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## Murakami Haruki's America and the Specter of the Untranslatable

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This essay explores how the noted Japanese novelist Murakami Haruki 村上春樹 (1949–) has interpreted the particularities of American vernacular speech through various acts of translation. As a translator, Murakami is best known for his Japanese-language renderings of classic works of twentieth-century American fiction, from F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) to Raymond Carver's minimalist short stories.<sup>1</sup> But “translation” in the context under consideration here also includes the wider range of techniques that Murakami deploys in Japanese-language essays of his own that rewrite and analyze the English-language talk of anonymous Americans whom he encountered while living in the United States in the 1990s.

In this article, I will focus on one such essay, *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi* バークレーからの帰り道 (“The Road Home from Berkeley”), which appeared in a volume of Murakami's essays about his experience living in the United States titled *Yagate kanashiki gaikokugo* やがて哀しき外国語 (*The Sadness of Foreign Language*, 1994).<sup>2</sup> As Murakami reconstructs a conversation in the essay that he had with a Black American interlocutor in New Jersey about their mutual love of jazz, he evokes the movements of the translator's imagination by not only rewriting the American's speech in Japanese, but also analyzing its various features and explaining their implications in expository prose of his own. By documenting the interpretive strategies with which the translator makes sense of the language of another, *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi* ultimately reveals that for all that Murakami's critics have associated his fiction with a dreary world of homogenizing cultural commerce in which the specificities of language and style melt into a recycled sameness, there is another side to this world-famous novelist too, a side that has grappled



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with the particularity of socially contextualized speech that defies global circulation altogether.<sup>3</sup>

To make this point, the analysis that follows takes inspiration from the scholar of comparative literature Michael Lucey's approach to reading "the ethnography of talk" as it explores how Murakami, as a translator, performs a kind of "fieldwork" akin to that of the linguistic anthropologist.<sup>4</sup> Thinking of the work of the translator as a form of fieldwork helps us to see that when the translator is an outsider to the language community they translate, they must labor to understand the socially contextualized meaning of ordinary utterances, the implications of which are understood intuitively by their own speakers without any explication, research, or investigation at all. I choose *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi* as the text in Murakami's oeuvre that best illuminates these dynamics because whereas Murakami's translations of Fitzgerald, Salinger, and Carver all ask to be read as stand-alone works of Japanese-language literature in which the translator's hand is an unobtrusive presence, *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi* is full of self-reflexive asides, parenthetical emendations, and supplementary explanations in which Murakami explicitly narrates the anthropological fieldwork that informs his attempts to make sense of his interlocutor's speech. These self-conscious disclosures of the interpretive process of translation richly document the sort of effort to understand the language of another that is usually only implicit in a translated text. In so doing, they reveal how the translator—like the anthropologist—sets out to learn the social contexts that mediate the nuance of particular usages of language as they are understood by speakers within a particular language community, while at the same time remaining an outsider to that community themselves.

The most important conclusion that follows from studying the fieldwork documented in *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi* is that Murakami himself came to believe that some language is so deeply woven into the particularities of social history and cultural context that it cannot be translated at all. In this view, the specter of the untranslatable is not something that can be overcome through improved technique, as if a more skillful translator could solve the translation problems that Murakami could not. To the contrary, *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi* suggests that recognizing the untranslatable in language is part of the deeper ethical act of recognizing the integrity of another person's identity, which inevitably produces socially contextualized talk with constellations of indexical referents that can be so complex as to be inarticulable in any words other

than its own. Although Murakami has more often been read as a writer whose fiction embodies the supposed homogeneity of globally circulating pop fiction that is made for the market, then, his own experiments in translating the social life of American speech reveal how he has also trained his ear to hear the specificity of language-in-use, including untranslatable utterances with meanings so particular that they can never circulate beyond their own forms.

### **What Murakami Heard in New Jersey**

In *What Proust Heard: Novels and the Ethnography of Talk* (2022), Lucey observes that “when we hear someone speak to someone else, we hear more than what they are talking about, we hear something of who they are in the social world or who they wish to be.”<sup>5</sup> Drawing on the writings of figures ranging from Mikhail Bakhtin and Erving Goffman to Pierre Bourdieu, Michael Silverstein and beyond, Lucey explains that one of the most important contributions that the field of linguistic anthropology can make to the field of literary studies is to provide a framework for understanding the social life of language beyond the semantic meanings of what words say, and for focusing attention more precisely on the contextual implications of language-in-use that allow particular forms of talk to crystalize complex constellations of culture. Although Lucey made this point in his study of the legendary French novelist Marcel Proust’s prose in particular, his perspective on the social life of language articulates a more general paradigm for thinking about how novelists of all kinds train their ears—and the ears of their readers—to the contextual nuance and tacit knowledge that words circulate on the pages of prose no less than in the conversations of real life.

In Murakami’s oeuvre, his personal writings about listening to the English language as he heard it spoken around him during his time living in America in the early 1990s supply a particularly provocative ground in which to explore how he interpreted the social life of talk through the act of translation. In 1991, he arrived at Princeton for an appointment as a visiting scholar that would last for the next two and a half years, and during this time, he wrote several essays about his experiences abroad that were later published in book form under the title *Yagate kanashiki gaikokugo* in 1994. In the analysis below, I will focus on one of the essays in this volume in particular, *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi*, because it presents a distinctive engagement with the specificities of American speech as Murakami heard it in his conversation with a Black American chauffeur on his way home

from Newark International Airport to Princeton after having spent a month on the West Coast visiting the University of California at Berkeley.

By the time Murakami arrived in America, he was already a star in Japan. His popularity grew throughout the 1980s, with his bestselling novel of the decade, ノルウェイの森 *Noruwei no mori* (*Norwegian Wood*, 1987), selling some 3.55 million copies in a little more than a year after first being published (more than 10 million copies would sell by 2009).<sup>6</sup> As Murakami would later describe in 職業としての小説家 *Shokugyō toshite no shōsetsuka* (*Writing Fiction For A Living*, 2015), and as David Karashima and Stephen Snyder have shown in their respective studies of Murakami's rise in the American publishing industry, too, his time in America in the early 1990s coincided with his growing popularity as a novelist being translated for readers beyond Japan.<sup>7</sup> During these years, *The New Yorker* and the noted publisher Alfred A. Knopf began publishing Murakami's fiction in English translation. It comes as no surprise, then, that Murakami begins *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi* by contemplating the growing American interest in contemporary Japanese fiction in translation, and wondering aloud what this might mean for the future of Japanese literature in global context.

