
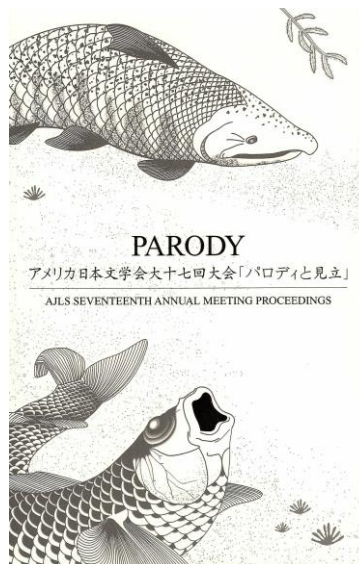


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## MAD SCIENTISTS AS TRANSLATORS: JAPAN'S FIRST ADAPTATION OF MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN*

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### INTRODUCTION

In the 1889 issue of *Kuni no motoi* (Basis of the Nation), a strange story called *Atarashiki zōbutsusha* (or *shin zōbutsusha* in some issues, *New Creator*, 1889) was serialized.<sup>1</sup> Complete with illustrations by Kobayashi Kiyochika, sometimes referred to as “Japan’s last ukiyo-e master,” the serial depicted a large bodied man, towering over and frightening those around him. This was none other than Japan’s first adaptation of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein: or The Modern Prometheus* (1818, later edition 1831).<sup>2</sup> Much of the original 1831 version has been cut out, and it is more of a melodrama than a monster tale, ending with the scene where the monster asks Frankenstein to make him a partner, craving love between a man and wife (*fūfu no ai*).<sup>3</sup> Not much about the translator who goes by “Master of Gourd Hut” (*hisago no yado no shujin*) is known, and judging by the fact that Shelley’s name does not appear on any of the pages, the audience was probably never aware of the original British author. The one thing that is clear though is that the aim of the translation was to educate Japanese women, the target audience of the journal, about Western science.<sup>4</sup> The journal itself was led by educator Nose Sakae, who worked directly under Mori Arinori and the Ministry of Education. The opening issue of *Basis of the Nation* is decorated by words of support by notable scientists, such as Baron Katō Hiroyuki, horticulturalist Yatabe Ryōkichi, and Miyake Hiizu, Tokyo University’s very first Doctor of Medicine and later Professor Emeritus. One glance at the 1889 issue reveals that *New Creator* was published side by side with articles such as “The Direction of Women’s Education,” “Stories on Illness and Healthy Lifestyle,” and “On Improving your Body Type” to fit these educator’s goal. Japan’s first

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<sup>1</sup> Hisagosha 1889. Henceforth referred to as *New Creator* in both text and notes. All translations are mine. When appropriate, I have written out the Japanese phrases in the footnotes.

<sup>2</sup> Shelley 1831. I am referring to this version rather than the 1818 one, since the translation appears to be based on the 1831 version.

<sup>3</sup> This would be the end of Chapter 4 in the second book of the 1831 version of the original—the 1831 version has 12 chapters.

<sup>4</sup> Yokota 1998, pp. 17–23.

translation of the monster tale, then was written for a didactic purpose. It raises questions about the relationship between the monstrous and scientific knowledge, between fantastic literature and empirical science, making the reader wonder how Western science came to be translated through the monstrous body of Frankenstein's creature.

According to Gerald Figal, Meiji Japan was in the process of casting out folk knowledge and superstition, replacing old knowledge represented by folkloric monsters with newer Western sciences and medicine:<sup>5</sup>

The alliance of a state-operated educational system and a national medicine based on Western medicine during the Meiji period had a two-part ideological aim: first, to shift the fear of monsters among the folk to a fear of folk belief itself; and second, to transfer a blind belief in folk medicine to a blind belief in state medicine (p. 92).

The Meiji government created for the first time the binary of human/monster, where the former came to represent the enlightened and civilized present, and the latter the uncivilized past. Figal further argues that this enlightenment process of the folk was also designed to "rationalize individual bodies into a national body" (p. 102) that functioned as an organic unit.

The monsters of translated texts, however, do not fit into this category of the "uncivilized" folk/monsters. The imported monsters cannot be placed in the same bracket as the older monsters like *yōkai*, not only because they were coded as new modern monsters, but because these texts were often turned into educational texts about western science. *New Creator's* monster, for example, was not meant to act as a critique of scientific positivism as Shelley's work is often understood to be. Rather, it was meant to educate the reader about new forms of science. Modern science was introduced via the figure of these new monsters. Superstition here was not something to be cast out, for it represented imported knowledge. One may say, in fact, that these translated monsters as being somehow tamer than their original counterparts because even though they may still appear to be threatening at the content level, their primary purpose was education and the dissemination of popular science.

