in the context of translation, to draw conclusions about what can be considered real and what can be considered fantasy in a translated work of fiction.

While readers of the original version only deal with 'their' world, perceived as 'real', and the imagined fantasy world, readers of the translated text navigate between the world of the main characters, the fantasy world, and 'their own' world, which is usually considered more 'real' compared to the world of the main characters. It is, therefore, necessary to turn to descriptions of fantasy world food that are created through a comparison between the reader's real world and a fantasy world. Conducting a thorough translation analysis is essential to investigate how the real world of the reader of the original and the real world of the reader of the translation coexist in a translated text. By examining the translator's manipulations applied to food descriptions, I can identify the ways the fantasy world comes into being in fantasy translation.

Brave Story

Bureibu Sutōrī /Brave Story/ (2003) by Miyuki Miyabe tells a story of a Japanese boy called Wataru who finds himself in the fantasy realm of Vision after a series of misfortunes befall his family:

> Porta Nectere [the gates to the world of Vision], opens only once in a decade – and then only if there is a place suitable to make the connection. There also has to be someone nearby who wants to change his fate more than life itself – to get back something that was lost. Only then will the gates open. (Miyabe [2003] translated by O'Smith 2009)

This passage highlights the challenges faced in accessing the world of Vision, allowing the reader to contemplate the desperation of Wataru, the chosen one to enter Vision in that decade. It portrays his intense desire for strength to overcome the obstacles he and his family faced.

The defining characteristic that sets apart a young adult novel from literature aimed at a more mature audience is often the presence of an adolescent protagonist. These protagonists embark on quests to explore their identity and learn how to navigate life within the boundaries imposed by societal institutions that shape their social roles and status (Oziewicz 2015). In the case of Wataru, his journey into the world of Vision serves as a catalyst for his moral education. From the beginning of the novel, readers are introduced to Wataru as a character who longs for a new perspective on his everyday existence.

The story follows a traditional narrative structure known as the home-away-home pattern, which is often seen in fantasy literature. In this structure, the main character embarks on a journey to a fantasy realm and eventually returns home to the real world, having gained new knowledge and skills along the way. Once Wataru successfully enters the fantasy realm of Vision, he is recognised as a traveller by its inhabitants. In Vision, travellers are granted the opportunity to reach the Tower of Destiny, where the goddess of fate resides, and fulfill their wishes or recover something that was lost. The world of Vision is populated by a diverse array of beings, including beast-people, individuals of mixed races, fantastical creatures, and monsters. Throughout his journey, Wataru forms a party with a lizard-like amphibian and a young cat-girl, and their encounters, along with their daily experiences of partaking in fantasy-world cuisine and hunting for sustenance, provide vivid descriptions of Vision's distinct geography, climate, and culture.

To reach the Tower of Destiny, he must gather five gemstones that serve as the key to unlocking the future. However, his path is filled with numerous challenges. The land is inhabited by hostile monsters, demons, and beasts that pose a constant threat. Adding to the complexity, Wataru finds himself in direct competition with Mitsuru, another Japanese boy who has also entered the world of Vision with the same goal. Only one traveller can unlock the future and change their destiny. Throughout his arduous journey, Wataru experiences personal growth and develops the mental strength required to regain control of his life in the real world. The story highlights that the true answer he seeks is not simply obtained by receiving it directly from the goddess but rather by the path he takes to reach her. As expressed in the novel, 'By the time that path opens, you will know what you must ask the Goddess. You see, you will not find your answer from the Goddess. It is the path to the Goddess that is itself your answer' (Miyabe [2003] translated by O'Smith 2009: 515).

Returning to the discussion of the real-fantasy dichotomy in literary fiction and literary geography, it is worth noting that in the original work, Japan, the world in which Wataru was born and raised, and the world to which he aspires to return after entering the world of Vision, is depicted as the real world. The reader is made aware of Wataru's Japanese background through explicit statements in the text. Furthermore, there are numerous references to specific elements of Japanese culture, such as the April start of the school year, shrines, torii shrine gates, and more. On the other hand, the world of Vision is naturally perceived as a fantasy realm by the reader of the original work.

