Lost Chapters in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*: A Translation and Commentary

Kieran Robert Maynard
Fudan University

Abstract

Murakami Haruki is among the most translated living Japanese authors. His novel *Nejimakidori kuronikuru* (1994, 1995) has been translated into English as *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (1997) by Jay Rubin, who cut about sixty-one of 1,379 pages, including three chapters (Book 2 Chapters 15, 18, and part of 17; and Book 3 Chapter 26). Other sections were rearranged or altered. I believe the deleted sections should be included in the translation, as they invite new interpretations and enhance appreciation of the novel. This paper summarizes the deleted sections, analyzes the consequences of their omission, and argues for inclusion in the English edition of the novel.

Murakami Haruki’s Career as a Novelist

The Japanese author Murakami Haruki has written several novels that feature thirty-something listless males as protagonists and read like detective stories in which the protagonist (who is also the narrator) must solve a mystery by navigating a world upended by supernormal events. Murakami’s short stories and novels are often described as “magically realistic,” in which strange phenomena like leeches falling from the sky coexist with detailed descriptions of everyday life. At 29 years old, Murakami began writing fiction, and published his first book in 1979. After the publication of *Norwegian Wood* in Japan in 1986, his popularity skyrocketed; he became known in the United States after being published in *The New Yorker* in the 1980s, and was probably the first Japanese writer whose work was published by that magazine. In the late 1980s, Murakami visited Europe and the United States, where he stayed at Princeton and Tufts Universities as a visiting scholar. He also spent time in New York City, where he procured an American literary agent. During his time in America, Murakami wrote *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*.

Murakami has contracted three principal translators. His early works were translated by Alfred Birnbaum, and the later works have been translated by Philip Gabriel and Jay Rubin. Jay Rubin is the Takashima Research Professor of Japanese Humanities at Harvard, whose research now focuses on Murakami Haruki and the pivotal turn of the century Japanese author Natsume Sōseki, both of whom Rubin has translated into English. Rubin worked with Philip Gabriel to translate Murakami’s novel *IQ84*.

*The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*

In 1994 and 1995, the three volumes of Murakami’s *Nejimakidori kuronikuru* were published in Japan. At the time, the work was Murakami’s longest novel. Among other convoluted plot elements, the novel deals with Japanese war crimes in the Manchurian Empire. The main narrative follows the protagonist Tōru Okada, a thirty-something man out of work whose world starts to change in after the disappearance of his cat. His wife leaves him, and he starts receiving calls from a strange woman. He meets a host of odd characters and enters a dream world at the bottom of an empty well in the quest to discover the truth about his wife’s...
disappearance. The novel was translated into English and published as *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* in 1997 by Jay Rubin, who called it “so far, his most serious novel”. In June 2000, many German readers were surprised to learn that the German-language translation of *South of the Border, West of the Sun* was a re-translation of Jay Rubin’s English version rather than a direct translation from the Japanese text. It was also discovered that the German *Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* was a re-translation, with significant textual differences from the Japanese that it had adopted from Rubin’s English text. According to Rubin, Murakami read and approved the translation, including deletions and alterations, but many readers were left with a vague impression that the “adaptation” of the novel somehow impinged upon its “authenticity” as a representation of Murakami’s text. Out of intellectual curiosity as an avid reader, I wondered what changes had been made, and compared the Japanese text to the English, and found that about sixty-one pages of Japanese text were missing in the English, including three chapters (Book 2 Chapters 15, 18, and part of 17; and Book 3 Chapter 26). Several passages had been moved, and in many cases one or two lines had been deleted.