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<sup>5</sup> Figal 1999, pp. 77–104.

This article explores the metaphor of monsters and their creators, the mad scientists, in Meiji 20s literary adaptations of English texts. Its goal is not to answer what kind of science was meant to be taught via these translations, but rather to open up a line of inquiry about how monsters can be used as a linguistic device for translating knowledge. After delving into how the concept “monster” was translated in the early Meiji era, the majority of the paper examines together the figure of the mad scientist with that of the translator in *New Creator*. I focus on the connection between the figure of the translator and that of the creator-scientist in order to show how these stories of mad scientists’ conflict with their hybrid bodies (*shintai*) could be read in conjunction with the Meiji translators’ struggle with producing the literary body (*buntai*). Specifically, I am interested in aligning the concept of the untranslatability of the original language (the impossibility of forming an equivalent in one language from another) with the idea of the monstrous, a hybrid body that reveals the gap between the original and its reproduction. Mad science tales are cautionary tales that illuminate what happens when someone re-creates a body from the “original” (corpses for mad scientists, the English language for the translators), but the reproduction (the monster, the translation) is never the same as before.

#### MONSTERS AS UNTRANSLATABLE LANGUAGE

From around 1878 (Meiji 11) onwards, Meiji Japan witnessed a boom in translation literature. Many of these were what may be considered SF, mysteries, or adventure tales today. Countless tales by Jules Verne, tales predicting the future (*miraiiki*), H.G. Wells, Swift, Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass*—these are just a few examples from the plethora of translated tales in the second and third decades of Meiji Japan. These tales were not exactly “translations” in its orthodox sense, that is, the concept of finding a linguistic, semantic equivalent in one language for another. The idea of literal translation (*honyaku*) was normally reserved for the sphere of diplomacy, law, and sciences, originating in the Tokugawa era with the translation of imported Dutch and other European medical texts.<sup>6</sup> However, a different kind of translation, what is often called, adaptative translation was the norm for the arts and was referred to as *honan’mono*. As J. Scott Miller describes, these texts adaptations were highly malleable forms that “inhabit the boundaries between literature and criticism” and is a kind of “creative criticism with a hybrid nature” (p. 4), and what distinguished these Meiji

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<sup>6</sup> Miller 2001, pp. 1–21.

adaptations from its Edo counterparts (such as translations of the Chinese *baihua* by the nativists) was that the Meiji writers saw *hon'anmono* as a valid alternative to the literal translation *honyaku*.

Many of these adaptations surrounded what we may call “mad science” themes, stories about the creation of a monster. Mad scientists, of course, is a later American trope popularized by Boris Karloff films,<sup>7</sup> so it is more fitting to say that I will be looking at the figure of the “creator” (*zōbutsusha*), which became common in the Meiji period. However, before delving into an analysis of the creator-scientist, I would first like to establish a working definition for the concept “monster” in the early Meiji era, for it would facilitate the later discussion of how we may read the figures of mad scientists as translators. In the section below, I will draw from various monster-themed *honan'mono* to re-define the monster as a kind of linguistic mistranslation.

Japanese translations of western monster tales challenge some of the more traditional ways of understanding the monster. The definition of the monstrous is often ocularcentric, emphasizing the visibility of the abnormal difference on their bodies. Thus, Peter Brooks has famously read the monster of *Frankenstein* as “nothing but body: that which exists to be looked at, pointed to, and nothing more.”<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Jeffrey Cohen has declared that one of the characteristics of the monster is its body as a sign, one that reveals and warns, a body that exists “only to be read.”<sup>9</sup> Much of these ocularcentric thoughts thus treat monsters as a failed embodiment of sorts, where they become the threatening other, their bodies marked with excess, visual differences, and abnormality.

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<sup>7</sup> Skal 1998 summarizes the mad scientist trope as follows: The mad scientist seems anarchic but often serves to support the status quo; instead of pressing us to confront the serious questions of ethics, power, and the social impact of technological advances, he too often allows us to laugh off notions that science might occasionally be the handmaiden of megalomania, greed, and sadism. And while he is often written off as the product of knee-jerk anti-intellectualism, upon closer examination, he reveals himself (mad scientists are almost always men) to be a far more complicated symbol of civilization and its split-level, discontents (p. 18). The mad scientist, for Skal, is often a tool for marking off the discipline of science as a male/privileged domain. Orbaugh 2006 notes this gender distinction as well when she comments: “The configuration of space and gender at this moment in modern science is paradigmatic: educated men of science are <out there> in the wildest reaches of the planet (or the wildest reaches of the scientific imagination) exploring the unknown and uncanny; and women are back in the metropole anchoring the good and true traditional values.”