Against the backdrop of his growing prominence outside Japan, Murakami indicates at the beginning of *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi* that in pondering the possibility of contemporary Japanese literature making a “breakthrough” with readers around the world, “I realized that my main project might become an attempt to somehow relativize [相对化] the Japanese language even as I am writing novels in Japanese, and by the same measure, to relativize what it means to be a Japanese person even as I am a Japanese person.”<sup>8</sup> Readers who associate Murakami with the pecuniary drive of the global culture industry might be tempted to read in this statement a selfish intention to write in order to be translated, as if to “relativize” the Japanese language meant eliminating the untranslatable specificity of local particularity by composing Japanese-language fiction in narrative prose that would be easy for a foreign audience to understand. But as *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi* unfolds, it reveals that Murakami's desire to “relativize” the Japanese language between self and other articulated not only in his self-interested desire to promote his own fiction in translation at *The New Yorker* and Knopf (as Karashima, Snyder, and Murakami himself have already described), but also in his other-oriented interest in American vernacular talk, which he engaged as a writer and translator reflecting on how the Japanese language can converse with

voices in other languages.

In *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi*, Murakami’s abstract notion of a “relativized” form of the Japanese language becomes more concrete as he reconstructs his conversation with the Black American chauffeur who drives him home to Princeton. Although Murakami never describes the essay as an act of translation per se, he explicitly indicates at several points how he has rewritten in Japanese some of the English-language words and phrases that the driver uses. Read within the broader contextual coordinates that frame the essay, these translations suggest that as Murakami conveys the driver’s quoted speech in Japanese, he is rewriting what was originally an English-language conversation in the words that he imagines his interlocutor would have spoken had he been speaking Japanese.

Insofar as this means that Murakami controls the narrative like a novelist controls a novel, or like a translator controls a translation, it also means that the essay becomes a constructed account in which the quoted dialogue that appears could never be read as a perfect transcription of exactly what was actually said. While this might throw the anthropological implications of the essay into question for some, my own analysis proceeds from the premise that it is precisely because the essay presents a literary reconstruction of a conversation Murakami had with a Black American interlocutor that it asks to be read as a translation in which he grapples with what he heard someone else say in words that were not his own. By tracing the dialogue between self and other that materializes in the translated talk that Murakami reconstructs through self-reflexive acts of writing and rewriting, then, we begin to see how the essay mixes anthropological fieldwork with various acts of translation as it renders the driver’s talk in a “relativized” form of Japanese that tries to articulate a voice outside itself.

The conversation begins after Murakami arrives at the airport on the night of Thanksgiving during a terrible rainstorm. He indicates that while he would ordinarily rent a car and drive himself home, the bad weather led him to change his plans on the spur of the moment and hire a driver instead. Although he requests limo service, the driver who picks him up arrives in an old Buick that is well past its prime. Murakami describes the driver himself as a tall older Black man who looks like Dexter Gordon and speaks in the deep baritone of Al Hibbler.

Although most of the driver’s quoted speech is presented to the reader just as if it had happened in Japanese, we also notice several places in the

essay where Murakami reveals precisely how he has translated particular features of the driver's talk. As Murakami and the driver begin to converse about their mutual love of jazz, for example, Murakami draws the reader's attention to the driver's distinctive American "speech tick" in the passage below:

He turned the radio to a jazz station. A tenor sax was taking a solo in a ballad. "Sounds like Wayne Shorter," I said. "Right," he said, nodding. "Herbie Hancock on piano," I said. "Oh yeah, you've got a great ear for this, oh yeah," the driver said. "Oh yeah" was a speech tick of his.

彼はラジオをジャズ・ステーションにあわせてくれた。テナー・サクソスがバラードのソロをとっていた。「これウエイン・ショーターみたいだ」と僕が言うと、「そうだな」と彼は言って頷いた。「ピアノはハービー・ハンコックだ」と僕が言うと、「うん、あなたなかなかいい耳してるな、うん」と運転手は言った。うん（オー・ヤー）、というのがこの人の口ぐせである。<sup>9</sup>

In this exchange, for which I have translated Murakami's Japanese-language prose into English above, we see the personal matters of taste articulate through the social forms of talk. As Murakami and the driver get to chatting, they realize that they both belong to a community of taste that can identify the music of Shorter and Hancock spontaneously, as soon as it comes on the radio. This creates the bond that sustains their conversation about jazz to come. By the same measure, though, Murakami also observes in the passage above—and throughout the essay in general—that although he and the driver share some of the same taste in music, they do not share the same language in which to talk about it. One indication of their distance comes through in the many self-reflexive asides in which Murakami explains how he is translating the driver's English-language talk into Japanese. In the quotation above, for example, he tells the reader of his Japanese-language text that what appears in the driver's directly quoted speech in Japanese as *un* (うん) corresponds to "オー・ヤー," which in turn corresponds to the English-language expression "oh yeah," a "speech tick" (*kuchiguse*) that specifies the driver's style of speaking.

Murakami supplements his translation of the driver's speech in this way elsewhere in the essay, too. In another instance, the driver discusses the Miles Davis song "So what?" and even sings the lyrics that jazz singers later put to its tune. In English, the quoted lyrics that appear in the essay would read "Miles Davis walked off the stage (so what?)," and when the driver sings these words, Murakami translates them into Japanese as "マ

イルスがステージから出ていった、ソー・ホワット（だから何だ？）。”<sup>10</sup> As the parenthetical translation (だから何だ?) explicitly discloses Murakami’s method for “relativizing” the Japanese language in relation to English, each language talks to the other in a two-way dialogue that is only possible—and only necessary—because neither can say precisely the same thing as the other. There is a difference between “So what?”, ソー・ホワット and だから何だ, Murakami implies, if only because different words always mean different things.

As the conversation develops, Murakami becomes only all the more aware of his distance from the socially contextualized talk of his Black American interlocutor when the driver describes his personal relationships with some of the jazz musicians whom they discuss. This personal degree of proximity distinguishes the driver’s talk about jazz from Murakami’s style of speaking about it, for whereas Murakami describes how he learned the facts of American jazz musicians’ lives and times from reading books about them, the driver speaks from memory and experience, forming his side of the conversation in dialogue not only with Murakami, but implicitly with many of the musicians active in the New York scene with whom he has talked about jazz on other occasions, too. The distinction between Murakami’s bookish understanding of jazz and the driver’s personal relationships with specific musicians comes to light in particularly stark terms when Murakami realizes that at times he has a more factually correct understanding of particular pieces of information than the driver does. At one point, for example, Murakami mentions to his reader that he learned from Bill Crow’s *From Birdland to Broadway: Scenes from a Jazz Life* that Dave Lambert of the jazz group Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross died in an accident on Interstate 95 in Connecticut, whereas the driver misremembers the scene of Lambert’s death as having occurred on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. But rather than treating the driver’s speech as an imperfect form of information transmission in need of correction, Murakami instead chooses to quietly savor the driver’s “talk about the old days” (思い出話 *omoide banashi*) as a form of storytelling.