**The Missing Chapters and Altered Sections**

In Rubin’s English translation, Book 2, Chapter 15 of the Japanese, where Tōru prepares to go to Crete, is deleted completely. In Chapter 15, he wakes up with the clairvoyant woman Creta Kanō, who had mysteriously appeared in his bed the night before. She says that she has lost her name, and invites him to flee Japan with her and go to Crete. He burns all the memorabilia left by his wife, goes into town, and buys a suitcase. He reads an article the protagonist reads about his nemesis and brother in law, Noboru Wataya, who is trying to become a politician. A large portion of the article is included in the text. In Chapter 17, Tōru takes a passport photo and meets with his uncle, who explains how to select real estate properties by standing for hours watching passerby. The passport scene is deleted and Tōru’s uncle’s 9-page explanation is condensed to an English paragraph. The rest of the chapter is unabridged. Chapter 18 is cut completely, but a few sections are preserved elsewhere. A scene in which Tōru talks with May Kasahara is combined with a similar scene in Chapter 17, and Lt. Mamiya’s letter is moved to Book 3, Chapter 1. In the deleted sections of Chapter 18, Creta Kanō returns, and Tōru informs her of his intention to remain in Japan. He meets May Kasahara, and they watch the demolition of the Miyawaki house. He swims in the ward pool and has a vision of floating in the bottom of the well hearing horses dying during an eclipse. This leads him to a revelation that the strange woman on the telephone is none other than his wife Kumiko, ending Book 2 on a cliffhanger. In Book 3, Chapter 1 is spliced with a later chapter, and Chapter 2 is moved. Chapter 26 is deleted entirely. In that chapter, Tōru has a direct computer chat with his nemesis, Noboru Wataya, and threatens to invade his dreams. The English version lacks a table of contents, but if the chapters in both texts are arranged side-by-side, the deletions are apparent.
Lost Chapters in The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle

The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle Book 2 Chapter Headings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English translation</th>
<th>Japanese original</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 Creta Kanō’s new departure</td>
<td>14 Creta Kanō’s new departure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 The only bad thing…</td>
<td>15 The right name, the things burned with salad oil… (Kieran Robert Maynard translation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 The simplest thing… (end of Book 2)</td>
<td>16 The only bad thing…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>17 The simplest thing…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>18 Tidings from Crete, the things that fell… (end of Book 2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the English version, because it is not revealed that the mysterious phone woman might be the protagonist’s wife Kumiko until near the end of Book 3, there is no cliffhanger between Books 2 and 3. Thus the end of the Book 2 Chapter 16 in English is spliced with the end of Japanese Book 2 Chapter 17 and a few lines from Chapter 18.

End of Book 2 in English vs. End of Chapter 17 in Japanese

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English translation end of Book 2 (final Chapter 16)</th>
<th>Japanese original end of penultimate Chapter 17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I could not—and should not—run away, not to Crete, not to anyplace. I had to get Kumiko back. With my own hands, I had to pull her back into this world. Because if I didn’t, that would be the end of me. This person, this self that I thought of as “me,” would be lost. (Murakami 1997: 338)</td>
<td>I cannot run away, and should not run away. That was the conclusion I reached. No matter where I might go, that would always chase me down. No matter how far. (Murakami 1994: 332; Kieran Robert Maynard translation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the start of Book 3 the chapters have been rearranged. Rubin combined two chapters called “May Kasahara’s POV” (there are seven in total in the Japanese) and moved the “Hanging House” chapter to make the chronology of events consistent. Chapter 26 is cut entirely.