<sup>8</sup> Brooks 1993, p. 220.

<sup>9</sup> Cohen 1990, pp. 3–25.

My goal is not to argue against these readings or diminish the importance of the visual body, but in the first half of Meiji Japan, when the perception of the human anatomy was constantly in shift and the binary of normalcy/abnormality or healthy/unhealthy not yet clearly established, questions arise as to how applicable such theories are, for they rely on the Cartesian binaries of mind/body and the natural/unnatural. There must be an alternative way of understanding the monster in Meiji writings, one that tries to show the process of how these foreign beings were being domesticated in the literary sphere and how they can be understood as linguistic functions rather than visual objects of the gaze. Peter Brooks once again sheds light on this question:

A monster is that which cannot be placed in any taxonomic schemes devised by the human mind to understand and to order nature. It exceeds the very basis of classification, language itself: it is an excess of signification, a strange byproduct or leftover of the process of making meaning. It is an imaginary being who comes to life in language and, once having done so, cannot be eliminated from languages.<sup>10</sup>

The notion of the body here is inseparable from language and linguistic signification. Monsters show the limitation of linguistic formation of the body and the process of embodiment and interpellation. They resist signification, for their bodies are often hybrid, comprised of parts that represent multiple significations. For this reason, they are often discussed as bodies of excess, plural existences that resist demarcation. I find this “resistance for signification” aspect of the monster to be particularly fitting for understanding the figure of the monster in early Meiji translations. How was something like the English word “monster,” now translated as *kaibutsu*, adapted in Meiji Japan? How was the concept of the hybrid body translated in Meiji monster narratives? How do they “resist signification” exactly? Before delving into the relationship between the mad scientist and the translator, let me first elucidate the definition of the monster in Meiji literary terms.

The description of the birth of Frankenstein’s creature in *New Creator* captures the monster in highly anatomical terms:

The large man (*ōtoko*) that was completed had fairly good proportions of arms and legs. His face too was supposed to be

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<sup>10</sup> Brooks 1993, p. 218.

created beautifully, but after his breath had been put inside, it had changed somewhat. Regarding the appearance of his body, his shining hair flowed, his teeth were clear and resembled pearls. His muscles and veins protruded excessively, and they were scarcely covered by the yellow skin. His face was so white that it stood out, and the two eyes were especially well-made, and I cannot describe how creepy they were. His lips were black and pointed, and I cannot capture its ugliness (p. 221).

In many Japanese adaptations, the Western monster is depicted as something “enormous,” and this one is no exception. The description here matches fairly closely with the English original, except “the large man” here is inserted to replace either “creature” or “wretch.” I will talk about these “insertions” a bit later, but for now, let us note that although bodily descriptions of monsters did occupy a large part of these narratives, the noun “monster” itself posed numerous difficulties for the translator.

In fact, the untranslatability and the absence of the word “monster” in the text are striking. In the original English, the word for the first time appears in the climactic moment when Frankenstein becomes aware of what he has done: “I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created.” This sentence in Japanese is completely omitted. Instead, there are conspicuous insertions, before the scene and after, where the translator writes “its appearance was one that was close to that of a *yōkai*” (p. 221) and also has Frankenstein remark, “I did not want to be captured by this scary *bakemono*” (p. 222), which in the original (if there is such a thing at this point) is something like “one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped.”

Meiji translators were extremely creative in conveying the idea of the Western monster, and they produced myriad of words in order to carry this out. In fact, the first thing that normally strikes the reader in these texts is that the word for monster is rarely unified or stabilized, and the translator often uses various *kango* (Chinese compounds) to capture the idea. One good example of this appears in the translation of Bulwer-Lytton's “Haunted House” (now known as *bakemono yashiki*, translated as *Rondon kidan* “Strange Tale of London” a bit before *Frankenstein* in 1880), in which at least four different Chinese compounds appear within the first ten pages: *bakemono* (no *ateji*), *yokai* (with the *ateji bakemono*), *kaibutsu* (with the *ateji bakemono*), and *yōbutsu* (with the *ateji*

*bakemono*).<sup>11</sup> Although all four are meant to be read as *bakemono*, the mixture of these compounds as written words visually stands out to the reader. A story about a cave monster in *Bōken sekai* also employs a similar technique, and the monster there is not unified in the reading at all, mixing words such as *kyōjū* (gigantic beast), *kaijū* (strange beast), *yōjyū* (mysterious beast), *kaibutsu* (strange thing).<sup>12</sup> *New Creator* also follows this pattern of translating the monster, as, the monster, on top of being compared to a “large man,” *yōkai*, and *bakemono*, will also come to be called *oni* (folkloric demon) and *daiyōbutsu* (the great mysterious thing).