Throughout the essay, the different ways of relating to—and talking about—jazz that separate Murakami from the driver are layered by the differences in race, class, and personal background that separate them, too, reminding the reader that their conversation never arrives at anything like common cause nor shared identity. Indeed, their distance from one another is greatest when Murakami realizes that the driver believes jazz to be “our music” (俺たちの音楽), meaning the music of Black Americans like

himself.<sup>11</sup> Even so, though, a measure of sympathy comes through as the driver explains to Murakami why he admires Japanese jazz fans in particular (the English-language text below is my own translation of Murakami's Japanese that follows):

“You know what? I've always thought that Japanese people really treat the music of us Black folks with understanding. Just like Europeans do,” [the driver said].

でもな、俺は思うんだけど、日本人は俺たち黒人の音楽をきちんと理解して扱ってくれるよな。ヨーロッパの人たちと同じように。

“I think you're right. That's why so many jazz musicians have left America and come to Japan and Europe,” [I, Murakami, said].

そうだと思う。だから多くのジャズミュージシャンがアメリカを離れて、日本やらヨーロッパやらに来た。

“Right. Kenny Clarke, Bud Powell, Dexter Gordon...all of them left America. Americans just don't respect jazz at all,” [the driver said].

そう、ケニー・クラーク、バド・パウエル、デクスター・ゴードン、みんなアメリカを離れた。アメリカ人はジャズに全く敬意なんか払わないものな。<sup>12</sup>

This exchange indicates that although Murakami is an outsider to the jazz world of Black Americans, he is also an outsider to white America's anti-Black racism. In this context, the driver understands their shared taste in music to create a bond reflecting how Japanese jazz fans have long been sympathetic to “the music of us Black folks.”

When the driver next asks Murakami if he knows of the jazz pianist Barry Harris, and after Murakami confirms that he does (“I know him, he's a great pianist”; 「知ってる。良いピアニストだ」), the driver elaborates the affection that Black jazz musicians like Harris felt for Japan, where they and their music were more highly regarded than in postwar America. The driver explains that Harris once said to him:

“When you go to Japan, you'll be treated like a king.”

「日本に行ったらみんな王侯貴族みたいにもてなされる (トリーティッド・ライク・ア・キング) なんだって。」<sup>13</sup>

Comparing my English translation above to Murakami's Japanese below it, we notice that Murakami parenthetically emends his Japanese-language



translation of the driver's speech with a *katakana* version of the English-language expression that was originally spoken (*toriitiddo raiku a kingu*, "treated like a king"). This suggests that while the precise wording of the driver's talk matters to Murakami, it cannot be fully communicated through the Japanese-language translation that precedes the parenthesis and necessitates the parenthetical emendation that steers the reader of Murakami's Japanese-language text toward the middle ground between English and Japanese that *katakana* offers (*toriitiddo raiku a kingu*).<sup>14</sup>

We soon learn why the precise wording of the driver's statement matters. When the driver later contrasts the regal treatment of Black American jazz musicians in Japan with the racism they faced at home in America, he articulates his perspective in a statement that parallels Harris's:

"Look, in this country [America], we're all just treated like a dog, oh yeah."

なああんた、この国では俺たちはみんなほんとうに犬のように扱われる (トリーティッド・ライク・ア・ドッグ) なんだよ、オー・ヤー」<sup>15</sup>

By writing in a parenthetical emendation in this quotation as well, Murakami reveals that the driver's statement (*toriitiddo raiku a doggu*, "treated like a dog") is an echo of Harris's statement (*toriitiddo raiku a kingu*, "treated like a king").

As Murakami listens to the dialogue between these two Black Americans about how they have been treated by others, he takes care to consider, too, how their speech is treated by the othering force of translation. In the end, Murakami deploys two parallel translations: one that conveys Japanese-language content (*inu no yō ni atsukawareru*), and another that conveys English-language form (*toriitiddo raiku a doggu*). The implication seems to be that what matters most for the reader of Murakami's Japanese-language text is that the driver's English-language speech emerges in dialogue with the earlier utterance of Harris, a speaker who, unlike Murakami, belongs to the language community of the driver himself. In this sense, the parenthetical emendation *toriitiddo raiku a doggu* performs a kind of fieldwork that teaches the reader of Murakami's Japanese-language text to notice particular features of the language community to which the driver and Harris belong, and to which Murakami does not.

One of the larger-scale conclusions to be drawn from these close readings of *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi* is that as a translator, Murakami

implies an awareness of the peril of translation itself, which inevitably confronts the language of his Black American interlocutor with the specter of being transplanted out of its own forms and assimilated into a foreign idiom that is incapable of articulating its social indexicality. The perils of translation in this context come through in recalling the prominent American cultural critic James Baldwin's short essay "If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?" (1979), in which Baldwin writes that "people evolve a language in order to describe and thus control their circumstances, or in order not to be submerged by a reality that they cannot articulate. (And, if they cannot articulate it, they *are* submerged.)"<sup>16</sup> In this view, the particularity of Black English in America expresses the struggle of Black Americans to become legible to themselves, and articulate to each other, within the context of a broader social conflict that threatens to "submerge" their voices beneath the placid surface of a hegemonic English that does not recognize the historical particularity of their experience.

For readers of Murakami's *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi*, one of the most important implications of Baldwin's essay is that in some cases, translation can act as a form of conquest that obliterates the specificity of vernacular speech, "submerging" the very constellations of identity that the original language struggles to render perceptible. Baldwin implied this point in writing that the story of Black English was the story of an "absolutely unprecedented journey," one by which "passion," "skill" and "sheer intelligence" produced an "incredible music, the mighty achievement of having brought a people utterly unknown to, or despised by 'history'—to have brought this people to their present, troubled, troubling, and unassailable and unanswerable place."<sup>17</sup> Baldwin wrote that the social specificity of Black English had long been confronted by the submerging force of assimilation, such as when "white people purified" the sexuality of the word "jazz" by associating it with an innocuous notion of the "Jazz Age" writ large, or when the Black expression of poverty "beat to his socks" "was transformed into a thing called the Beat Generation," which Baldwin argued was largely "composed of *uptight*, middle-class white people, imitating poverty, trying to *get down*, to get *with it*, doing their *thing*, doing their despairing best to be *funky*, which we, the blacks, never dreamed of doing—we *were* funky, baby, like *funk* was going out of style."<sup>18</sup> Each of these examples implies how translation can have the effect of "submerging" social difference beneath the surface of a more homogenous and hegemonic English.

