

How Romance Translators Write Themselves and Their Readers into Afterwords

Isabelle Bilodeau

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Introduction

To ensure the positive reception of translated books, which hail from distant cultures and languages, publishers pay particular attention to how translated books are framed. The paratext, “a consciously crafted threshold for a text which has the potential to influence the way(s) in which the text is received” (Batchelor 142), can engage with readers’ expectations to make a book attractive and to guide how it is read. While some publishing cultures play down the fact of translation in this regard (see for example Norberg, and McRae), in Japanese publishing translators feature eminently in the paratext, particularly as authors of *yakusha atogaki* (translator afterwords).

Commonly found in translated books regardless of genre, *yakusha atogaki* is a flexible text type that can perform a wide range of functions. The most significant factor in what functions it performs is the translators’ agency in choosing what and how to write. This ranges along a spectrum, from translators following the *atogaki* “formula” and presenting informative but impersonal content, to placing their own persona at the center of the text as interested, storied characters. Another important factor is the genre of the book to which the paratext belongs, whether this is “capital-L Literature” (Carter 431) or one of the many genres of fiction and non-fiction. The “romance novel,” generally considered one of the most lowbrow genres, is counterintuitively one of the most likely to contain a translator afterword in Japanese translation. As such, it begs to be examined from the point of view of translator’s agency, particularly to find out how Japanese translators of romance novels engage with their readers through writing *yakusha atogaki*.

Romance novels are frequently derided for their formulaic plots, stock characters, and similarity to each other. Strict publisher guidelines of pre-set lengths and “key” plot elements are indeed at the core of one type of romance publication known as “series” or “category” romances. These are brief novels in numbered series with a short shelf life,

“bodice rippers” that infamously line the shelves at supermarket registers¹. However, the longer works known as “one-off” or “mainstream” romance novels draw closer to the middlebrow genre of “women’s fiction,” though its writers are nevertheless expected to provide a central romantic conflict resolved in a “satisfactory” manner². Defenders of the broadly-viewed genre of romance claim it is unfairly devalued even with respect to other lowbrow genres such as detective or science-fiction for the reason that it is “written by women, for women, about women, and portrays the unashamed positive realisation of female desire” (*Love Between the Covers*). To this may be added the fact that its translators are also women, at least in name³. Gendered and restricted networks characterize the production and consumption of romance. This becomes important when examining how translators interact with this readership in their paratextual writing.

In this exploratory survey, I examine extracts from a sample of translator afterwords for romance novels. By gathering information about the ways in which translators integrate the sender (themselves) and receiver (their imagined readers) into their writing, I hope to gain a clearer picture of the functions performed in this textual genre. How translators interact with their readers (interactive function) and act as promoters (promotional function) are of particular interest for the romance genre with its preset female production and consumption networks. Below, I describe the sample of afterwords and how it was collected. Then, from a few of its texts, I examine points at which translators “write” themselves and their readers into their text: addressing readers with stock phrases; representing readers by asking questions, voicing reactions, and giving advice; and representing themselves in connection with the book, as fellow romance readers, and in parallel experiences.

Sample

Examples 2 to 22 in this paper are from the afterwords to 18 novels, which are part of a larger sample containing all romance novels in the paperback foreign literature section at a public library in Nagoya, Japan⁴. The books were identified as romance novels based on cover designs, titles, and publisher’s imprint⁵. Using a preexisting population, that is, books selected without regard for this study by professional librarians for a general audience of library users, had the advantage of granting the researcher direct, physical access to a wide range of titles, writers, translators, and publishers/imprints. The resulting sample contains books from all publishers described as dealing in “romance” in an industry publication (“Hon’yakusho o tegakeru shuppansha risuto zen 40 sha”), and 14 of the 16 publishers of romance novels listed by the Japanese fan review site Romance-Hills.com; in other words, it suitably represents the range of Japanese romance publishers and imprints.

The sample was designed to include only the library's "mainstream" romance novels (including crossover genres such as romance-suspense and romance-horror), and not "category" romances, one of the few types of translated literature in Japan to rarely contain translator afterwords (Bilodeau "Discursive Visibility" 11-12). In the library, category romances were readily identifiable as they were stacked separately from mainstream paperbacks.