Yanabu Akira has revealed the various different modes of translation in the early Meiji era. He has emphasized the importance of new *kango* (Chinese compounds), for the most difficult task of the translator at this time was to find equivalents for foreign nouns, verbs, and adjectives, and *kango* were seen as the most reliable tool for capturing at least some of what the other word meant.<sup>13</sup> Scholars have often seen the multiplicity of new *kango* within a single text as mistranslations in the sense of failed attempts by the translators to create a Japanese equivalent, but Yanabu sees these “mistranslations” as a positive force.<sup>14</sup> He argues that Meiji translators actually often recognized the impossibility of attaining semantic transparency, and they attempted to at least come close to the original meaning of the word by overlapping either pre-existing concepts or new compounds to capture the meaning to the best extent possible.<sup>15</sup> Thus, a word like “society” never found a unified form in Nakamura Keiu’s works, but instead one finds the juxtaposition of words like (*seifu*, *kaisha*, *kaisho*, *nakama*, *sezoku*) that together comes to stand for the single concept of “society.” In this sense, he is very much in line with theorist Lawrence Venuti, who has claimed that there is a kind of potential in creating gaps between the original and the reproduction, in how the translation/adaptation points to the contradictions and the hybridity of its own language.<sup>16</sup> Language in Meiji translation is at its basis defamiliarizing, for it reveals the untranslatable nature of languages. Western nouns posed a special challenge to Meiji era

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<sup>11</sup> Inoue 1880, pp. 228–230.

<sup>12</sup> *Bōken sekai* 1910, pp. 50–56.

<sup>13</sup> Yanabu 1976, pp. 34–49.

<sup>14</sup> Yanabu 1976, p. 24.

<sup>15</sup> Howland 2002 also discusses the variety of juxtapositions and compound words created by Meiji era translators, see especially pp. 74–76.

<sup>16</sup> Venuti 1998, pp. 9–20.



translators, who could only capture the single concept through multifarious layering of another foreign language—Chinese.

Monsters, in this fashion, may be understood as “misreadings” of sorts—not in the sense that the translators somehow got the original idea of the monster wrong, as there was no such concept in Meiji Japan, but as untranslatable bodies whose monstrosity was captured via the hybrid juxtapositions of Chinese compounds. Even though there were of course other ways of translating the word “monster,” for example writing out the phoneticization as *katakana kotoba* next to the Chinese compound (e.g. *tokei* accompanied by the *katakana* ‘wotchi’),<sup>17</sup> I have not yet been able to discover the *katakana* “monstā” in these adaptations. Meiji translators mainly used newly formed compounds or older words with similar connotations like *bakemono* to create a multiplicity of meaning in these tales.

The only other type of translation that differs from the one above is one where the translator chooses to use a unified word for “monster.” However, even then, it creates other kinds of “misreadings” in the translated text. Sagawa Shunsui’s *Kojō no kaibutsu* (The Monster on the Lake, a translation of “The Monster of Lake LaMetrie” by Wardon Allan Curtis) was published with numbered sections, grammatical explanations and a glossary of English words.<sup>18</sup> It was aimed at students interested in learning translation itself, and it offers a wonderful insight into how the word *kaibutsu* was used by Meiji writers. In this bizarre tale, a scientist goes to a lake to look for a lost creature from the past, an elasmosaurus. He discovers it, but the story of course does not end there. Since his servant decides to commit suicide, conveniently by cutting off his head and leaving the brain intact, the scientist replaces the brain of the creature with that of his servant’s, ending up with a hybrid human mind/dinosaur body creature. The monster actually speaks and sings like the servant, but eventually, the body takes over the mind, and the servant’s identity becomes forever lost in the creature’s massive body.