By extension, my reading of Baldwin would suggest that in *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi*, the imperfections of a translation that requires emendation, supplementary explanation, and other forms of fieldwork are not necessarily shortcomings of skill that could or should be remedied. Instead, these imperfections might be said to stand as ethical disclosures of the particularity of identity itself, which inevitably produces socially contextualized talk within indexical constellations that are irreducible, and therefore untranslatable. In this sense, *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi* is a revealing commentary precisely because it explicitly discloses the process—rather than only the product—of translation, unpacking the incommensurability among and within languages that a smoother-reading rendering would “submerge” beneath the surface of more placid prose.

### **Profanity Is What Gets Lost in Translation**

The supplemental explanations and parenthetical emendations that characterize Murakami’s attempts to render the driver’s speech in *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi* ultimately reflect how every utterance, in the words of the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, is simultaneously “deficient—it says less than it wishes to say” and “exuberant—it conveys more than it plans.”<sup>19</sup> Dispensing with any notion that language simply says what it means, Ortega y Gasset proposed that language is always “deficient” inasmuch as it can only articulate a small part of the whole of the social meaning it intends to convey, while at the same time being “exuberant” in its ambition to somehow represent that whole nevertheless, with the result being that words come to mean more than their speakers or writers can easily control. He located the origins of this paradox of language in the fundamental problem that our world is “ineffable” whereas our language is constrained. Ortega y Gasset argued that within the “frontier of ineffability” that always haunts language, however, a compensatory surplus of meaning emerges as writers and speakers paradoxically become articulate by “pass[ing] over in silence” what they expect “that the hearer can and should himself suppose” or “add.”<sup>20</sup> He concluded that as writers and speakers choose to say some things while knowing they can never say everything, “language in its authentic reality” becomes “a perpetual combat and compromise between the desire to speak and the necessity of silence.”<sup>21</sup>

In the context of the current analysis, Ortega y Gasset’s perspective on language makes any straightforward notion of translation untenable. This is so because in arguing that any complex utterance is likely to remain silent on some of its own implications, he also implied that no translation

is likely to find precise equivalents for each and every nuance of any usage of “language in its authentic reality.” In this view, we come to see that if, as Ortega y Gasset writes in “The Difficulty of Reading,” “to read, to read a book, is, like all other really human occupations, a utopian task” that is impossible to do perfectly, then how much more so must the act of translation be utopian, as Ortega y Gasset himself argued in his famous essay “The Misery and the Splendor of Translation.”<sup>22</sup> These complexities of language led the linguist A.L. Becker to encourage analysts working in multilingual contexts to move “beyond translation” altogether, and toward a more realistic reckoning with the impossibility of ever rendering the particularities of an utterance in one language in the verbal forms of another. Drawing on Ortega y Gasset, Becker explained that such a movement “beyond translation” would entail “an attempt at restitution for the careless aggression and violent appropriation involved in any act of translation—a restoration of the balance, a making visible of our failures.”<sup>23</sup>

Weaving these perspectives together, we might say that the kind of fieldwork that makes Murakami’s translation strategies visible to the reader of *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi* marks one step in the direction of moving “beyond translation” in the sense that Becker suggests because it renders explicit the sorts of techniques, compromises, and frustrations that are undisclosed in Murakami’s best-known translations, just as they usually are in any translation that asks to be read as a work of literary art rather than as an explanatory exposition. When Murakami translated F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*, and Raymond Carver’s short stories, after all, he intended for his Japanese-language renderings to be read as stand-alone works of literature that require few (if any) of the explanatory interventions that appear throughout *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi*. This is not to say, however, that Murakami did not grapple with the specter of the untranslatable in rewriting classic works of American fiction; rather, it is to observe that the specter of the untranslatable that is explicitly disclosed in *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi* remains “submerged” in his best-known translations, without “restitution” and invisible to the reader who encounters Murakami’s Japanese-language text alone.

At the beginning of *The Catcher in the Rye*, for example, Salinger’s first-person narrator Holden Caulfield declares: “I’m not going to tell you my whole goddam autobiography or anything.”<sup>24</sup> Murakami translates this sentence into Japanese as shown below, underneath which I translate

Murakami’s Japanese-language translation of Salinger back into English:

それに僕としちゃ何も、頭からそっくり自伝を話して聞かせようとか、  
そんなつもりはないんだ。<sup>25</sup>

I’m not going to make you listen to me tell you my whole  
autobiography off the top of my head or anything.

In comparing the English and Japanese versions of Holden’s speech, we notice that what disappears in translation is the mild expletive “goddam.”

This tells us that while it has been said that poetry is what gets lost in translation, we also notice that at the opposite end of the spectrum of decorum, the same is true of profanity. In *Nine Nasty W\*rds: English in the Gutter: Then, Now, and Forever* (2021), the scholar of language and culture John McWhorter explains that although words like “damn” and “hell” “were once more potent” forms of English-language profanity, they have long since lost the religious sense of condemnation that originally made them profane in the first place, such that “since the late nineteenth century, *damn* and *hell* have been understood as inappropriate in a formulaic sense, while in everyday life many ‘proper’ people have treated them like cinnamon sticks in tea.”<sup>26</sup> This is how Holden uses the word “goddam” in the quotation above—to flavor his language without giving any real sense of offense. Even so, though, the subtlety of “goddam” proves to be as difficult to translate as the stronger flavors of its spicier siblings in the family of profanity. Murakami’s translation captures much of the spoken vernacular style of Holden’s voice, but inevitably, the word “goddam” disappears in translation.

Murakami also encountered the specter of the untranslatable in the form of the most indecorous word that appears in the first chapter of *The Catcher in the Rye*: “faggy,” which *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines as an adjective meaning “gay, homosexual; characteristic or reminiscent of the (stereotypical) behavior, lifestyle, or interests of gay men.”<sup>27</sup> Holden uses the word to describe the weak showing of an opposing team’s fans at a high school football game in the passage below, which is followed by Murakami’s Japanese translation:

You couldn’t see the grandstand too hot, but you could hear them all yelling, deep and terrific on the Pencey side, because practically the whole school except me was there, and scrawny and faggy on the Saxon Hall side, because the visiting team hardly ever brought many people with them.

