

10th Japan International Translation Competition:

English Section Review of the Contemporary Literature Category

Stephen Snyder

Translator of Japanese Literature, Professor of Japanese Studies, Interim President,
Middlebury College

The source text for this year's competition, Inoue Areno's short story "Nijuu-nin-me ruuru," is a fascinating study of character and voice, as well as a classic—and challenging—example of an unreliable narrator. As such, it provided the translators with a perfect canvas to display their skills, as they navigated between the matter-of-fact tone of much of the narrative and the slow revelation of the disturbing, slightly uncanny, and ultimately touching inner drama. The attraction of this text was apparent in the large total number of submissions and in the larger-than-usual pool of talented finalists. Many translators created original, insightful renderings of important passages in the story. Our Grand Prize Winner and Second Prize Winners demonstrated their accuracy and creativity across the whole of the text. It was a pleasure to see how competently and imaginatively they negotiated such issues as foreshadowing, consistent (age-appropriate) narrative voice, and the complicated tense structure of the original, and to see their translations come together as exciting, vividly imagined English-language texts that nevertheless carefully recreate Inoue's compelling story.

Grand Prize: Chelsea Marie Bernard

Grand Prize Winner, Chelsea Marie Bernard pays careful attention, in her rendering, "The Rule of Twenty," to the issue of voice, a critical aspect in a text whose central theme is aging in a multi-generational household. The inner dialog she creates for the elderly narrator consistently reflects his lifeworld and his growing confusion and embarrassment as his inner and outer worlds collide. At the same time, in sections of dialog, she fashions authentic voices for the younger characters in the story as well. Rendering dialog naturally is a challenge for any translator, and it proved to be a central one for this text, which has a higher-than-average percentage of quoted speech. One of Chelsea Bernard's many strengths as a translator is her ability to create voices for her characters and bring them

together in natural conversation. At one of the crucial moments in the story, we find this simple, evocative exchange between the narrator and the young man who has initiated him into the “Rule of Twenty” and is explaining why he agreed to the project in the first place:

“Did it ever cross your mind that she might’ve been . . . a little off? Or making the whole thing up?” I asked. *Of course*, I silently added to myself, *the same could just as easily be true of you*.

“You can just tell with these kinds of things, can’t you? From someone’s expression, the way they talk—you can tell if they’re lying or delusional. And even if she was, well, I figured that was okay, too. In the end, whether to believe or not is up to you.”

His eyes were sparkling, and I found myself wondering what, if anything, they could reveal to me about him.

“So why me? What about this old man caught your eye?” I asked.

“You just did, that’s all,” he said with an easy laugh.

I had to laugh, too. It was a good answer. He hadn’t picked me because I had some special quality or aura. I had just so happened to be there, that was all.

The combination of accuracy, sensitivity to the form and content of the original text, and the ability to render its quiet power in equally effective English makes Chelse Bernard’s translation worthy of the Grand Prize for the 10th JLPP International Translation Competition.

Second Prizes:

The translations by the Second Prize Winners, Joseph Peter Sabatino and Nicolas Keen, are also prize-winning efforts in every sense. They, too, capture the literary qualities of “Nijuu-nin-me ruuru” in accurate, evocative—at times haunting—English prose, and, like the work of the Grand Prize Winner, their translations demonstrated a marked degree of excellence that separated them from the large pool of highly competent submissions.

Second Prize: Joseph Peter Sabatino

Joseph Peter Sabatino’s translation shows how completely he has digested the original story and how fully he is able to recast it in literary English that is not overly dependent on that original. He takes some interesting risks with colorful phrasing, most of which work out

well, though others somewhat miss the mark. The prose is natural and fluent, and the handling of tense and voice is expert. Joseph Sabatino's translation shows its quality perhaps most clearly in the passages of quiet description, the interior dialog of the elderly protagonist:

I was staying in a room upstairs, a small tatami room right across the hall from my grandson Natsuo's. I could hear his music playing—safe to say he was already home.

Natsuo was eighteen, and had recently been rejected from his dream school. He sulked his way all through April, but by May he was back to his usual self. He wasn't the kind of person to dwell on things, much like his father. He was shy, sure, but there was a kindness about him too. All in all, I thought he'd turned out rather well.

When I opened the door to my room, I heard the music get a little quieter. Grandson-speak for "Welcome home."