If one were to analyze the English story, one might offer a reading of this tale as a parody and subversion of the Cartesian binary of the body and mind, where the body is represented as being stronger than the mind and intellect. However, what is interesting about the Japanese adaptive translation is not the content but the surface language itself. In this story, the English word “monster” only appears twice in the whole text, but in the Japanese, the word *kaibutsu* appears almost incessantly. This owes to

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<sup>17</sup> Yanabu 1976, p. 24; Howland 2002, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Sagawa 1907.

the fact that *kaibutsu* is used as a generic term that stands not only for “monster” but also encompasses the English words “creature,” “elasmosaurus,” and “reptile.” It is in fact often inserted as a pronoun for “it” when the antecedent is the creature. In other words, the creation of the word *kaibutsu* was somewhat similar to the invention of what Yanabu has termed “superfluous pronouns” in the Meiji era, where something like the word *kare* (which in the Edo period connoted a genderless person/thing over there) came to be ascribed to the English “he,” most notably in the opening of Tayama Katai’s *Futon* (The Quilt, 1907).<sup>19</sup> *Kaibutsu*, in a similar manner, often acted as an excessive pronoun, where the translator decided to use the word instead of simply leaving out the English “it.” It thus functioned foremost as a linguistic filler, rather than as a signifier, a conveyor of meaning.

Furthermore, even in the original texts, the monster’s hybridity does not lie just in their body but also in their voice and language. Kuroiwa Ruikō, known for his “free adaptation” style wrote about a snake-man hybrid in *Ayashi no mono* (The Mysterious Thing, 1895–1896), an extremely loose translation of Edmund Downey’s “Little Green Man.”<sup>20</sup> In the key scene where the protagonist/surgeon meets the patient/monster, he says: “the words from his mouth were not that of a madman (*kichigai*). However, there was a strange intonation in his pronunciation (*iyōnaru fushi ari*), and he spoke like there was something in his mouth.”<sup>21</sup> This story is an interesting one that again involves a scientist, this time as a detective-type figure who must solve the identity of this patient, and the first clue that he gets is not the appearance of the patient but by his “strange” sound, an aural otherness. This strange sound, as we discover later, is due to the fact that the patient has an elongated snake tongue that he must hide, but it is interesting how body and language go hand in hand, even at the content level. You may also recall that Frankenstein’s monster too produces unhuman-like sounds when he arises, and in the aforementioned “Monster on the Lake,” the hybrid monster creates “a kind of incredible music” (*monosugoi ongaku*) which in the English is “the solemn notes of the Gregorian” and in Japanese the *noh* tunes of “*hashi benkei*.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Yanabu 2009, pp. 3–6 (unpublished version).

<sup>20</sup> Kuroiwa 1895. I describe it as “extremely loose” but in fact, it is completely different. The original tale is about leprechauns, but Ruikō’s tale is about a snake-man.

<sup>21</sup> Kuroiwa 1895, pp. 298–299.

<sup>22</sup> Sagawa 1907, p. 27.

Noel Carroll, who has laid out the typical plot of monster narratives has used the term *onset* to describe the moment when the presence of the monster is established in the text where the reader often knows much more than the protagonist, which then leads to discovery, where the protagonist notices its existence.<sup>23</sup> In these translations, the moment of discovery is accompanied by both strange sounds and bodies where the monster is defined through aural and visual differences. In this sense, the representation of these Western monsters via the juxtaposition or the mismatching of the reading in *rubi* and the *kango* (*yōkai* being read as *bakemono*, etc) is somewhat of a fitting translation where the visual written word (the body) itself is strange, but the reading, the sound of it is also defamiliarized through the gap between the *ateji* and the compound.

Early Meiji adaptations thus reveal how the idea of the imported monster, the idea of a visual hybrid body, was still in a constant flux, and how the translators used various techniques to tackle the concept and domesticate it for their Japanese readers. The monster here is not just an “excess” in terms of the body or a hybrid being who threatens the reader with all its extra body parts. It is also excessive at the surface level of the text—it appears everywhere, as pronouns, fillers, and translations of other words, and it is hybrid, not just in terms of the body but as word compounds. These linguistic monsters are emblematic of the Meiji translator’s effort (and their failure/impossibility) to create a direct translation, and this struggle and conflict with the creation of new *buntai* becomes encapsulated by the figure of the mad scientist and his endless battle of taming his monster.