応援席の方はそんなによくは見えないんだけど、でもみんなが声をかぎりに叫びまくっているのは聞こえる。ペンシーの応援席はそりゃえらい騒ぎだった。なにしろおそらく僕一人を除いたペンシーの生徒全員がそこに勢揃いしていたはずだからね。それに比べるとサクソン・ホール側の応援はしょぼいものだった。ビジター・チームについてくる応援団の数なんてしれたもんだからさ。<sup>28</sup>

Murakami's translation of Holden's description of the opposing fans in question, "scrawny and faggy," replaces the two English-language words with one Japanese word: *shoboi* (しょぼい), meaning "without energy" (*genki ga naku*), "poor-looking" (*hinsō*), and "shabby" (*misuborashii*).

The Japanese word *shoboi* conveys weakness but nothing derogatory. In fact, when Murakami recalled his first visit to Princeton in 1984 as a pilgrimage to Fitzgerald's alma mater in *Yagate kanashiki gaikokugo*, he described the roadside motel where he stayed, The Princeton Motor Lodge, with the word *shoboi*, by which he obviously meant something like "shabby," and nothing like "faggy."<sup>29</sup> Reading Salinger's original text alongside Murakami's translation therefore reveals that in the Japanese-language version of the novel, Holden never speaks the word. Without comparing the translation to the original, though, there would be no way for the reader of the Japanese-language text to know of the omission, and in this sense, the word "faggy"—like "goddam"—becomes "submerged" in translation, so to speak, undisclosed and imperceptible to the reader of Murakami's Japanese-language text.

By comparison, we notice that *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi* evokes the movements of the translator's imagination differently than does a conventional translation that is meant to be read as a stand-alone work of literature, such as Murakami's translation of *The Catcher in the Rye*. As a personal essay composed in an expository style, *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi* supplements and explains the quoted speech of the driver by citing particular books that inform the reader about Murakami's understanding of his interlocutor's speech. This gives the essay a kind of bibliography of sorts that contextualizes how Murakami makes sense of the language he is hearing through bookish research.

After recording how the driver describes Black Americans being "treated like a dog" in their own country, for example, Murakami explains that he learned about racial prejudice in America from reading Miles Davis's autobiography *Miles* during his recent stay in Berkeley:

In my free time in Berkeley, I read Miles Davis’s autobiography *Miles* (the correct reading of his name in Japanese would be *Mairuzu* but for some reason it always appears as *Mairusu*). Miles speaks loud and clear about how much he was made to suffer as a result of living in a white supremacist society. About how much Black Americans are exploited and discriminated against. And about how much the great jazz musicians of his time—including Miles himself, Mingus, and Max Roach—fought against racial discrimination. They were in a position where all they could do was fight. In a world in which the social system excluded them, they had to assert themselves by pouring themselves into the music, making it that much richer.

バークレーでは暇な時間にマイルス・デイヴィスの自叙伝『マイルス』（マイルズが正確な読み方だと思うけれど、日本ではどういうわけかマイルスで通っている）を読んでいた。その中でもマイルスは、どれほど自分が白人優位社会の中でいじめられ、痛めつけられてきたかを、声高に、そして切々と語っていた。自分たちがどれほど搾取され、差別されてきたかを。そしてマイルスやミンガスやマックス・ローチと言った当時の優れたジャズ・ミュージシャンたちはみんな人種差別と激しく闘ってきた。闘わざるをえない状況に彼らはいた。社会システムそのものが彼らを含んでいない世界の中で、彼らは自己を主張し、その音楽を深化させていかななくてはならなかったのだ。<sup>30</sup>

This passage discloses that as an outsider to the speech community of the Black American driver, Murakami relies on his bookish research to understand what the driver means when he says that Black Americans are “treated like a dog” in their own country. *Miles* describes in detail the very jazz world of postwar New York that the driver discusses with Murakami throughout their conversation, and the book contextualizes the music of that world within the broader social history of racial conflict in America, too. *Miles* therefore serves Murakami as a valuable resource for understanding the voices of Black Americans living in a “white supremacist society,” and for understanding, too, a small measure of how the specificity of their historical and personal experiences have informed their music. This research fills in some of the bigger picture of race tension in America that hovers over the driver’s speech at the same time that it corrects small details in the textual record—such as the small detail that the name “Miles” has been mistranslated into Japanese as *Mairusu* instead of *Mairuzu*.

After indicating how the veil of translation can distort even the seemingly incontestable facts of Miles Davis’s given name, Murakami

next observes that the mistranslation of the name “Miles” presents in microcosm a measure of the untranslatability of the text of *Miles writ large*. He explains that for all that *Miles* contains useful information about American history and social life, its greatest virtue is the style and voice conveyed by its prose:

This book [*Miles*] can truly be read only in the original English. If *Miles* were to be translated into Japanese, the original text would lose 30 to 40 per cent of its vigor no matter how skillfully the translation was rendered. The reason for this is that a Black writer [Quincy Troupe] set down in prose almost exactly the words that Miles himself spoke just as he spoke them. The language in *Miles*, then, is 100 per cent jazz.

この本は—というかこの本だけは—本当に英語で読むしかないと思う。日本語に翻訳されたら、たとえどれほどうまく翻訳されたとしても、おそらく原文の息づかいの三割から四割くらいは消えてしまうだろうから。これはマイルスが喋ったものを黒人のライターがほとんどそのまま文章化しているのだけれど、その文体が百パーセント「ジャズしている」からだ。<sup>31</sup>

Murakami suggests that part of what makes *Miles* difficult to translate is that the prose of the book emerged from the iconic trumpeter’s conversations with the noted writer Troupe. As a result, even the printed text reads like transcribed talk that conveys the music of Davis’s voice.

In the afterword to *Miles*, Troupe himself explains part of what Murakami seems to have intuited about the style of speaking documented in the book. Troupe writes that “Miles speaks in a tonal language, in the manner of mainland Africans and African-Americans from the South,” adding that “when I hear Miles speak, I hear my father and many other African-American men of his generation. I grew up listening to them on street corners, in barbershops, ballparks and gymnasiums, and bucket-of-blood bars. It’s a speaking style that I’m proud and grateful to have documented.”<sup>32</sup> In this statement, Troupe explicates what Murakami alludes to in the quotation above: namely, that the language of *Miles* originates in a style of speech that embodies the lived experience of a particular person from a particular community in a particular place and time. Content can be paraphrased in translation with the help of anthropological fieldwork, but the social life of language that gives *Miles* its vitality is irreducible, and, Murakami argues, therefore untranslatable.