In this article, I hypothesize that in a translation of a fantasy story, descriptions of fantasy food are replaced with domestic analogues to recreate a fantasy world for the target reader while maintaining the contrast between the real world and the fantasy world. To support my argument, I conducted an analysis of three volumes of Miyabe's *Brave Story*

(2003) and their translations by O'Smith, which were compiled into a single English-language book with the same title (2009). As a pre-translation analysis, I examined the Japanese writing of *Bureibu Sutōrī* (2003). My initial observation is that food is first mentioned when Wataru enters the world of Vision in the story. The reasons behind this are discussed in the following section.

Vision food in Miyuki Miyabe's *Bureibu Sutōrī* (2003)

Most of the food descriptions in Vision created by Miyuki Miyabe are either based on a comparison with real-life analogues or introduced with a real-life equivalent. When discussing Vision food, many readers of the original story may imagine alien food and beverages that can only be encountered in a fantasy realm.

> Boron to ochite kita mi o, hitotsu hirotte tsuchi o harai, shinchō ni kajitte miru to, naruhodo mikake-dōri no tomato ajida. Demo, sūpā de utte iru yori mo, zuttozutto aji ga koishi, mizumizushī. Vision no kudamono wa, dōshi-sama no tokoro de gochisō ni natta mono mo sōdattakeredo, dōshite kon'na ni oishī ndarou. Korenara, atsumete motte yukeba, dōchū no nodonokawaki o iyaserushi, onaka no tashi ni mo naru.[1] (Miyabe 2003)

> Picking up one of the fallen fruits and brushing off the dirt, he carefully took a bite. Tastes like a tomato too. But it was a far richer, juicer fruit than any tomato Wataru had seen at the supermarket. Wataru was starting to wonder if all the fruit in Vision tasted so delicious. Even better, if he gathered enough of these, he wouldn't be thirsty – or hungry – on his journey. (Miyabe [2003] translated by O'Smith 2009)

However, Vision food is not limited to unknown food and beverages or food with magical properties. It includes many common items, such as water. In any fantasy realm, water is often depicted as flowing from fantasy-realm springs, and it is uncertain whether its chemical composition differs slightly or significantly from the water we drink. A similar discussion can be found in the article titled *What is water?* (Needham 2000), where the author speculates on the application of the term 'water' to different types of water, including soft and hard water. In other words, it is challenging to determine whether real-world food analogues found in a fantasy realm should be considered as real-world food or as fantasy-food introduced with a real-world equivalent. Additionally, since the story is narrated by a young boy, there is limited evidence to suggest that he would serve as a reliable source in describing the actual state of food in the world of Vision.

The introduction in *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature* edited by Keeling and Pollard states that food serves as a cultural signifier, 'not only the product of a culture but one that gives shape to mentalities that structure thought and expression' (2009: 4). The argument goes on to stress that 'food is essential to the cultural imagination' (6), making it a central element in 'the creation of culture' (6). In other words, analysing food allows researchers to derive various information of the culture of the fantasy world in a

fantasy story. Citing Pavel, Padrón reminds his readers that 'the fictionality of fictional worlds lies in the eyes of the beholder' (2007: 256).

Presently, *Table Lands: Food in Children's Literature* by the same Keeling and Pollard (2020) stands at the forefront of culinary analysis within the field of Children's Literature Studies. In reviewing *Table Lands: Food in Children's Literature,* Harris-Aber notes that the book 'observes the instructive nature of specific texts and the culinary choices that authors make' (2021: 251). The book concludes that 'food evokes the subjectivity of readers and characters alike' (251). This argument backs my assertion that a meticulous comparison of instances of food descriptions in *Bureibu Sutōrī* /Brave Story/ will reveal the ways these descriptions are manipulated to maintain a contrast between the real world and the fantasy world in its translated version.