The proportion of books in the sample containing translator-authored paratext was 97 per cent—decisively higher than in Japanese translated literature as a whole, where a survey including other literary genres (literary fiction, thrillers, mystery, science-fiction, romance, and others) found a proportion around 70 per cent (Bilodeau "Literary translators as peritextual authors" 104). This itself denoted much higher frequency than in European and American contexts, where rates tend to be closer to 20 per cent in classics and literary fiction, and presumably drop even more steeply in the "commercial" genres, although these have not been systematically surveyed. In the Japanese context, higher frequency in romance novels suggests that romance afterwords have strong, stable functions that are valued by production agents, that is, translators, editors, and publishers.

Stock phrases

First, I examine the use of the conventional set phrases that can serve as convenient openings and closings for translator afterwords. Presentational statements are found in openings, while apologies, announcements and invitations can appear in both the initial and closing position of texts.

a. Presentational statements

Yakusha atogaki frequently open with a stock sentence that can be termed a "presentational statement" as it presents the book by naming it. The following, from outside the sample in this study (Bilodeau "Literary translators as peritextual authors"), exemplifies its simplest form:

Example 1

本書は、Chenjerai Hove, *Shadows*, (Baobab Books: Harare, 1991) の翻訳である。

The present book is a translation of Chenjerai Hove, *Shadows*, (Baobab Books: Harare, 1991)⁶. (Fukushima 231)

This opening signals factuality and accountability, whether to the source material or to readers. Spare and impersonal wording frames exact bibliographical information in the source language, showing an effort to situate the work outside the target culture distant from the readers of the translation. This is a case of a "highbrow" literary work with the translation and the afterword penned by a university professor. When dealing with the

lowbrow romance genre, translators tend to use the formula more flexibly, as the following examples from the romance sample show.

Example 2

本書は〈ミッドナイト・ブリード〉シリーズの三作目、前作のクリムゾン事件から4ヶ月後、二月の物語です。

This book, the third installment in the “Midnight Breed” series, is the story of [what happened in] February, four months after the Crimson incident in the previous book. (Ichinose 424)

Example 2 uses the impersonal opening seen above, *Honsho wa* [The present book], but de-emphasizes the translation aspect, characterizing the book as a “story of...” (*...no monogatari desu*) instead of a “translation of.” It gives no source language information, instead situating the book numerically in a series named in Japanese and refers to narrative content and a fictional timeline (“four months after the Crimson incident”) known to readers of the series. It focuses on briefing readers of the series, who are already-engaged, target-culture receivers.

Example 3

FBI シリーズ、第八弾『幻影（原題“Double Take”）』をお届けします。

I bring you *Gen'ei* [Phantom] (Original title *Double Take*), the 8th installment in the “FBI” series. (Hayashi 529)

In example 3, the impersonal sentence opening *Honsho wa...* is replaced by the sentence-end phrase *o-todoke shimasu* [literally: (I) bring (you)]. This phrase implies a sender and a receiver, thus announcing a more personal tone for the text. Like example 1, example 3 provides the title in the source language, but also features the translated title; yet, as in example 2, the series and the book's place in it are used to situate readers.

Example 4

ロデオで暴れ馬を乗りこなすカウガールのように鮮烈な日本デビュー、デリラ・デブリンの『テキサスの夜に抱かれて』をお届けします！

I bring you *Hold Me in the Texas Night* [original title: *Down in Texas*] by Delilah Devlin, making her Japan debut like a fiery cowgirl taming a wild horse at a rodeo! (Kimura テキサスの夜に抱かれて 358)

While the previous statements gave information, example 4 extends to expressive and promotional functions. Writer, translated title, and the fact of the writer's Japanese debut fulfill the informational function characteristic of presentational statements. Added to this is the “Japan debut”, akin to the “series” statements in examples 2 and 3 as it situates the author for knowledgeable readers. The characterization as “a fiery cowgirl taming a wild

horse at a rodeo!” not only plays up the subgenre (Western, or cowboy romance) to which the novel belongs, it also communicates the translator’s avowed enthusiasm through an exuberant metaphor and the use of an exclamation mark. Finally, the choice of the standard *o-todoke shimasu* phrase asserts the translator’s intent to connect with readers. This magnified use of the presentational statement shows how *yakusha atogaki* authors can play with standard forms.