Book 3 Chapter Headings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English translation</th>
<th>Japanese original</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 The Wind-Up Bird in Winter</td>
<td>1 May Kasahara’s Point of View</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Waking from Hibernation…</td>
<td>2 The Mystery of the Hanging House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 What Happened in the Night</td>
<td>3 The Wind-Up Bird in Winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Buying New Shoes…</td>
<td>4 Waking from Hibernation…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 A Place You Can Figure Out If You Think About It Really, Really Hard (May Kasahara’s POV: 1)</td>
<td>5 What Happened in the Night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Nutmeg and Cinnamon</td>
<td>6 Buying New Shoes…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 The Mystery of the Hanging House</td>
<td>7 A Place You Can Figure Out If You Think About It Really, Really Hard (May Kasahara’s POV: 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Down in the Well</td>
<td>8 Nutmeg and Cinnamon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 The Zoo Attack (or, A Clumsy Massacre)</td>
<td>9 Down in the Well</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These chapters contain plot elements not found elsewhere in the book. By omitting these chapters, three major changes are made. First, without the vision of swimming in the well, Tōru’s transformation from patient to agent is not motivated. Without Chapter 15 and the opening of 17, in English Tōru is never shown with any intention to leave Japan. Rubin removed several minor references to hesitation over leaving Japan in addition to the large cuts, and has said that he felt the deliberations were too long, as Tōru doesn’t go in the end. In the deleted sections, Tōru actually makes many preparations to flee Japan at the height of his weakness. His hesitation over leaving contrasts with the firm decision he makes after his vision of swimming in the well.

In Chapter 18, the well first appears when Tōru watches the demolition of the Miyawaki house with May Kasahara:

May Kasahara and I went through the alley to the back of the empty house. Indeed the demolition work had already begun. Six helmeted workers were removing the storm shutters and windowpanes and carrying out the sink and electric appliances. For a while she and I watched them work. They seemed accustomed to that sort of work, and saying hardly anything they moved silently and systematically. High up in the sky, line of white clouds trailed on, suggesting the arrival of fall. I wondered what the fall is like in Crete. Are the same kind of clouds are floating over there?

“Are those guys gonna tear up the well, too?” May Kasahara asked.

“Probably,” I said. “There’s no use leaving something like that there. First of all, it’s dangerous.”

“There might be people who go inside,” she said with a rather earnest face.

The demolition is important in that it later motivates Tōru to find a way to buy the land under the house because that land includes the well. After the vision in the pool, he realizes that only through the well can he reach Room 208, where Kumiko is trapped. If the well is destroyed, he might lose contact with Kumiko forever. Later, “the house was simply gone and the well was buried without a trace.” This motivates him to buy the property and stand up to Noboru Wataya in the deleted Chapter 26.

The vision in the pool of swimming at the bottom of a well is typical of Murakami’s style, and another iteration of the well motif that runs throughout the novel. Many of the novels important events and characters transformations are linked to characters spending time at the bottom of a well, and the hallucinatory well is no exception:
Lost Chapters in The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle

Half listening, I swam many leisurely laps around the 25-meter pool. And then I had a vision. Or, a kind of revelation.

Before I knew it, I was inside a huge well. I wasn’t swimming in the local pool, but at the bottom of the well. The water surrounding my body was thickly heavy and warm. I was absolutely alone there, and the surrounding water had an odd and unusual echo. I quit swimming, floated quietly and gazed around, then lay on my back to look up above. Because of the buoyancy of the water, I could float there without any effort. My surroundings were shrouded deep in darkness; all I could see was a cleanly cut circle of sky right overhead. But strangely, I wasn’t afraid. There is a well here, and now I am floating like this at the bottom—I found this very natural. Rather it was surprising that I had only now realized it. That was one among all the wells of the world, and I was one among all the “myselfs” of the world.¹⁰

At the bottom of the well, Tōru’s visual perspective changes—he says “the vertical positions would soon reverse in my head and I would feel just as if looking from the top of a smokestack straight down at the bottom”—and so does his mental state.¹¹ While hearing the sound of horses, he smells the flowers from the dream room, and “as if something suddenly flipped, I understood everything,”¹² and then “all kinds of memories, thoughts, and feelings became one, surged up and swept away something like a clump of emotions.”¹³ After the vision in the well, Tōru says:

I may lose. I may be lost. I may not make it anywhere. No matter what desperate efforts I make, it may be that things are already irretrievably damaged. I may be only scooping in vain the ashes of ruins, and the only one unaware of it is me. There may be no one here who will bet on my side. “I don’t mind,” I say in a small, determined voice to someone there. “I can say this. At least there are things I must wait for, and things I must seek.”¹⁴