Before making a comparison, I analysed all instances of food descriptions, regardless of whether it belonged to the real world or the fantasy world, and regardless of whether it possessed magical properties or not. My analysis showed that food is mostly mentioned in the 'away' part of the story when the protagonist enters the world of Vision:

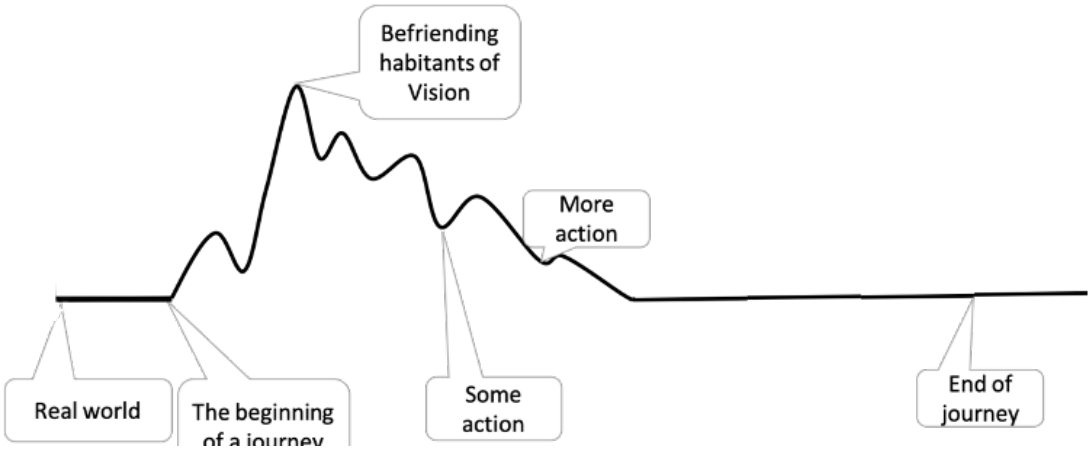

Figure 1. The instances of food description in *Bureibu Sutōrī /Brave Story*.

The number of instances of food descriptions significantly increases once the main character, Wataru, enters the world of Vision. Food becomes a recurring element as Wataru takes his initial steps, meets new friends, forms a party, and embarks on his journey. However, as Wataru progresses further on his quest, the frequency of food descriptions gradually decreases. At some point, the simplification of food descriptions becomes notable. The narrative provides simple mentions of breakfast, lunch, and dinner, which eventually vanish as the story unfolds. This pattern suggests that food and its descriptions serve as tools in Brave Story to offer readers insights into Vision: its inhabitants, the plant life, and the landscape. As Wataru embarks on his first quest, fewer references to food are observed. However, as Wataru and his party travel to different locations, the number of food mentions slightly increases. As the climax of the journey approaches, the reader's

focus shifts away from what Wataru and his friends eat, leading to a complete fading away of food descriptions.

With this in mind, we can see how food descriptions in *Brave Story* (2003) serve as a means to introduce and distinguish the fantasy world of Vision. They play a role in conveying the nature of this world, whether it is welcoming or hostile. Through the initial encounters with Vision food, the reader becomes aware that the main character, Wataru, has departed from the real world. By comparing the fruit, meat, and other products he sees and tastes with those found in everyday life, the reader understands that there may be a parallel between the food in the fantasy realm and familiar real-world counterparts. As the story progresses, the mentions of food gradually diminish, allowing the reader to form their own perception of the fantasy realm, while the author directs their attention to the unfolding narrative.

The food itself could be categorised into ingredients and meals. The ingredients in the *Brave Story* (2003) encompass a wide variety of magical commodities:

> 'Sore, nāni?'
> Kubi o nobashite nozoku to, nanika yara kyōaku ni akakukagayaku ittsui no me to me ga atte shimatta. Kono himono, kao ga tsuiteiru.
> 'Kore ka? Nbara no maruboshida. Mechakucha umai nda ze'[2] (Miyabe 2003)

> 'What's that?' Wataru asked, craning his neck to see, when he saw with horror that the thing in Kee Keema's hands had two eyes shining a violent shade of red. Kee Kema's jerky had a face.
> 'This? Dried n'bara. Best thing on the road.' (Miyabe [2003] translated by O'Smith 2009)

Dishes, on the other hand, are introduced in a simpler manner:

> Yūshoku ni wa, marugao no anka-zoku no ko kāsan ga, pan to shichū to kudamono o hakonde kite kureta. Ko kāsan no mukuchide, Wataru no kao o miyou to shinakattakeredo, sono buaisō-sa o hyakubun issyu de chōkeshi ni suru hodo, oishī shokujidatta.[3] (Miyabe 2003)

> For dinner, a round-faced ankha woman delivered bread, stew, and fruit. She said nothing and did not even look at Wataru. But the food was so delicious it more than made up for the lack of hospitality. (Miyabe [2003] translated by O'Smith 2009)

Notwithstanding, the 'n'bara jerky' mentioned in the first example sounds more fantastical compared to the 'bread', 'stew', and 'fruit' in the second example. As shown in Figure 1, the closer Wataru is to the goal of his journey, the fever food items are mentioned. The ingredients gradually shift to full-fledged meals, which eventually fade away as the action intensifies.