The four examples above show the range of presentational statements, from unadorned, impersonal sentences to expressive exclamations in which a translator personally endorses a book. The constants are the informational function and the use of formula; the variables, the degree to which the presence of a sender and receivers is asserted.

b. Apologies

In books belonging to a series or written by a popular novelist, afterwords appear to frequently include an apology about publication delays. In an opening sentence, apologies may employ substantive phrases that also function as greetings, as in example 5.

Example 5

お待たせしました！ポリーナ・シモンズ著『青銅の騎士』の後編、『黄金の扉』をお届けします。

Sorry to have kept you waiting! I bring you *The Golden Door*, the second part of *The Bronze Horseman* by Paullina Simons. (Tominaga 321)

Example 5, from the final volume of a two-part, four-volume novel, uses the standard formula *o-matase shimashita* (lit.: [I] made [you] wait) as its opening, preceding the *o-todoke shimasu* presentational statement. The translator’s reference to “making the reader wait” is purely formal and its actual function is as greeting, rather than apology⁷. Nevertheless, the choice of this apologetic greeting conveys the translator’s emotional responsibility toward readers. The exclamation point, a rather strong accent for the phrase, draws the translator even closer to the reader.

In a closing paragraph, the apology may be elaborated with stock phrases that reinforced with personal information expressing heartfelt accountability to readers.

Example 6

未筆ながら、『ひそやかな微笑み』から二年以上の歳月が流れてしまったことを深くお詫びしたい。産休中とそれ以降、遅々とした進捗状況をあたたかく見守ってくださった二見書房と、また本書を手にとってくださいました読者の皆様に、心から感謝を申し上げます。

To finish, I want to deeply apologize for the two years that have elapsed since *A Quiet Smile*. To [publisher] Futami Shobō, which watched warmly over my slow

progress during my maternity leave and after, and to all the readers who kindly picked it up, I express heartfelt gratitude. (Yamada 528)

Example 6, situated at the end of its *yakusha atogaki*, functions as a full apology. It is integrated with an acknowledgment, thanking publisher and readers, but while the acknowledgment is routine (using the stock phrase *kokoro kara kansha o mōshiagemasu* [lit.: (I) offer thanks from the heart]), the apology goes beyond mere formality. It is fleshed out with substantive detail: the amount of time (two years), the title of the preceding book in the series, and the reason for the delay (maternity leave and child raising). Such fullness signals a sense of emotional responsibility toward readers, invoked as valued customers whose expectations are acknowledged as influent in scheduling the publication.

As the two examples above indicate, apologies can be packed with implications: conveying an emotional responsibility toward receivers/readers; acknowledging readers as valued customers whose needs must be considered; and signaling the translator's agency in relation to the book's development. Both examples also show apologies conveniently hinting at the popularity of a series or writer with prior readers, staged as impatient, eager, and waiting, thus appealing to potential readers. In this way, apologies in afterwords implicate both the translator and the reader as subjects in the production of the book.

c. Invitations

In addition to the urging implicit in mentioning a book's series, translators in afterwords may openly invite readers to engage with other books in a series or to read more works by the same writer. Such invitations are often phrased together with an announcement of publishing schedule and located at the end of the text.

Example 7

さて、ランダムハウス講談社では、クレイジー・シリーズ順次邦訳刊行していく予定である。どうか期待をふくらませつつ、新作をお待ちいただきたい。

At Random House, they plan to release serial translations of the "Crazy" series. Please build up your expectations while waiting for the new books. (Ikeda あの夏の天使 507)

In example 7, the translator announces the publisher's plans for the series (of which this book is the first installment), and prods readers to stay tuned. The translator both names and speaks for the publisher ("At Random House, they plan to"). She stays silent on the fact that she herself will not translate the future books—two different translators completed the series—but makes herself an agent of promotion in spite of this.

Example 8

一日も早くお手元に届くよう訳者もがんばりますので、ご期待ください。

I too will do my best to see that it [the next book] reaches you as soon as possible, so keep an eye out for it. (Katō 時の旅人クレア III 434)

In example 8, the translator's promise is contrastingly personal. The time factor frequently evoked in apologies features here too, implying demand and evoking eager readers to whom the translator holds herself accountable. As promotional acts directed at future publications, these invitations to read future books evoke the potential reader as demanding customer.

Translators' invitations in *yakusha atogaki* may also be directed at their own featured book, as in example 9.