A glance at *Miles* in English and Japanese reveals why Murakami suspected that its language cannot be translated. Below are the first lines in both languages, with the English-language original followed by the published Japanese translation by Nakayama Yasuki:

Listen. The greatest feeling I ever had in my life—with my clothes on—was when I first heard Diz and Bird together in St. Louis, Missouri, back in 1944. I was eighteen years old and had just graduated from Lincoln High School. It was just across the Mississippi River in East St. Louis, Illinois.

When I heard Diz and Bird in B’s band, I said, “What? What is this!?” Man, that shit was so terrible it was scary. I mean, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie “Yardbird” Parker, Buddy Anderson, Gene Ammons, Lucky Thompson, and Art Blakey all together in one band and not to mention B: Billy Eckstine himself. It was a motherfucker. Man, that shit was all up in my body. Music all up in my body, and that’s what I wanted to hear. The way that band was playing music—that was *all* I wanted to hear.

まあ、聞いてくれ。

オレの人生で最高の瞬間は、……セックス以外のことだが、それはディズとバードと一緒に演奏しているのを初めて聴いた時だった。ちゃんと憶えている、一九四四年、ミズリー州セントルイスだ。ミシシッピ川を挟んで、ちょうどイリノイ州東セントルイスの反対側。オレは一八歳で、リンカーン高校を卒業したばかりだった。

“ミスターB”のバンドでディズとバードを聴いた時、オレは叫んだね、「ワア、これは何だ!？」。ものすごすぎて、恐ろしくなったほどだ。みんなから“B”と呼ばれていたビリー・エクスタインがリーダーで、ディジー・ガレスピー、チャーリー・パーカー、バディ・アンダーソン、ジーン・アモング、ラッキー・トンプソン、アート・ブレイキー……。みんな一緒にあのバンドにいたんだ。とにかくすごかった。あの音がオレの身体の中に入ってしまった。オレはあの音が聴きたかったんだ、全身ドブプリとつかってしまった。“B”のバンドときたら……。そこにはオレの聴きたいことが全部あった。<sup>33</sup>

Nakayama deserves our admiration for navigating the utopian challenge of translating *Miles*. The Japanese-language translation above conveys much of the content of the English language original, to be sure, and something of its style, too. But on comparing the two versions closely, we

also notice that as Davis’s English-language voice moves into Japanese, some things change. For example: the aside “with my clothes on” is spelled out explicitly in Japanese that says “other than sex” (セックス以外のことだが); “that shit was so terrible it was scary” becomes something like “it was all too amazing, so much so that it was scary” (ものすごすぎて、恐ろしくなったほどだ); and “man, that shit was all up in my body” becomes something like “that sound entered my body” (あの音がオレの身体の中に入ってしまった).

But the most noteworthy and untranslatable word in the quotation above is “motherfucker.” It appears in the English-language expression “it was a motherfucker,” with which Davis describes the sensation of hearing jazz played by Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker for the first time. In Japanese, however, the utterance becomes something like “it was just amazing” (*tonikaku sugokatta*). In assessing what gets lost in translation, it serves to recall that McWhorter observes “there’s something Black about *motherfucker*,” just as Troupe writes that the “tonal” quality of Davis’s language—which Troupe associates with the speech of “mainland Africans and African-Americans from the South”—came through in how he could use “*motherfucker*” in a wide variety of ways, whether “to compliment someone or simply as punctuation.”<sup>34</sup> To be sure, McWhorter acknowledges that “just why *motherfucker* came to be especially embraced by Black people is a mystery.”<sup>35</sup> But he also explains that it is inarguable that this word means something in Black American speech that it does not in the vernacular talk of anyone else, so much so, in fact, that McWhorter writes in his description of Black acquaintances using the word that “the whole thing fails to translate” if the Black speaker in question were to be replaced with a white speaker “of any kind.”<sup>36</sup> As a matter of translation in the excerpts of *Miles* quoted above, then, the semantics of “motherfucker” are not the problem—obviously, Davis is not speaking of anyone fucking anyone’s mother, and if he were, *that* would be easy to translate. Instead, “motherfucker” matters for its melody, its rhyme, its tonality, and its Blackness. It reveals, as McWhorter writes in the last lines of his study of “English in the gutter,” that “there is complexity in profanity, then, even of the humblest variety. *Jibber-jabber, tittle-tattle, pitter-patter, mother-fucker.*”<sup>37</sup>

One way of elaborating the difference between “it was a motherfucker” and “*tonikaku sugokatta*” (“it was just amazing”) would be to say that in the Japanese translation of Davis’s statement, “nothing happens.” I borrow this expression from the scholar Jonathan Lear’s study of the demise of

Native American culture in the years after a formerly nomadic tribe—the Crow—were placed on reservations in the American plains, never again to live the way of life that had previously defined their community. In his study, Lear focuses on the statement by Plenty Coups, the last chief of the Crow, who said of the loss of the Crow’s nomadic way of life: “When the buffalo went away the hearts of my people fell to the ground, and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened.”<sup>38</sup> Lear explains that this enigmatic statement—“after this nothing happened”—reflects the demise of the structures of meaning by which the nomadic Crow had made sense of their world, including rituals related to intertribal warfare on the Great Plains in particular. Once the Crow were placed on reservations and intertribal warfare was prohibited by the US government, however, the same rituals that once celebrated bravery on the battlefield became meaningless. “Nothing happens” in the new context because the same warrior rituals performed on a reservation without warfare could never again make meaning or construct significance in the same way that they did in the nomadic age of intertribal conflict.

One of Lear’s most illuminating conclusions holds that while the demise of the Crow’s way of life is historically particular in so many ways, it also reveals a universal feature of the human condition that includes us all. “Humans are by nature cultural animals: we necessarily inhabit a way of life that is expressed in a culture,” Lear writes. “But our way of life—whatever it is—is vulnerable in various ways.... [I]f our way of life collapsed, things would cease to happen.”<sup>39</sup> Lear suggests a view of culture and meaning that measures vulnerability in proportion to particularity and untranslatability. This view holds that all human beings rely on the specificities of cultural context to supply the grammar that gives words meaning, and that endows actions, rituals, and performances with implications. If the grammar fails or the context changes, though, meaning falls apart, and “nothing happens” because we lack the ordering force of cultural narrative by which to make sense of our world as before.