As far as translation is concerned, ingredients are introduced with a real-world analogue, and meals are introduced with a real-world naming. The overall strategy for

translating food descriptions within the fantasy realm would entail 'the deletion or the loss of cultural reference' (Oittinen et al. 2018: 88). When translating ingredients, a translator may preserve the foreignness of the ingredient name and manipulate its real-world analogue. When translating meals, a translator may replace the meal with a real-world analogue that is better known to a child-reader of the translated version. The degree to which the original text is preserved in translation varies depending on the type of food a translator deals with. In parts where ingredients are introduced, a translator would probably preserve more of the original text than in parts where meals are introduced.

Vision food in translation

To explore the dynamic between the author of *Bureibu Sutōrī* (2003), the translator of *Brave Story* (2009), the texts itself, and the English-speaking readers engaging with O'Smith's translation, I conducted a comparative analysis focusing on the translation of fantasy-realm food descriptions. This analytical approach draws inspiration from the work of Cavanaugh et al. *What Words Bring to the Table: The Linguistic Anthropological Toolkit as Applied to the Study of Food* (2014). Moreover, my analysis is grounded in the concept of language world view as elucidated by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), who write that language can refract and influence our perception of reality through its distinct categories and world view. Lakoff and Johnson argue that the language itself is 'not just mere words' (2003: 7) but the very embodiment of human thought processes, a factor that significantly influences both human perception and speech production. As they explain, 'We talk about arguments [that way] because we conceive of them that way—and we act according to the way we conceive of things' (2003: 7). Building on this line of thought, Hall (1959) and later Katan (2004) present a perspective that underscores language as a tool for realising cultural manifestations:

> Culture is perceived […] as a system for making sense of experience. A basic presupposition is that the organisation of experience is not 'reality', but is a simplification and distortion which changes from culture to culture. Each culture acts as a frame within which external signs or 'reality' are interpreted. (Katan 2004: 3)

Within this context, a linguistic world view unveils 'how individuals perceive, catalogue and construct reality, and how this perception is communicated through language' (Katan 2004: 3). To paraphrase Saler (2012), food in a fantasy book doesn't emerge from thin air. When it comes to describing food, especially the food of a fantasy realm, authors are constrained by the expressive tools of their target language. These constraints limit their ability to introduce exotic, alien, or even magical elements onto the table.

Both the readers of the original text and the translated text are introduced to gastronomic experiences of the world of Vision as perceived by the Japanese character Wataru. Consequently, the depictions of fantasy food are filtered through the language world view of a fictional Japanese boy, reflecting the attributes of Japanese gastronomic discourse. In an ideal scenario, these attributes should be preserved in translation to

achieve equivalence. However, the principles of fantasy translation theory propose that the translator's central aim should be readability — recreating the text in the target language while concealing the act of translation. Equivalence takes a back seat in priority. Following these translation theories, my analysis revealed three main challenges in translating fantasy-realm food descriptions, all of which fall under the umbrella of differences in linguistic worldviews: loanwords, onomatopoeia, and culture-specific items.