Example 9

では、ちょっと不思議な世界のお話を、主人公のケリーといっしょに、はらはらどきどきしながら楽しんでいただければ幸いです。

I'll be glad if your hearts flutter with excitement as you enjoy following the heroine Kerry into this story's slightly strange world. (Takata 488)

This closing sentence recaps characteristics of the book which the translator described in the text ("a slightly strange world" refers to supernatural elements in the story; "hearts flutter with excitement" to the suspense elements of the romance). *Itadakereba saiwai desu* [I'll be glad if] is a standard formula to close a communication. Here, it invites readers to enjoy the book specifically through identifying with the heroine.

In the presentational statements, apologies, and invitations seen above, translators put their awareness of readers' needs on display. Romance afterword writers seem to lean towards using a personal tone, visible for example in the systematic use of *o-todoke shimasu* in presentational statements instead of the alternative, impersonal formula *Honsho wa*. The abundance of direct address is often linked to a series format, common in romance publishing, and romance translators court returning readers.

Writing readers into the text

The statements examined above are directed at readers but remain focused on communicating the translator's intention. Translators also take frequent opportunities to portray and "stage" an imagined reader in afterwords by asking question, voicing readers' reactions, and proffering advice.

a. Opening questions

Questions asked in the paratext of a published book obviously cannot command a response, unless the translator were to ask readers to write in their responses in a separate medium such as a website or a postcard; such a request for dialogue has yet to be found in the sample. Rather, questions are used for effect as "hooks" in openings, to direct receivers

to think of a particular topic.

Example 10

あなたはどんな人と結婚したいですか。

What kind of person do you want to marry?" (Kimura 愛と情熱の契約結婚 509)

Example 10 is a one-sentence opening paragraph that evokes the book's main plot point. As a seeming discussion opener, the question sets the stage for readers to identify with the heroine. The direct appeal to the reader with *anata wa* [you] as sentence topic and an interrogation about the reader's desires is notable. This "hook" is somewhat deceptive, as the translator goes on to a plot summary in which the heroine's dilemma is the topic, rather than continuing to discuss the question to readers.

Example 11

もし、あなたがそこで人質にされているとしたら、どんな男性に助けに来てほしいと思います？危険なものもしない、どこまでもタフでワイルドな頼りがいのある男？それとも頭脳戦でまんまと敵をあざむき、スマートな解決をめざす知性派の男？あなたを大切に思うあまり、自分の非力を忘れてがむしゃらに突入しようとする愛すべき男？

If you were taken hostage, what kind of man would you want to come to your rescue? A tough and wild yet reliable daredevil? An intellectual who cooks up a plan to take down the enemy in a game of wits? Or an adorable romantic so in love he rushes in to save you, forgetting his limitations? (Sakamoto ふるえる砂漠の夜に 277)

Example 11 concludes the opening paragraph of the afterword to a novel about an abductee rescue. The topic-setting question branches out into three suggested answers that in effect describe standard male protagonists of romance novels. The reader is again addressed with *anata*, this time as subject, and the tag phrase *to omoimasuka* [do you think], seeming to demand an answer from an individual reader. In the suggested responses, the translator frames the thoughts of her imagined readers about an ideal hero, and she places herself in fellowship with them.

b. Voicing readers' thoughts

Another strategy for evoking readers in romance afterwords is to stage readers' reactions to the featured story, and particularly their objections as a rhetorical appeasement strategy. In the following two examples, these imagined utterances are voiced through indirect and direct discourse.

Example 12

...出会ったばかりのハンサムな上流紳士と美しい牧師の娘が、あんな場所で、あんな

ことを！だれもが読み始めて間もなく、相当な驚きにみまわれることでしょう。
...from a handsome upper-class gentleman and the beautiful daughter of a minister
who have only just met, such behavior, in such a place! Anyone would be astonished
to encounter that so soon after they started reading. (Sakamoto パッション 466)

Example 12 is from an afterword to a historical romance that begins, controversially, with the hero and heroine having sex in a public place at their first meeting. The novel flouts romance readers' genre expectations for historical romances. The translator stages imagined readers protesting with the phrase "Such behavior, in such a place!" She predicts that readers will react negatively to broken genre conventions, and she offers an interpretation of their reaction: what shocks them is not the content itself, but its placement in the story "as soon as they started reading". This containment strategy showcases a presumed understanding of her imagined readers.