Second Prize: Nicolas Keen

Nicolas Keen's version of the story, entitled "The Rule of Number Twenty," is another highly accurate, idiomatic rendering of Inoue's original. Mr. Keen's language is vivid, and he has an excellent grasp of tone for the sections of dialog, like his fellow prize-winners. The judges identified a number of places in the text that needed to be handled with particular skill in order to help the reader understand the shifting sense of reality in the text. Mr. Keen negotiated these challenges very effectively. He, too, is at his best in simple passages that are crucial to the character development. Here, the narrator is laughing inwardly as his son-in-law makes the same sort of verbal misstep he'd once made in his own marriage:

I felt wryly amused, though not at Yosuke's expense. The fact was I had no special fondness for cream stew. If anyone did, it was my wife. More exactly, what she truly seemed to enjoy was making it, and since she would ask for my verdict on those occasions, I'd tell her how good it was. Over time, the perception took hold in our house that cream stew was a favourite dish of mine.

All three of our winners are to be congratulated on their prize-winning translations, each of which distinguished itself for conspicuous excellence in a large and strong pool of submissions. The quality of all this work was noted with pleasure by the judges, and it is a pleasure to be able to recognize our Grand Prize and Second Prize Winners for their remarkable achievements. As always, we note the extraordinary potential represented by these efforts and we encourage our winners—and the other contestants—to continue their work in the field of literary translation.

第10回 文化庁翻訳コンクール 現代文学部門英語講評

日本文学翻訳家、ミドルベリー大学教授、暫定学長
スティーヴン・スナイダー

本年度の課題作である井上荒野の短編「二十人目ルール」は、ヴォイスや人物描写の妙を味わえる興味深い作品であるとともに、「信頼できない語り手」が登場する代表的かつ難易度の高いテキストだ。本作は、叙述の多くを占める淡々とした語り口と、じわじわと明らかになる不穏でやや不可思議、そして最終的には胸に迫る内的ドラマとのあいだを訳者が行き来するための、絶好の腕の見せどころとなった。その魅力は、応募総数の多さや、例年以上に充実した最終候補者の顔ぶれにも如実に表れている。多くの訳者が、作中の重要箇所 zu 独自の視点と洞察をもって取り組んでいた。

なかでも最優秀賞および優秀賞受賞者は、作品全体を通して正確性と創意を発揮した。伏線の処理、語り手の年齢に即した語りの一貫性、複雑な時制構造の取り扱いなどが、難所を巧みに乗り越え、原作の魅力を損なうことなく、英語読者にとっても情景が鮮やかに立ち上がる訳文へと仕上げていた。

最優秀賞：チェルシー・バーナード

最優秀賞のチェルシー・バーナードさんは、特にヴォイスに細心の注意を払っている。課題作の中心テーマ「多世代家族における老い」に対し、バーナードさんは高齢の語り手にふさわしい内的独白を一貫して構築している。語り手が、自身の内面と外界の衝突がもたらす混乱や気恥ずかしさに次第に吞まれていく様子が、丁寧に描き出されている。同時に、会話部分では、若い世代の人物たちの自然なヴォイスも見事に表現している。会話文の自然な訳出は、翻訳者にとって常に大きな課題だが、本作では引用された会話文が平均より多く、なおさら難易度が高かった。バーナードさんの大きな強みのひとつは、登場人物それぞれのヴォイスを的確に創り上げ、自然な会話として結びつける力である。物語の要所のひとつには、語り手と、「二十人目ルール」に彼を導いた若い男性との間の、次のような簡潔で印象深いやり取りがある。

“Did it ever cross your mind that she might’ve been . . . a little off? Or making the whole thing up?” I asked. *Of course*, I silently added to myself, *the same could just as easily be true of you.*

“You can just tell with these kinds of things, can’t you? From someone’s expression, the way they talk—you can tell if they’re lying or delusional. And even if she was, well, I figured that was okay, too. In the end, whether to believe or not is up to you.”

His eyes were sparkling, and I found myself wondering what, if anything, they could reveal to me about him.

“So why me? What about this old man caught your eye?” I asked.

“You just did, that’s all,” he said with an easy laugh.

I had to laugh, too. It was a good answer. He hadn't picked me because I had some special quality or aura. I had just so happened to be there, that was all.