This is a crucial perspective to integrate into the current analysis, if only because taken too far, any study of the untranslatable particularity of the speech or culture of another can run the risk of exoticizing or Orientalizing how other people make sense of their world in terms that are different from one’s own. This risk can be mitigated, Lear’s study would suggest, by a comparative perspective that understands the specter of the untranslatable to be something that haunts all human lives. That is why we find traces of it in the language of Holden Caulfield and Miles Davis, in

Ortega y Gasset's European philosophy and in Becker's studies of Southeast Asian languages, in Lucey's close readings of Proust no less than in Lear's study of the Crow and Baldwin's reflections on Black English. Drawing these threads together, then, we might say that "nothing happens" when Davis's expression "it was a motherfucker" is translated into the Japanese *tonikaku sugokatta* because the words are no longer Davis's own, the context has moved from English to Japanese, and the translation therefore cannot mean the same thing that Davis's own language meant. "Nothing happens" because *tonikaku sugokatta* is not how Davis talked, and because these Japanese words cannot mean what he meant when he said, "it was a motherfucker." In noticing this, we notice, too, that the shortcomings of the Japanese-language translation have nothing to do with the skill of the translator. Instead, they are a confession of the gulf between self and other, language and language, "exuberance" and "deficiency."

In the end, encountering the specter of the untranslatable can be humbling, of course, if only because it reminds us of all that we will never be able to fully understand in the languages and cultural practices of others. However paradoxically, though, grappling with the untranslatable can lead to more hopeful moments of insight and connection, too. As *Miles* prompts Murakami to reflect on the meaning of language-in-use and the untranslatable contingency of context, it ultimately teaches him to listen to the driver's words in real life, and to hear in them something that textual transcriptions, however faithful, can never reproduce:

And yet, when the Black driver turned to me and said quietly, "Look, in this country we're all just treated like a dog, oh yeah," I somehow felt that in the tranquility of his voice, something had been communicated to me that was different from what I had read in *Miles*. Setting aside the propagandists who yell it all from the rooftops, an ordinary Black man would never say to me what he said. They would most likely believe that no amount of explanation could ever do justice to what they wanted to say [about race in America], for it is not the sort of thing that one could ever convey all that simply or briefly. And then, it might be the case that some folks simply would not want to talk about it in the first place. But this older man murmured it just as our conversation about jazz was coming to an end. And then we moved on and talked about something else. I have to imagine that had he not known that I love jazz, he never would have brought it up. Somehow, that's how it seemed.

でもその黒人の運転手が僕に向かって、「なああんた、ここの国では俺たちはみんなほんとうに犬のように扱われるんだよ、オー・ヤー」と静かな声で言ったとき、マイルスの本を読んだときに感じたのとはまた違ったある種の思いが、その静けさとともに伝わってきたように思う。声高にプロパガンダをする人はもちろん別だけれど、普通の黒人はなかなか僕なんかに向かってこういうことは言わない。たぶんいちいち言ってもしかたないし、それに短時間で簡単に伝えられることでもないと思っているのだろう。それともあるいはただ単に話したくないのかもしれない。でもそのおじさんは僕とジャズの話はずっとして、その最後にフットそれだけを吹くように口にした。そしてまたそれっきり別の話に移ってしまった。僕が本当にジャズが好きだということがわからなかったら、彼はそんな話はまず持ち出さなかつただろうと思う。なんとなくそういう気がする。<sup>40</sup>

For all of the difference and distance that emerges in the course of Murakami's conversation with the driver, this passage indicates a form of trust, and of sympathy, that articulates in the murmured expression "Look, in this country we're all just treated like a dog, oh yeah." Murakami himself is addressed personally (*naa anta*), and is made to feel that his taste in jazz has allowed him access to the talk of the driver that would otherwise not have been forthcoming. The boundaries between insider and outsider never dissolve, of course. But even so, something comes to the surface in a conversation that could have forced it to remain "submerged," to return to Baldwin's term. And something happens where nothing had to, as Lear teaches us to see. As the fieldwork of translation allows Murakami to listen to the voice of another, then, even words that articulate the gulf between self and other are spared the fate of being spoken into a conversation in which "nothing happens."

### Conclusion

In *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi*, Murakami writes about how we talk about the styles of pop culture that we love with other people who love them, too, even if those other people are not just like us. He suggests that loving popular culture—for whatever reason—and talking about its particularities—in whatever language—forges what the art critic Dave Hickey once described in an essay about playing jazz with neighbors he grew up with in Texas as democratic "communities of desire," by which Hickey meant "people united in loving something as we loved jazz."<sup>41</sup> For Hickey, the kind of art that promotes this sort of democratic community of desire tends to be meaningful without being lofty, more popular than

pretentious. It is the art of jazz, but also of Norman Rockwell and Johnny Mercer, he wrote, both of whom could be denigrated by scholars for their formulae, commercialism, and clichés—the very things that Murakami’s critics have charged against his fiction. Hickey presents a different perspective, however. He observes that it is precisely because popular culture “has no special venue” (such as a museum or a school) that institutionalizes its value and defends it from criticism that it depends for its survival most of all on its power to captivate ordinary interpreters in everyday life, who give it value by talking about it with others. “And I love that kind of talk, have lived on it and lived by it,” Hickey writes. “To me, it has always been the heart of the mystery, the heart of the heart: the way people talk about loving things, which things, and why.”<sup>42</sup>

The language of connection in a community of desire where talk and taste articulate sympathy even in the absence of solidarity is what Murakami writes about when he writes about his conversation with the driver in New Jersey. It could be objected, of course, that any excessively optimistic reading of their conversation runs the risk of eliding their immense differences in terms of race, class, and privilege. Such an objection would remind us why Hickey observes that focusing on the feelings of sympathy conduced by culture is sometimes discouraged or denied these days for fear that such feelings “privilege complacency and celebrate the norm.”<sup>43</sup> But Hickey himself counters that the things that allow us to connect with others—however imperfectly, however contingently—should never be taken for granted. They conduce what Hickey called “kindness, comedy, and forgiving *tristesse*,” and these “are not the norm,” he writes. Instead, “they signify our little victories—and working toward democracy consists of nothing more or less than the daily accumulation of little victories whose uncommon loveliness we must, somehow, speak or show.”<sup>44</sup>

That “somehow” is what *Bākurē kara no kaerimichi* is all about.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For Murakami’s translation of Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, see *Gurēto Gyatsubii* (Tokyo: Chūō kōron, 2006). For his translation of Salinger’s *The*

*Catcher in the Rye*, see *Kyatchā in za rai* (Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 2006). Murakami's translations of Carver have appeared in several different volumes. See, for example, his translation of Carver's volume of short stories *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* (1976) in *Tanomu kara shizuka ni shitekure* (Tokyo: Chūō kōron, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Murakami Haruki, "Bākurē kara no kaerimichi," in *Yagate kanashiki gaikokugo* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1997), 119–134.