Example 13 takes the imagined readers beyond surprise to exasperation and anger:

Example 13

「なんなの、この尻切れトンボは。この先どうなのよ！」とじりじりした読者も多かったろう。「ロマンスものだと思って読んだのに、ラブシーンが全然ないなんて。まるで詐欺じゃない」と怒った読者もいたであろう。

There must have been many exasperated readers thinking, 'What is this non-ending? [I want to know] what happens next!' Maybe others got angry: "I read this thinking it was a romance, but there were zero love scenes. What a con job!" (Kato 時の旅人クレア II 465)

Using direct discourse to conjure up specific utterances by two different virtual readers, the translator demonstrates her concern for readers' reactions. Romance fans are said to be highly demanding in their expectations of conventional elements, such as tension-resolving love scenes and a happy ending (Hemmungs Wirtén 50). The book in question here was marketed as romance in Japan, while having been classified variously as romance and mainstream fiction in its original context (Wineyard). The translator is aware that the absence of genre elements may puzzle and even disappoint readers. She uses her own voice in the afterword to give readers a voice, with the ultimate goal of explaining the deviations in a positive light to retain readers.

Translators in the two examples above stage imagined readers' putative voices. They write as though they know the readers and their expectations, something which the conventions of the romance genre allow them to do without being overly presumptuous. The translators' own expertise in the genre is also put on display. And sympathy between translator and reader comes to the surface as translators signal their awareness of readers'

concerns by staging their imagined voices.

c. Giving advice

Translators also invoke imagined readers when they offer advice on how to read. In examples 14 and 15, the translators give tips on how to enjoy the translated book.

Example 14

あとがき、とはいいますが、ストーリーを読むまえにあとがきを読む方も、意外に多いのではないのでしょうか。そんな方のために、本作を二倍楽しむ方法をお教えしましょう。お手元にミュージカル音楽をご用意ください。それを聴きながらこの物語を読む、それだけです。簡単ですね。

It's called an "afterword," but a surprising number of people are probably reading it before the story. For those people, let me offer a simple way to double your enjoyment of this book. Get yourself some recordings of musicals. Listen to them while reading the story; that's all. Easy, isn't it? (Sakamoto 誘惑のトレモロ 280)

For a novel that takes place in the world of stage musicals, the translator suggests a soundtrack to enhance the reading experience. She stages the reader as an afterword "preview" reader, that is, a potential and still undecided reader. Her metatextual comment on the "afterword" she is writing also claims to know readers and their quirks.

Example 15

一冊ごとに読んでももちろん楽しめる。順を追って読んでいけば、過去の作品の人気登場人物がゆるく絡み合いながら織りなす一回り大きなドラマが浮かび上がってくる。そして手元の一冊を読み終わったとたん、すぐにでも次が読みたくなる。

Of course, each book [in the series] can be enjoyed on its own. [But] by reading the series in order, an epic drama unfolds as earlier books slowly reveal links between favorite characters. And as soon as you finish reading that book, you'll want to start the next. (Ikeda 波間に眠る伝説 439)

In example 15, the translator recommends a reading order for the whole series, with specific reasons for how this will maximize enjoyment. The advice is openly promotional, vaunting the series' power to hold readers' attention. Following her advice will yield an appealing experience of "epic drama" and "slowly reveal[ed] links between favorite characters."

In both examples, the translator presumes ("a surprising number of people are probably," "of course," "you'll want to start") to readily understand and predict her readers' needs, allowing her to promise a positive experience. The translator's voice portrays the imagined needs of her reader and guidance as a prior reader herself.

Writing the translator

Just as translators have reasons to stage their imagined readers, they also have reasons to portray themselves as the dialogic other in the text. In this way they can emphasize connections between themselves and the translated book, and between imagined readers and themselves, either as a typical engrossed romance reader, or as a reader with a parallel mindset.

a. Connections with the story

By telling stories of personal connections to the translated book in afterwords, translators can suggest that a privileged bond exists between the translating individual and the text. Example 16 is the opening of an afterword for a novel that takes place in a mountainous wilderness and involves the heroine encountering wild bear. The translator evokes her own experience of bears.