After this scene, Tōru actively tries to change the course of events. In the last lines of Chapter 17, Tōru says, “I cannot run away, and should not run away. That was the conclusion I reached. No matter where I might go, that would always chase me down. No matter how far.”¹⁵ In Rubin’s translation, this is combined with a later statement about wanting to save Kumiko. Indeed, the well scene of Chapter 18 could be seen as an elaboration of the last words of Chapter 17, but the key difference is in Tōru’s attitude. In Chapter 17, he cannot run away because running away itself is useless. He is still at the mercy of events. However, after the vision Tōru makes the decision to remain in Japan not out of fear, but out of conviction. Without the well scene, this character change is not motivated, the well motif is not maintained, and the Murakami-esque dreamlike imagery is not preserved.

The second major change caused by the alterations is the elimination of time lapse between Books 2 and 3. Without Chapter 18, the English translation jumps from a violent scene, followed by a violent dream, into Book 3. The Japanese Chapter 18 is long and convoluted, and through various events shows Tōru gradually nearing the state of realization that he reaches in the well. During the well vision, he dreams that he is having sex with Creta Kanō, when she changes into the phone woman, and the room changes into Room 208. Suddenly, he realizes the
phone woman is actually his wife. In the English, the idea that the phone woman, the woman in Room 208, and Kumiko might be one in the same is not presented until near the end of the novel, but in the Japanese it is stated explicitly, with emphasis, near the end of Chapter 18, when the narration reads:

Make no mistake. That woman was Kumiko. Why hadn’t I realized it before? I shook my head furiously in the water. It should have been easy to figure out, right? Absolutely easy. Kumiko was facing me from that strange room, frantically sending me that single message: “Please find my name.”

Thus, the cliffhanger between Books 2 and 3 is eliminated. Other scenes that show the passage of time and changes in Tōru’s world are removed, such as Creta Kanō’s departure and the demolition of the Miyawaki house, so that both Creta Kanō and the Miyawaki house simply disappear in the English version.

The third major change caused by the alterations is the demotion of Creta Kanō to a very minor role in the novel. Rubin has said that “the clairvoyant Kanō sisters detract from the book,” and Creta Kanō’s part in the novel is made less significant by the omissions. Creta Kanō passages in Chapters 15 and 18 are deleted in the English, so she simply disappears until she appears in Tōru’s vision in Book 3 with a baby. She loses her name in Chapter 15 of the Japanese, and in Book 3 Chapter 39 says she has just found a new one. In the English, since Chapter 15 is deleted, this is changed to “a new name for the baby.” Another single-line reference to Chapter 15 in Book 3 Chapter 38 is also deleted, meaning Rubin was certainly aware of what he had cut from Book 2. With the omissions, the phone woman and Creta Kanō are loose ends, when both could be said to be projections of the protagonist’s wife, evidenced by the sexual dream sequence. Murakami has said in an interview, “I think sex is an act of . . . a kind of soul-commitment. If the sex is good, your injury will be healed, your imagination will be invigorated. It’s a kind of passage to the upper area, to the better place. In that sense, in my stories, women are mediums—harbingers of the coming world.” Creta Kanō is a psychic medium by trade, and the foil for May Kasahara. In the same interview, the interviewer said, “There seem to be two distinct types of women in your novels: those with whom the protagonist has a fundamentally serious relationship—often this is the woman who disappears and whose memory haunts him—and the other kind of woman, who comes later and helps him in his search, or to do the opposite—to forget,” and Murakami acknowledges this as “one of the main motifs in my work.”

Murakami has said,

My protagonist is almost always caught between the spiritual world and the real world. In the spiritual world, the women—or men—are quiet, intelligent, modest. Wise. In the realistic world, as you say, the women are very active, comic, positive. They have a sense of humor. The protagonist’s mind is split between these totally different worlds and he cannot choose which to take.