#### REPRODUCING CORPSES

Although many Meiji translations introduce monstrous character, the focus of the stories lie much more on the creators of those monsters. That is, as much as the multiple words for “monster” may be significant, they cannot be understood without examining the word *zōbutsusha* (creator). Religious texts from this period used the term to capture the idea of the absolute Christian God, the one who *created* all, and although Fukuzawa Yukichi back in 1866 still translated the word “creator” as *ten* (the Confucian heaven), by the mid-1870s, *zōbutsusha* began to replace its older counterpart.<sup>24</sup> It is striking how many adventure stories, not just monster tales, were being translated with the word “creator” in their titles

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<sup>23</sup> Carrol 1990, pp. 97–157.

<sup>24</sup> Imaki 1877 is an essay on religion that uses the word *zōbutsusha* in this manner. Yanabu 1976 mentions this use of *ten* in Fukuzawa’s writings, p. 2.

to emphasize the “mad scientist” figure in the text. Inoue Tsutomu’s translation of Jules Verne’s “A Fantasy of Dr. Ox’: *Zōbutsu-sha kyōgaku shiken: gakujutsu myōjō* (Amazing Experiment of a Creator: A Strange Utilization of Technology, 1887) is a good example of this,<sup>25</sup> not to mention the aforementioned *Shinzōbutsusha* (New Creator). In the section below, I will turn to this latter text to examine the act of these creator-protagonist and his effort to reproduce bodies from corpses, tying it together with the Meiji translator’s struggle for producing a linguistic equivalent for the “monster,” described in the previous section.

*New Creator* has often been described as a fairly close translation (not counting the omitted parts), but this is a misleading statement. From the very beginning, what becomes evident, in fact, is the intranslatability and the awkwardness of the various first-person narrations. As in the original English version, the story begins with the epistolary form, where the sailor, who saves Victor Frankenstein from the icy waters, writes about him to his sister back home. In the English, of course, this creates the story-within-the-story framework for Victor’s own tale, and the transition from the first-person epistolary to the first-person of Victor’s story is fairly smooth.<sup>26</sup> However, in the Japanese, the letters are written in *sōrōbun* (a literary style reserved for writing letters, where each sentence ends with the verb *sōrō*), and it uses *keigo* (honorific language) towards the addressee, the sailor’s older sister. In other words, there is an extremely tight and set linguistic structure that distinguishes itself from the rest of the text, which as we have seen, is a lot more experimental in nature. Furthermore, the Japanese story abruptly ends without ever returning to the sailor’s tale, so there is no sense of a “box” or a sense of closure of any kind, and one is left to wonder what to do with the beginning epistolary part.

Monster narratives from this period, in fact, reveals the Meiji translator’s inability to fully capture a very specific kind of narration—the first-person. The emphasis on *ninshō* (~person narration) only appeared with the dissemination of translated literature. As Komori Yōichi has shown, before the conflux of translations, the Japanese language was something that resembled second-person narration in nature—in other words, the *katarite* (narrator) and *kikite* (listener) occupied the same space of utterance at the same time.<sup>27</sup> Meiji 20s

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<sup>25</sup> Inoue 1887.

<sup>26</sup> Orbaugh 2006 notes how in the original version, it is in fact through these letters that the entire story is told.

<sup>27</sup> Komori 1988, 31.

witnessed a boom of first-person narrations, for it was an era when translators like Tsubouchi Shōyō and Futabatei Shimei were tackling the problem of how to capture the interiority of their characters, how to create a kind of new narrator that did not simply equate to the authorial voice. Eventually, this resulted in the gradual disappearance of the physical, bodily narrator and the emergence of the invisible, omniscient one.

Maeda Ai and Kamei Hideo have both pointed out that in Edo texts, it was typical to have a physical character who was used as a device for narrating.<sup>28</sup> In Edo tales, there is often a character who stands behind closed doors or screens and listens in on the conversations or observes the other characters. This mediator figure then relays to the reader what s/he has heard and seen, thus weaving the story. Kamei points to this when he states that “to have an urbane sophisticate overhear the conversation between a geisha and a pretentious boor from behind the sliding door of an adjoining room, and thus expose its ludicrousness, was a technique much favored by the writers of late Edo *sharebon*.”<sup>29</sup> The author would create an often mockable character, embodied by the geisha in this case, who would utter obviously silly things. The mediator-character was thus a mode of expression that revealed the author (and presumably the reader's) opposite stance.