<sup>3</sup> Several recent commentaries have associated Murakami with what critics view as the bland, featureless prose that they believe to be promoted by the global book market, with the implication being that Murakami's feel for language tends toward the easily translatable rather than the contextually specific. In a 2010 essay in *The New York Review of Books*, for example, Tim Parks associated Murakami (among many others) with the rise of what Parks called "the dull new global novel." See Parks, "The Dull New Global Novel," in *The New York Review of Books* February 9, 2010. (Accessed online October 5, 2023 at: <https://www.nybooks.com/online/2010/02/09/the-dull-new-global-novel/>).

Parks held that the quest for global marketability required novelists to remove local flavor from their writing, with the result being that under the conditions of cultural capitalism, "what seems doomed to disappear, or at least to risk neglect, is the kind of work that revels in the subtle nuances of its own language and literary culture, the sort of writing that can savage or celebrate the way that this or that linguistic group really lives" (Parks, "Dull New Global Novel"). The celebrated translator of contemporary Japanese fiction Stephen Snyder has written that "I find myself agreeing with Parks" and "lamenting on one level the flattening and homogenizing effect of the global literary markets I've been studying for years now—and which are the underpinning of Murakami's remarkable success." See Snyder, "Insistence and Resistance: Murakami and Mizumura in Translation," *New England Review* 37.4 (2016), 141. Snyder observes that Murakami's "work moves between languages and cultures (and, perhaps particularly, into and out of English) with relative ease and fluidity, with few textual and stylistic impediments or difficult cultural contexts," elsewhere elaborating that Murakami's style "thematizes and demonstrates its own transability" in contrast to the novelist Mizumura Minae's prose, which "insistently resists translation or its possibility" (138, 136). In another study, the noted scholar of Japanese literature John Treat disputes the opinion that Murakami has any sort of a "unique" style, countering that "Murakami is not thoughtful enough to be postmodern (though he would like to be) and does not have a unique style (it's familiar, recycled American literary minimalism)." See John Treat, *The Rise and Fall of Modern Japanese Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 256.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Lucey, *What Proust Heard: Novels and the Ethnography of Talk* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>6</sup> David Karashima, *Who We're Reading When We're Reading Murakami* (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2020), 27.

<sup>7</sup> See Karashima, *Who We're Reading When We're Reading Murakami*; Snyder, "Insistence and Resistance: Murakami and Mizumura in Translation," 133–142; and Murakami Haruki, "Kaigai e deteiku. Atarashii furontia," in *Shokugyō toshite no shōsetsuka* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2015), 295–325.

<sup>8</sup> Murakami, "Bākurē kara no kaerimichi," 123.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>14</sup> Miles Davis echoed this sentiment where he wrote in his autobiography that when he visited Japan, his Japanese hosts "treated me like a king. Man, I had a ball, and I have respected and loved the Japanese people ever since. Beautiful people. They have always treated me great." (Miles Davis with Quincy Troupe, *Miles: The Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 269).

<sup>15</sup> Murakami, "Bākurē kara no kaerimichi," 129.

<sup>16</sup> James Baldwin, "If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?" *The New York Times*, July 29, 1979. Accessed online (October 4, 2023) at: [https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/98/03/29/specials/baldwin-english.html?source=post\\_page/](https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/98/03/29/specials/baldwin-english.html?source=post_page/)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, "The Difficulty of Reading," trans. Clarence E Parmenter, *Diogenes* 7.28 (December 1959), 2.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 6, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>22</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, "The Misery and the Splendor of Translation," trans. Elizabeth Gamble Miller, in Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet, eds., *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992): 93–112.



- <sup>23</sup> A.L. Becker, *Beyond Translation: Essays toward a Modern Philology* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 18.
- <sup>24</sup> J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1951), 3.
- <sup>25</sup> J.D. Salinger, *Kyatchā in za rai*, trans. Murakami Haruki (Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 2006), 5.
- <sup>26</sup> John McWhorter, *Nine Nasty W\*rds: English in the Gutter: Then, Now, and Forever* (New York: Avery, 2021), 15, 14.
- <sup>27</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “faggy (adj.),” July 2023, accessed online at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1131213502>. In addition, *Green’s Dictionary of Slang* defines “faggy” as “effeminate, homosexual,” and quotes the lines that I have quoted from *The Catcher in the Rye* as one of the early usages of the word in this sense. See Jonathon Green, *Green’s Dictionary of Slang: Volume 2* (London: Chambers, 2010), 13. *The New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* similarly defines “faggy” as “effeminate, blatantly homosexual” and quotes *The Catcher in the Rye* as an early usage in this sense, too. See Tom Dalzell and Terry Victor, eds., *The New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English: Volume I: A-I* (London: Routledge, 2006), 716.
- <sup>28</sup> Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, 5; J.D. Salinger, *Kyatchā in za rai*, trans. Murakami Haruki, 7–8.
- <sup>29</sup> Murakami, “Purinsuton—hajime ni,” in *Yagate kanashiki gaikokugo*, 14.
- <sup>30</sup> Murakami, “Bākurē kara no kaerimichi,” 129.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 129-130.
- <sup>32</sup> Quincy Troupe, “Afterword,” in Miles Davis with Quincy Troupe, *Miles: The Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 414, 415.
- <sup>33</sup> Miles Davis with Quincy Troupe, *Miles: The Autobiography*, 7, emphasis in original; Miles Davis with Quincy Troupe, *Mairusu Deivisu jiden*, trans. Nakayama Yasuki (Tokyo: Shinkōmyūjikkū entateimento, 2015), 36.
- <sup>34</sup> Troupe, “Afterword,” 414; McWhorter, *Nine Nasty W\*rds*, 264.
- <sup>35</sup> McWhorter, *Nine Nasty W\*rds*, 265.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 264.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.
- <sup>38</sup> Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 2.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

- <sup>40</sup> Murakami, “Bākurē kara no kaerimichi,” 130.
- <sup>41</sup> Dave Hickey, *Air Guitar: Essays on Art and Democracy* (Los Angeles: Art Issues Press, 1997), 36.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

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