Loan words

As per the Merriam-Webster dictionary, loanwords refer to 'a word taken from another language and at least partly naturalised'[4]. Within the topic of food and foodways in children's and young adult fantasy literature, loanwords indicate food introduced in the book using a fantasy-realm language. In essence, the term loanwords denotes the names of imaginary foods that accentuate the exotic nature of Vision. Upon comparing the two primary categories of fantasy-realm food that appear in both *Bureibu Sutōrī* (2003) and *Brave Story* (2009), it is evident that the majority of loanwords pertain to the ingredients:

> 'Bakuwa no mi o anmari tabe tcha ikan zo'... 'Darubaba no kōbutsuda. Amakute umaiga, hito no kuimono janai. Anmari kuu to, hara o kowasu zo'. Wataru wa, tabekake no akai mi o, potorito toriotoshita.[5] (Miyabe 2003)

> 'Don't eat too many o'those baquas now, y'hear?' … 'Darbabas love'em, I know. Ah, they're sweet as can be. But not for people fold. Eat too many o'those and yer stomack'll tie itself into all sorts of knots.' Wataru dropped the half-eaten fruit in his hand. (Miyabe [2003] translated by O'Smith 2009)

The translation of loanwords often entails either borrowing the language label, omitting, or creating the label in the target language (Katan 2004). As previously mentioned, instances of food descriptions serve to paint a vivid picture of the world of Vision, and as such, they cannot be omitted in translation. Introducing the label in the target language is also unfeasible, given that the ingredient is presented in a fantasy-realm or non-existent language – a language in which the translator likely lacks fluency – and there exists no method for replicating the unfamiliar concept in words.

Transcription and transliteration, therefore, seem to be the most fitting strategy. In the case of transcription, there's a chance of becoming ensnared in associations stemming from language disparities. A fine example is the name of a fermented milk drink, originally referred to as *karupisu* in Japanese and transcribed as Calpis in Latin letters for many decades. When the company tried to sell it in the US, they had to change the name to Calpico because Americans thought Calpis sounded like cow piss (Stanlaw 2004).

Following the conventional rules of Japanese writing, all the loan words in *Bureibu Sutōrī* (2003) are written with *katakana* – syllabic writing used in Japanese, primarily for words of foreign origin. With no characters from which the meaning of the word could be derived, therefore the naming of the fantasy-realm ingredients of Vision is impossible to

reproduce in the real-world concepts. In case of transcription, the fantasy fruit バクワ should be transcribed as *bakuwa* with 'kuw', not 'qu', and there should be a 'u' in the name of a cattle called ダルババ (*darubaba*). As a reader may notice, transcribing the word would maintain the elements of the Japanese language. The English translation, however, was executed as the re-transcription of the original unknown fantasy word that was initially transcribed into Japanese. In his translation, O'Smith (2009) opts for transliteration over transcription, thus creating a distance between the reader and Japanese-like elements. The example above, amongst others in my corpus, illustrates aimed to enhance the readability of the fantasy-realm loanwords. In simple terms, the goal was to create a translation variant that would go down well with the English-speaking reader. To paraphrase Dore (2019), 'this sort of ethnolect adaptation may be seen as an attempt to retain the exotic flavour of […] food, which may be still recognized by part of […] audience (8).

Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia can be defined as words 'the sounding of which is partly defined by their meaning' (Sasaki 2020: 177). The very essence of onomatopoeia suggests that these words leave room for imagination. Onomatopoeia is quite prevalent in the Japanese language, and this holds true for food descriptions as well, as they are 'often used to express an impression in a personal, emotional manner' (Flyxe 2002: 54). In other words, onomatopoeia expressions 'are an integral and creative part of lexicon' (Wakabayashi 2021: 201). A reader is free to interpret an ingredient or product in their own way. However, in translation, a translator tends to opt for tools more familiar to the target culture. This is because, as Boase-Beier (2004) explains, sound words are not arbitrary; they are the outcome of a standardised representation of an actual sound, and these representations differ across languages:

> Kawa no paripari shita marui pan to, pepāminto no kaori no suru ocha. Ringo ni nite iru kedo, ringo yori zutto amakute nōkōna aji no suru kiiroi kudamono. Dore mo min'na oishikute, Wataru wa kuchi no kikazu ni dondon tabeta.[6] (Miyabe 2003)

> There was round bread with a crunchy crust, and tea that smelled of peppermint. There was a yellow fruit that looked something like an apple, but it was far more rich and sweet tasting. Everything was delicious. (Miyabe [2003] translated by O'Smith 2009)

Compared to the Japanese language, there are fewer single-word onomatopoeia expressions in the English language. The example above is particularly noteworthy as it represents a skillful effort to uphold the sound effect by replacing the onomatopoeia with a sound-mimicking verb and the noun 'crunchy crust'. However, the onomatopoeia *paripari* could be preserved in translation through transcription or an English-language equivalent with similar meaning. The transcription variant might be perceived as more challenging for

non-Japanese speakers (Sato 2017). The substitution with an English-language onomatopoeia possibly went unconsidered due to the perception that such an approach might be seen as 'childish or unsophisticated' (Wakabayashi 2021:201). To conclude, O'Smith's (2009) translation once again introduces a food description that aligns better with the familiarity of the target readers.