Kamei Hideo has traced these shifts in narration and the birth of a new kind of narrator in his essay on “the non-person narrator” in *Ukigumo*, where he describes a kind of in-between stage between the physical narrator of Edo and the invisible, omniscient narrator that emerges by the Meiji 30s. Kamei describes the non-person narrator as follows:

His (Futabatei Shimei's) narrator never manifests himself (more precisely, itself) distinctly within the novel by referring to himself with first-person pronouns such as *yo* or *watakushi*... At the same time, it would be impossible to say that this narrator is merely constituted as an observer's gaze, as a third person disconnected from any specific perspective on the depicted scenes or as a kind of omniscient presence that moves fluidly throughout...He listens to someone descending the stairs,

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<sup>28</sup> Maeda 1973; Kamei 2002, pp. 1–22.

<sup>29</sup> Kamei 2002, p. 18.

winking and signaling to the reader. This is a narrator with a very strong awareness of where he is situated.<sup>30</sup>

First-person narration was one of the earliest stages of experimentation towards the construction of the invisible narrator. Edo texts typically had physical characters, characters who would stand behind closed doors and listen in on the conversations and narrate what they heard; they were physical bodies that functioned as devices for carrying on the narration. The non-person narrator that Kamei describes is also a kind of *bodily narrator*, one that still listens in and has a specific presence.

Mad science narratives offer an interesting window into this relationship between narration and the body. At first, these tales seem contradictory in its goal to these modern narratives that try to efface the physical narrator. They are, after all, all about the re-creation of the physical body (the monster), a body that narrates. However, rather than seeing these stories as going against the Meiji intellectuals' goals, they should be seen as contributions to the Meiji 20's translation experiments.

There are numerous "first-persons" in *New Creator*. The two most conspicuous kinds of first-person narration are the confessional I (I who narrates about himself), and the companion-like I (e.g. Watson-who speaks not about himself but about Holmes).<sup>31</sup> The scientist is often someone who has committed a crime (the creating of the monster/ raising the corpse) and regretfully tells his story to the reader. *New Creator* begins actually with the companion-like narrator in the beginning because it begins with the epistolary form (the sailor who tells the reader about Victor Frankenstein) but then is quickly taken over by the reminiscing, confessional first-person (Victor talks about his experiment as "the regretful result"), which then is of course taken over by the monster's own confessional "I."

The scientist's first-person is a very specific kind of narration. He is not an ordinary narrator but one that dramatizes the situation and raises his position. He accomplishes this by claiming that his time is limited, that he will die soon. This was a technique employed by many other supernatural tales at the time, including Aeba Kōson's translation of Poe's "Black Cat", where the narrator begins by saying, "I will die

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<sup>30</sup> Kamei 2002, p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> Komori 1988 discusses these different first-person narration types in his analysis of Aeba Kōson's translation of Poe's "Black Cat," pp. 303–320.

tomorrow,” thus arousing the reader’s curiosity.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, in *New Creator*, Victor Frankenstein tells the sailor:

“I thank you for your sympathy, but it is useless; my fate is nearly fulfilled. I wait but for one event, and then I shall repose in peace.”<sup>33</sup>

In these monster tales, the first-person narrator is someone who distinguishes himself from the others in almost a narcissistic fashion. Frankenstein is someone who has a strong God complex, and the narrator in “Black Cat” too describes himself as a “man fashioned in the image of the High God.”<sup>34</sup> There is, however a huge difference between the first-person narrator of “Black Cat” and that of *New Creator*. The former has already been beaten by his monster and is going to die the next day. Frankenstein, however, has “one thing remaining,” his revenge against the monster, and his life is on hold. It is this suspension of temporality and the battle between the creator and its creature that pushes the narrative forward.

In both the Japanese and English versions, there is not only a bodily battle (Victor looks emancipated, as the monster runs about) but there is also a narrative battle, where the monster’s first-person narration vies with that of Victor. The monster gains enough knowledge at one point and takes over Victor’s story. In the original version, there is a large section devoted to the monster’s own tale, suspending the scientist’s narration, and in the Japanese version, too, the monster explicitly tells him: “Listen to me” (*waga koto o kikareyo*), thus turning Frankenstein into the listener.

Furthermore, there is an emphasis on not just speaking but speaking eloquently. When Victor is first discovered, he begins to speak “English that has a strange rhythm,” and once he has recovered, the sailors notice the beauty of his speech:

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<sup>32</sup> Aeba 1887, p. 83; Also discussed in Komori 1988, p. 303.