（「その女性がその……少し頭がおかしいとか、嘘を吐いているとかは考えなかった？」

もちろん君がそうである可能性もあるねと心の中で付け足しながら私は言った。

「こういうことってなんかわかるじゃないですか。相手の表情とか話しかたで。嘘でも妄想でもないって。それに、まあ、そういうのでもいいかなって思ってたんです。ようするに信じるか信じないかは、自分の問題だと」

青年の眼はきらきらしていて、そのことはどのような判断のよすがになるだろうか、と私は考えた。

「それで、どうして私なんだね。こんなじいさんの、どこが君の目に留まったんだね」

「留まったんだから、仕方がないですよ」

青年は軽やかに笑った。私もつられて笑った。いい答えだと思った。美点や存在感故に選ばれるわけではないのだ。ただそこにたまたま私がいた。そういうことなのだろう。）

バーナードさんの訳文は、正確性、原作の形式と内容への鋭い感受性、そして原文の静かな力を英語で再現する技巧を兼ね備えており、第10回 JLPP 国際翻訳コンクール最優秀賞にふさわしい出来栄だ。

優秀賞

優秀賞のジョセフ・サバティーノさんとニコラス・キーンさんの訳文も、あらゆる点で受賞に値する水準に達している。両者とも「二十人目ルール」の文学的価値を、正確で喚起力に富み、時に忘れ難い英文へと見事に置き換えている。最優秀賞受賞者と同様、非常に高い完成度を見せ、多数の優れた応募作の中でも際立った存在であった。

優秀賞：ジョセフ・サバティーノ

サバティーノさんの訳文は、原作を深く読み込み、土台にしながらも過度に原文に縛られない自然な文学英語へと再構築している点が秀逸である。大胆で生き生きとした表現を試みており、その多くは非常によく機能しているが、中にはやや的外す箇所も見られた。文章は自然で流麗、時制やヴォイスの処理も巧みである。特に、高齢の語り手による静かな描写や内的独白の場面では、サバティーノさんの力量がもっともよく表れている。例えば、

I was staying in a room upstairs, a small tatami room right across the hall from my grandson Natsuo's. I could hear his music playing—safe to say he was already home.

Natsuo was eighteen, and had recently been rejected from his dream school. He sulked his way all through April, but by May he was back to his usual self. He wasn't the kind of person to dwell on things, much like his father. He was shy, sure, but there was a kindness about him too. All in all, I thought he'd turned out rather well.

When I opened the door to my room, I heard the music get a little quieter. Grandson-speak for "Welcome home."

(私は二階の四畳半を使わせてもらっている。廊下を挟んで向かい側は孫の夏郎の部屋だ。音楽が聞こえてくるから、今日はもう帰っているのだろう。夏郎は十八歳、第一志望の大学に落ちたので四月は少々ふてくされていたが、五月に入ったら元気になってきた。単純明快な性格は父親似だろう。シャイだが、なかなかやさしいところもあって、今どきにしてはいい子に育ったものだと思う。

私が和室に入ると、聞こえていた音楽の音量が少し下がった。それが孫流の「お帰り」の挨拶だ。)

優秀賞：ニコラス・キーン

ニコラス・キーンさんは原作をきわめて正確かつ自然な英文に訳出している。会話部分の語り口は鮮やかで、他の受賞者と同様に優れた感覚がうかがえた。物語の「現実の揺らぎ」を理解する上で慎重な処理を要する箇所がいくつかあるが、それらに対してキーンさんは効果的に対処していた。また、人物造形の鍵となる何気ない場面で真価を発揮している。例えば、語り手が、かつて自分も経験したような言い間違いを婿の陽輔がしているのを見て、内心でおかしさを覚える場面が、実に見事に訳されている。

I felt wryly amused, though not at Yosuke's expense. The fact was I had no special fondness for cream stew. If anyone did, it was my wife. More exactly, what she truly seemed to enjoy was making it, and since she would ask for my verdict on those occasions, I'd tell her how good it was. Over time, the perception took hold in our house that cream stew was a favourite dish of mine.

(私は苦笑いした。陽輔くんに対してではない。じつのところ私は、クリームシチューがとくだん好きというわけではないからだ。どちらかといえば妻の好物で、それも私が思うに、食べるというより作るのが彼女は好きで、作るたびに「今日のはどう？」と聞かれるからおいしいおいしいと答えていたら、いつの間にか私の好物ということに家族内で認識されてしまったのだ。)

3人の受賞者の翻訳はいずれも、応募数が多く優れた翻訳群の中で際立つ傑作だった。この度の受賞を心よりお祝い申し上げる。審査員一同、翻訳の質の高さを特に評価しており、最優秀賞および優秀賞受賞者の素晴らしい功績を称えたい。これらの訳業が強く感じさせる将来性を踏まえ、受賞者、そして応募者が、引き続き文芸翻訳の道を歩まれることを期待したい。