Culture-specific items

The term culture-specific items refers to words and expressions that denote objects and concepts unique to the source culture and lack an equivalent in the target culture. These items, along with metaphors and humour, are frequently employed as illustrations to elucidate the concept of linguistic worldviews. The ways native speakers of different languages portray the world are different, particularly in the context of the representation of Japanese food culture in English. To illustrate, Japan has a large vocabulary for describing food, plates, take-out food, etc.:

> Kore wa micchū no o bentō ja' seisei no nuno ni tsutsunda mono o, dōshi ga shite kureta. 'Kyō no hiromeshi no bun jagana, washi ga mendō o mi rareru no wa koko madeja. Ato wa, onushi ga jiriki de nantoka seneba naranu".[7](Miyabe 2003)

> 'Food for the road," the Wayfinder said, passing Wataru a bulging bag of simple cloth. 'There's enough for your lunch in there, but that is all I can give you. After this you're on your own. (Miyabe [2003] translated by O'Smith 2009)

The word food is certainly more general than the Japanese term *bentō*. Food encompasses any type of sustenance, and the context 'for the road' allows for the imagination of various kinds of nourishment suitable for a journey. The Japanese term *bentō*, on the other hand, specifically denotes a particular assortment of small, separate dishes constituting a traditional Japanese lunch. This typically includes rice, a protein such as fish or meat, vegetables (often including tomatoes), and fruit for dessert. The dishes are usually arranged within a small container crafted from lacquered wood or plastic, featuring separate compartments. In comparison to the broader term food, *bentō* is a more precise and succinct expression.

Transcription, literal translation and paraphrase are applied to culture-specific words translation (Wakabayashi 2021). The word *bentō* is probably known to the non-Japanese reader due to the worldwide expansion of Japanese food. Transcribing *bentō* will probably lead to highlighting the 'Japaneseness' (6) of the text. A more downplayed translation would be literal translation and paraphrase. The former would probably result in the misleading translation variant 'lunch box,' which might seem to refer to the kind of food provided during school trips in English-speaking countries. The latter, paraphrase, is the strategy chosen by O'Smith (2009) in his writing. Unpacking the Japanese food term, O'Smith once again tones down on the culture-bound concepts in the favour of more general terms.

Where is the real world?

In translation, as my findings suggest, the concept of the real world is shifted towards what is perceived as the real world of the translator and reader of translation, moving away from the real world of the original author and the reader of the original to create a contrast. This, in terms, sustains the exoticism of the fantasy world. In other words, based on O'Smith's translation strategies applied to Vision food translations, the real world for the English-speaking reader is unlikely to be Japan. The reason for this presumably lies in the differences in understanding the real world as concept: 'Interlingual translation involves a series of 're-conceptualisations' of an original message in the source language until it is expressed in the target language, where it continues to be re-conceptualised by the target-language audience itself' (Massey and Ehrensberger-Dow 2017). Even when discussing real-world food, our linguistic perspectives differ. In the realm of fantasy, food takes this contrast to the next level, as readers must imagine non-existing products or meals: 'food is […] the cornerstone of life and lies at the heart of our cultural identity' (Chiaro and Rossato 2015: 239). If a reader lacks background knowledge of the Japanese world, they may assume that the translator removed all references to the real world to present the text as pure fantasy. However, this assumption may raise questions about fidelity.

I assume that the readers of the translation likely take the idea of the real world as is. As mentioned earlier, the relationship between the real world and the fantasy world is binary for the reader of the original text. However, when the Japanese story is translated into English, this relationship takes the form of a triangle. The reader of the translation navigates the real world as they perceive it, the real world of the original story, and the fantasy world.