Example 16

わたしが住む八ヶ岳山麓の森では、いまがキノコ採りのシーズンだ。朝、犬の散歩に行くと森の中からシャンシャン、とか、カランカラン、とか鈴の音が聞こえる。熊避けの鈴だ。ゴミ集積所の掲示板には、熊の目撃情報が張り出している。...都会で生まれ育ったわたしなど...

Where I live in the forests at the foot of Yatsugatake Mountains, it's mushroom-picking season now. In the morning when I take my dog out for a walk, I hear tinkling and clanging sounds coming from within the woods: bear-repellent bells. At the trash-disposal site's notice board, a notice about bear sightings has been put up ...For someone like me who was born and raised in the city... (Kato 胸騒ぎの夜に 417)

Watashi [I], the first word of the text, repeated later, sets the translator as the writing subject. The choice of hiragana orthography (わたし rather than 私) suggests casualness and a female identity. Vivid details—where she lives, her dog-walking habit, her origins as a city person—are explicitly local (“Yatsugatake Mountains”), thus connecting with her Japanese readers. On the other hand, her proximity in daily life to wild bears constitutes a personal, almost serendipitous connection with the American novel's bear-related plot point. Readers are left to make the obvious connection: her personal experience supports her competence in translating this particular novel.

In example 17, the translator notices that a character in the book has put on a shirt that features a quote from a pop song she herself enjoys.

Example 17

今回はグウエン・ステファニーのヒット曲、「ホワット・ユー・ウェイティング・フォー」からフレーズを拝借しています。訳者はこの曲が大好きなので、読んだ瞬間に舞いあ

がってしまいました。

This time, [the shirt] borrowed a phrase from the Gwen Stefani hit song “What You Waiting For.” I [lit: the translator] love that song, so I flipped out the moment I read that. (Matsui 574)

The translator revels in the connection between the book and her musical tastes. She gives readers a glimpse of her person: knowledgeable about and connected to pop culture; sensitive and excitable. The use of *yakusha* (the translator) as sentence topic underscores that this personal anecdote interrupts an otherwise impersonal description of plot elements in the afterword. With this interjection, the writer is no longer a faceless translator but a reader herself reacting appreciatively to the book.

b. Translator as fellow romance reader

In addition to showcasing personal connections with their book, translators in romance afterwords also frequently depict themselves as typical consumers of the romance genre, that is, as sentimental, engrossed readers who are emotionally vulnerable to the story and actively seek out its affecting elements. The following three examples feature this characterization.

Example 18

何度読んでも、同じところで涙が止まらなくなる。

No matter how many times I read it, I start bawling at the same spot. (Tominaga 197)

Example 19

... 気づいたら主人公たちとともに一喜一憂、涙を流しながら一気に読みてしまいました。

... before I knew it I was swinging from joy to sorrow with the protagonists, and all in tears I finished reading in one go. (Sakamoto パッション 467)

Example 20

おっと、つい夢中になって、だらだらと粗筋を書きつらねそうになりました。

Oops, I've gotten so absorbed I was about to ramble on and reveal the whole plot. (Shimotsuki 589)

The tropes of emotional identification and absorption are particularly relevant in the romance genre, as the capacity to inspire such reactions is considered the mark of a successful book. In example 18, the translator tells readers that she cries repeatedly at one point in the story, showing them that she shares their competence to read the genre. Example 19 also evokes an ecstatic, tearful reading experience in which the translator became immersed in the narrative. Example 20 focuses on the translator's absorption into

the story to the point of forgetting her professional role—rather than the authoritative writer of commentary, she is a reader, “absorbed” in the story to the point of loss of control. These portrayals also promote the book—a romance that can make you cry is highly desirable.

c. Parallel experiences

We have seen translators voice their imagined readers and portray themselves. They can go one step further and conjure up explicit parallels between readers’ experiences and their own.

Example 21

本書には...魅力的な人物が数多く登場します。...しかし、訳者にとって最も魅力的に思えたのは、小さな街の狭量さと俗物性を体現している“おばさん四人”でした。本書を読み終えた方ならば、きっと共感していただけますよね？

In this book...many fascinating characters appear. ...However, what I found most fascinating was the “four aunts” who embody the narrow-mindedness and snobbery of a small town. Readers who have finished reading the book, surely you sympathize with me? (Hirae 379)

In the last sentence of example 21, the reader addressed (“readers who have finished reading the book”) is the effective reader, the one who is reading the afterword in the conventional order (as opposed to the “preview” readers in examples 14 and 15 who overlook convention and read the afterword first). The translator started the paragraph with an overview of several “fascinating” secondary characters in the impersonal mode—assuming consensus. She concludes in the example above with an opinion that diverges from the consensus (“However, for me...”), and then brings the effective readers to her side, asking them to side with her rather than with the consensus (“surely you sympathize with me?”). Readers’ agreement is both assumed and requested, as shown by the interrogative with the combination of particles *yo* (assertion) and *ne* (asking for agreement). Translator and reader are shown to be in virtual agreement about this singular preference.