Tōru interacts with both Creta Kanō and May Kasahara in the omitted sections. Thus May Kasahara represents Tōru’s grounding in the “real world,” while Creta Kanō offers to remove
him to the “spiritual world.” In the end, he does not cross over completely, but moves in and out of the spiritual world through wells.

Another minor character, the primary antagonist, Tōru’s brother-in-law Noboru Wataya, also features prominently in the deleted sections, which include an interview and a computer chat. Without these sections, there are fewer instances of the voice of the antagonist, and he becomes less important as a character. The computer chat is the only place where the protagonist stands up to the antagonist by threatening to invade his dreams. However, like the trip to Greece, the threat never pans out in the plot.

**The English translation**

According to Rubin, Alfred A. Knopf, the translation’s U.S. publisher, “insisted on a work that was significantly shorter than the original.” Rubin translated the entire novel, then made cuts “rather than let a random editor do the job.” Murakami’s German publisher DuMont noted that “a chronological leap between Books Two and Three was done away with, as a result of which an entirely new work was created.” Rubin called such claims “overstatement,” and has said, “We are not talking about huge textual differences between the Japanese original and the English translation.” He has said, “The amount of ‘adapting’ I did was small in the overall context,” but that “it turned out to be a much more complex process than I had imagined.” Indeed, the sixty-one pages comprise less than 5% of the novel, but the deletions and alterations are many and complicated. Rubin writes,

> I undoubtedly destroyed the chaotic, fragmented impression of the original Book Three, but I was not persuaded it was meant to be as chaotic as I found it to be. I can be blamed for having rendered that section more conventional, but I’m not convinced that that was a great artistic loss.

Indeed, there are some chronological inconsistencies in Book 3, and in Japan, Book 1 was serialized, then published in 1994 at the same time as Book 2. A year elapsed before the publication of Book 3. Since the English translation is one volume, the transition between books is perhaps less important to the structure of the narrative. On the other hand, a reviewer for the *New York Times* wrote, “Murakami has written a bold and generous book, and one that would have lost a great deal by being tidied up”. I suppose that the reviewer didn’t realize it already was.

One of the missing chapters is the transition between Books 2 and 3, and Rubin has said, “I suppose that very tightness [of the transition] can be viewed as a distortion of the original, an Americanization of a Japanese work of art.” Rubin would not likely consider that a detriment to the book, as he has said, “Murakami’s style strikes the Japanese reader as fresh and new because it often reads like a translation from English.” English borrowings in katakana, for example, have a foreign flavor lost in English, and “a Japanese writer can bend his language more than a writer using English can without being accused of stylistic clumsiness,” therefore “the single most important quality that makes his style fresh and enjoyable in Japanese is what is lost in translation.” However, Murakami’s novels sell very well in English, so what is “fresh and enjoyable” about Murakami is likely his storytelling. Murakami himself is a translator (of English to Japanese) who has translated a diverse group of English writers into Japanese. Murakami has said that he considers his writing in Japanese a process of translation and...
translation itself a kind of criticism, and that he never re-reads his works in Japanese. He seems to consider details secondary to the gestalt of a work in translation. In 1996, Murakami wrote:

By having a work converted into another language by someone else’s hand, I can look back and reconsider it from a respectable distance and enjoy it coolly as a quasi-outsider, as it were, whereas I never would have read it again if it had remained only in Japanese.

[...]

One may say, then, that I might as well write in a foreign language from the start. But this is not easily done, for reasons of skill and capability. That may be why, in my own way, I have tried to write my novels using prose that I have constructed by first converting Japanese, my mother tongue, into a mock foreign language in my head—that is, by clearing away the innate everydayness of language that lies in my self-consciousness[...]