<sup>33</sup> Shelley 1931, p.28. *New Creator* p. 132: 私の運命は殆ど相決まり申候。私は、ただ一の出来事を、待つのに候。其れを仕舞候はば、安全に眠る積もりに御座候。

<sup>34</sup> Aeba 1887, p. 89.

when he speaks, although his words are culled with the choicest art, yet they flow with rapidity and unparalleled eloquence.<sup>35</sup>

After this, he is constantly described as a respectable person (*rippa naru jinbutsu* with his *rippanaru kotoba*). In other mad science tales as well, the monster's humanization is always measured by how well it can speak. We already saw how in *Kojō no kaibutsu* (Monster on the Lake), the scientist's creation ultimately produces "the solemn notes of the Gregorian." In contrast, in Kuroiwa Ruikō's *Ayashi no mono* (The Mysterious Thing, 1895–1896), the snake-man creation's monstrosity was marked by its strange intonation (*iyōnaru fushi*), an aural otherness.<sup>36</sup> Eloquent narrative and who controls that then often becomes the key theme in Meiji mad science stories. In other words, who is going to speak/write better? The monster or its maker?

And in *New Creator*, the story actually ends with the monster winning—both at the content level and at the linguistic level. As the story continues, the translation becomes more and more defamiliarizing because it reveals these gaps in the two languages, and the narration of Victor that is supposed to be eloquent and "respectable" begins to crumble. What is more, the work ends with the scene where the monster asks Frankenstein for a female partner, and the translator's last sentence is Frankenstein's words, "I rushed home to create another like him." In the English version, Frankenstein will then eventually start to make the female creature but destroys her body before she is completed, but in the Japanese version, this fact is hidden from the reader, and it ends as if Frankenstein is rushing off to fulfill his creature's desires. Frankenstein then is beaten by his creation, and his character greatly contrasts to the "respectable" man captured by the sailor in the beginning, and on top of this, his eloquence is also cut off by the awkward translation that cannot completely capture the English first-person.

Speech and body go hand in hand in these narratives. Mad scientists are first-person narrators who create another first-person and watch their copy slowly gain its voice and bodily power and destroy their own language. Reflecting on the effacement of the bodily narrator discussed above, one can read these stories as cautionary tales, not just about what happens when one recreates a body from butchered corpses (dead

<sup>35</sup> Shelley 1931, p. 26; *New Creator*, p. 130: 話など致候時は、不思議の能弁にて、立派なる詞を使ひ候。

<sup>36</sup> Kuroiwa 1895, pp. 298–299.



originals), but what happens when a text allows the dominance of that recreated body, letting it have its monstrous voice. These translators of these tales may not have been *directly* thinking about the erasure of the bodily narrator previously discussed, but they do illustrate the conflict and the possible consequence of what happens when a body that should remain dead is re-created as a narrator.

The figure of the mad scientist, in this manner, is a figure whose actions resemble that of a translator. The Meiji era literary critic Takayama Chogyū described the task of the translator as follows:

Translation does not imply looking up a word in the dictionary and replacing that with the original language. It is to assimilate it in complete harmony according to one's country's thoughts and also to recreate (*saizō*) it from its roots in that language. The translator always exhibits a full control and mastery of the languages on both sides, and for the passages he attempts to translate, must exhibit plenty of compassion (*dōjō*).<sup>37</sup>

Chogyū believed that translation of Western texts was the first step in the creation of *shinbuntai* (new writing, or literally, new literary body.) Meiji era monsters reveal the contradictory nature of Meiji era translation itself. Whereas on the one hand, these experimental texts revealed the gaps and limits of the target language itself, on the other hand, their goal (at least for the majority) was to create a unified literary writing. Monsters here are thus linguistic bodies that have the potential to threaten the concept of a homogeneous language through their excessiveness and non-signifying bodies but at the same time are emblems of the translators' goal to produce a seemingly coherent language. It is this contradictory nature—of domesticating scientific knowledge via frightening bodies or of creating a homogeneous language through a hybrid image—that distinguish these translated Western monsters from the Japanese folkloric monsters like *yōkai*, which could only be coded as outmoded.

Chogyū's description of a Meiji era translator is one who veers away from the original to the point where the original text is destroyed, taken apart, and recreated it into a new form. Just like a mad scientist, he is someone who "kills," collects corpses, and puts them together to create a monstrous, hybrid body. For both, there is nothing left but the hybrid copy, and the theme of mad science is a fitting tool for understanding the

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<sup>37</sup> Takayama 1914, pp. 171–172.

process of early Meiji translations. The only difference is that Chogyū had a little more insight than Victor Frankenstein, for *he* understood that it was impossible to create a perfect replica, that the original corpse could never be revived.

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