Geography-specific descriptions, such as food descriptions, are created based on the analogues of real world food of the original story. These descriptions, which reveal a second real world, pose a translation difficulty as they may be unfamiliar to the reader of the translated story. Translators, acting as the first readers, interpret food descriptions in the original text and recreate them in translation with the specific goal of maintaining the contrast between the real world and the fantasy world. A successful match between what a target reader perceives as the real world, and the real world described in the children's story ensures that the same reader will recognise the fantasy world as intended by the author. Therefore, a translator adjusts their perspective, eliminating unnecessary filters to preserve the contrast between the real world and the fantasy world in their translation.

On one hand, the idea of making the text more easy to grasp by paradoxically making it more unreal may sound as a plausible solution to this translation issue. Indeed, language differences can hinder a complete understanding of something foreign. A reader may struggle to envision something that falls outside their linguistic worldview without visual aids, for example.

On the other hand, a home-away-home scenario that Miyabe employs in her writing implies a clear distinction between 'home' and 'away'. For instance, the Japanese audience

adores the story of Narnia in its Japanese-language translation. However, to Japanese readers, the English world, from which the child characters originally hail, is as exotic as Narnia itself. Similarly, if the foreign concepts, such as *bentō*, transcriptions and onomatopoeia used in food descriptions in the original story, are preserved in translation, it pushes the book's real-world context further away from the target reader. As a countermeasure, O'Smith in his translation (2009), manipulates food descriptions to maintain the contrast between fantasy and reality and to recreate the original's home-away-home structure.

In this article, I have attempted to expand the academic discussions on real-fantasy world dichotomy to include translation texts by examining the strategies employed by translators in the translation of food in fantasy realms. The translation of fantasy-realm food plays an important role in providing verbal descriptions of nonexistent worlds, verbal descriptions of food contain information about the cultural and geographical features of a fantasy world, which stimulate our senses and memory, guiding readers' imagination toward a shared understanding of this fantasy realm. Within the context of a home-away-home narrative, a fantasy realm materialises through a stark juxtaposition of the real world and the fantasy world. Food, as Harris-Aber (2021: 251) suggests, has 'to do with forming one's own identity, finding one's place in a community, and the development of personal values' (251). Therefore, the examination of food in the translation of children's fantasy literature implies that translation shifts the real world to the world of the reader, revealing the fluid and subjective nature of the concept of reality in a children's fantasy story.

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Notes

[1] ぼろんと落ちてきた実を、ひとつ拾って土をはらい、慎重に齧ってみると、なるほど見かけどおりのトマト味だ。でも、スーパーで売っているよりも、ずっとずっと味が濃いし、みずみずしい。幻界の果物は、導師さまのところでご馳走になったものもそうだったけれど、どうしてこんなに美味しいんだろう。

これなら、集めて持ってゆけば、道中の喉の渇きをいやせるし、おなかの足しにもなる。

[2] 「それ、なあに？」

首をのばしてのぞくと、なにかやら凶悪に赤く輝く一対の目と目が合ってしまった。この干物、顔がついている。

「これか？ンバラの丸干しだ。めちゃくちゃ旨いんだぜ」

[3] 夕食には、丸顔のアンカ族の小母さんが、パンとシチューと果物を運んできてくれた。小母さんの無口で、ワタルの顔を見ようとしなかったけれど、その無愛想さを百分一秒で帳消しにするほど、美味しい食事だった。

[4] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/loanword (accessed 13.07.2022)

[5] バクワの実をあんまり食べっちゃいかんぞ

。。。

ダルババの好物だ。甘くて旨いが、ヒトの食い物じゃない。あんまり食うと、腹をこわすぞ。

ワタルは、食べかけの赤い実を、ぽとりと取り落とした。

[6] 皮のパリパリした丸いパンと、ペパーミントの香りのするお茶。リンゴに似ているけど、リンゴよりずっと甘くて濃厚な味のする黄色い果物。どれもみんな美味しくて、ワタルは口のきかずにどんどん食べた。

[7] 「これは道中のお弁当じゃ」

生成の布に包んだものを、導師がしてくれた。

「今日の広飯の分じゃがな、わしが面倒を見られるのはここまでじゃ。あとは、おぬしが自力でなんとかせねばならぬ」

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