Seen in that light, my process of creative writing may closely correspond to the process of translation—or rather, in some respects they may be two sides of the same coin.32

If Murakami never rereads his novels in Japanese, it is unlikely he read Rubin’s translation very closely or paid much attention to what changes had been made, and he did not apply the changes to later printings of the Japanese.33 He may have begun reading the English translations more carefully after Rubin’s translations came under scrutiny in 2000. In an interview in 2004, in response to the question, “How do you collaborate with your translators?” Murakami said:

They ask me many things when they are translating, and when the first draft is completed, I read it. Sometimes I’ll give them some suggestions. The English version of my books is very important; small countries, such as Croatia or Slovenia, translate from the English, not the Japanese. So it must be very precise. But in most countries, they translate from the original Japanese text.34

He may not have been aware that some translations were made using the English translation before the controversy in Germany, and ostensibly Germany would not qualify as a “small country.” He also said that in contrast to Alfred Birnbaum, who is “kind of free as a translator” and “changes the prose sometimes,” he considers Jay Rubin “a very meticulous, precise translator.”35 Rubin has said he has “occasionally suggested to Knopf that the time might be right for an uncut edition, but they have shown no interest in the idea,”36 and has said, “I do think, though, that if The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle outlives its time and becomes part of the canon fifty years from now, a re-translation will be needed, and scholars can have a fine time screaming about how Jay Rubin utterly butchered the text.”37

This timeline for retranslation aligns with Murakami’s own ideas. Concerning his translation of Raymond Chandler’s The Long Goodbye (1953), Murakami wrote that “if translation were a house, after 25 years it would need repairs, and after 50 years great renovation or rebuilding” because over time “the datedness of the chosen words and expressions will
gradually become more apparent.”

Concerning classics like *The Catcher in the Rye*, Murakami has said:

> My basic stance is that for superb classics, there ought to be several different translations. Translation is not an act of creation, but only one form of technical response, so various different approaches should exist in tandem as a matter of course. People often use the word *meiyaku* [great translation], but that’s only another way of saying “one superb response.” In principle, a peerless, perfect translation cannot exist, and even supposing one existed, in the long run it might have a detrimental effect on the original work. At least for works that are called “classics,” there need to be several alternatives. Isn’t the most desired form of translation one in which several high-quality choices exist and through the accumulation of multiple aspects the true form of the original text arises naturally?

Part of Murakami’s motivation for making a new translation of *The Long Goodbye* was that he objected to editorial liberties taken by Shimizu Shunji, the first translator. Concerning the two translations, he writes:

> Basically, we might take them as the contemporary [1958], spirited Shimizu translation, and what could be called the “quasi-classical”, especially close Murakami translation. Of course, whether one thinks, “If possible I want to read a perfect translation,” or, “Even somewhat abridged, it’s fine if it can be read comfortably” is wholly left to the selection of individual readers.

In the case of the *Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, if Murakami knew just what is missing in the translation, perhaps he would want to see a new or unabridged translation. Rubin’s superb translation is precise and has been well-received by readers (including myself, for whom it was the introduction to Murakami’s writing), but I assume admirers of Murakami or this novel would want to read the missing chapters, which include plot elements, stories, dreams, and visions that could change a reader’s interpretation of the novel.

**Works Cited**


Murakami, Haruki. “Honyaku suru koto, honyaku sareru koto” 翻訳すること、翻訳されるこ
Notes

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Tim Cross at Fukuoka University and Dr. Masaki Mori at the University of Georgia, without whose help this paper would not have been possible.


7 The scene where Tōru buys a suitcase in Chapter 15 is quite similar to the opening of Ōe Kenzaburō’s novel Kojinteki na taiken [A Personal Matter] (1964), in which the narrator buys maps of Africa and fantasizes about fleeing Japan to escape his life’s problems.


18 Murakami 1997, 599.


20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.
Lost Chapters in The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle

22 Japan Foundation, 13.
23 Ibid.
24 Quoted in Rubin 2002, 277.
25 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
32 Japan Foundation, 29-30.
33 Rubin 2002.
35 Ibid.
36 Japan Foundation, 13.