Example 22

『パッション』にワースト票を投じたのは、おそらく残念ながら、そのセクシーのハードルでつまずいた読者でしょう。...白状すれば、前評判がなければ、わたしも序盤で挫折していたかもしれません。

Those who voted *Passion* “worst [romance novel of the year]” were probably, unfortunately, the readers who could not get over that “erotic” hurdle. ...I confess, if it were not for the hype, I myself might have stopped reading early on. (Sakamoto パッション 467)

Example 22 is from the same afterword to the controversial novel already seen in examples 12 and 19. The translator evokes an event of negative reception in the source culture and guesses at its cause: readers' resistance toward the level of erotic content. While afterword writers must, implicitly, side with the novel, here the translator strategically leaves that conventional position ("confessing" her lapse) to situate herself with those resistant readers: she, too, was put off by what she was reading, in spite of abundant positive "hype"⁸. Staging herself going through a parallel experience, she validates imagined readers' concerns. This is a strategic move, modeling a desired consumer behavior (pushing through the "hurdle") and suggesting a reward (a positive reading experience beyond) to retain readership. What is notable is the use of the parallel with readers to achieve this aim.

Considerations

This survey explored how translators write themselves and their readers into their afterword practice by looking at a limited set of examples from a larger sample. The overview of strategies for staging a sender-receiver interaction shows that translators writing afterwords for romance novels inscribe an awareness of their specific readership into these texts. They give personal substance to formulaic phrases; they voice readers' objections and desires; and they write themselves into the text. In their texts, translators feature as attentive, emotionally involved producers, but also as engrossed consumers capable of the experience of romance reading. Their imagined readers correspondingly appear as valued, familiar customers, with needs and reactions that mirror those of the translators themselves.

Several directions need to be considered to explore the larger sample with the aim of situating the afterwords of romance translators as a translation paratext. One is the writing practices of individual translators with several texts in the sample: what can it reveal about how individuals engage with interactive and promotional functions? Sender-receiver interactions in these texts consider readers as desired consumers, not only of the book at hand but of related books, especially in the case of novel series. Examining promotional statements in the sample could reveal whether tensions arise between translators' self-portrayals and commercial imperatives. Another element to consider is the putatively female producer-consumer networks, and how they impact writing of these afterwords, for example in the expressive uses of first and third person pronouns. A third is the influence of publisher and imprint practices on translators' writing choices. Finally, outside this sample, a comparison with *yakusha atogaki* in other literary genres is needed to show whether interactive and promotional functions are magnified in the case of romance.

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Notes

- ¹ As an example, Harlequin's series guidelines can be seen here: <https://harlequin.submittable.com/submit>
- ² In mainstream novels, "No real limitations are placed on language, and the end may be more unpredictable. For instance, when asked how she would define a 'mainstream end' writer Nora Roberts used the word 'satisfactory,' having *Gone with the Wind* in mind." (Hemmungs Wirtén 52)
- ³ The use of female or gender-neutral pseudonyms for Japanese male translators of romance needs to be investigated.
- ⁴ Tsuruma Central Library, City of Nagoya; sample of 201 books collected in February 2017.
- ⁵ For example, the fan review site Romance-Hills.com lists the major imprints in Japan: http://romance-hills.com/special/take/?ft=inc_ptl_bookfinder_label. However, not all publishers have a specific imprint for romance novels.
- ⁶ All translations from the Japanese are mine.
- ⁷ The publication dates of the first and second part of this novel are only one month apart, which makes an actual apology unnecessary.
- ⁸ Regarding "hype", the translator explains that fans, in addition to dubbing *Passion* "Worst Read," also voted it "Most Luscious Love Story" and its author "Best New Author" in an annual romance readers' poll (Sakamoto パッション 467).

