

Elizabeth Simins

Selected Editing Samples

elizabeth.simins@gmail.com

Fiction in Translation

Light novels, web novels, etc.

JP → EN & KR → EN



Client: **Cross Infinite World**

Project: **How I Became King by Eating Monsters**

Localization editing

Developmental editing

Line editing

Copy editing

Proofreading

Localization of English translation of Japanese light novel.

Length: 65k+ words, 242 pages

Genre: Fantasy, action, dark comedy

Full work

See also: **Volume 2**

XX: Dorssen

TO the north of Farune and Cadonia lay a country called Dorssen. Dorssen was five times as large as Farune, and at least double the size of Farune and Cadonia combined. Said to have existed since the formation of the continent of Ares, Dorssen had a long history, and its royal family was alleged to be descended from a goddess. It was one of Ares's great central powers, and in addition to its territory, its economy and military both surpassed Farune's by a long shot.

From Dorssen's perspective, both Farune and Cadonia were just buffer zones against the Forest of Beasts, but those buffer zones had suddenly merged.

The king of Dorssen wasn't happy about that. Naturally, he was well aware of Farune's recent expansion into the forest and accompanying sudden, rapid growth. He could tolerate that. But no matter how much a small country developed, there was a limit to its scope. Even the construction of that barbaric facility, the arena, and the revenue it generated from gambling, had earned only a derisive laugh from Dorssen's king—poor countries were always desperately trying to find *some* way to stay afloat.

However, he couldn't overlook the fact that Farune had annexed a neighboring country, thereby doubling in size. Farune still possessed nowhere near Dorssen's might, but the annexation indicated it had territorial ambitions.

The country didn't appear to have greatly expanded its military, but it had introduced the Hundred, which recruited a select, elite few without distinctions in status. The king of Dorssen had also received information indicating that powerful wizards of poor moral character were gathering in Farune after hearing that they could conduct unethical magic research there. Finally, there was the suppression of the stampede in Cadonia. Farune had apparently accomplished it with a small number of people, without the use of a large army. That showed that Farune's power was not a straightforward affair. According to reports, the stampede had been relatively small, but even so, Farune's strength was clearly nothing to scoff at.



TWO men stood before the king of Dorssen, bowing their heads. They were the first and second princes of Cadonia. They had fled Mos as soon as the stampede began, and when they had learned of the death of their father, the king, they'd immediately begun struggling over succession—in other words, they were irredeemable fools. It was that stupidity that had lost the royal family its internal support and allowed Farune to annex Cadonia in the first place.

If these two and the late king of Cadonia had been just a bit more sensible, they could easily have avoided their current predicament, the king of Dorssen thought.

The two princes gave an account of their hopeless situation and pled their case to the king of Dorssen. According to them, they had been unjustly banished from Cadonia; the annexation had been a Farunian invasion; their father had to have been killed by Farune, not monsters; Farune had caused the stampede; their younger sister, who was now queen of Cadonia, had conspired with Farune; and so on.

It was the baseless whining of a couple of sore losers. If they had been the king of Dorssen's subordinates, he would have executed the both of them. However, what the king needed right now was a pretext. No matter how preposterous their assertions may have been, the two of them did have the right to inherit Cadonia.

"I understand what you want to say," the king of Dorssen said solemnly. "Dorssen cannot overlook Farune's outrageous behavior. We'll consider possible responses."

The princes were ecstatic, and feverishly thanked the king.

You incompetents, the king mentally cursed them. When Dorssen, one of the strong central powers, took action, it always drew the attention of the other great powers. If the king wasn't careful, one of those powers might interfere. A great deal of preparation and maneuvering was required, which took quite a lot of time and manpower. If a war broke out, the financial burden would be enormous. Nothing was simple. But still, it had to be done. Problems were best squashed while they were still small. That was the duty of a statesman.

First, he would go through ordinary diplomatic channels to demand that the current king of Cadonia relinquish the throne. At the same time, he would make plans with the Cadonian nobility. Then, he would mass troops at the border with Cadonia, mobilizing as many soldiers as possible and carrying



Client: **Cross Infinite World**

Project: **This Alluring Dark Elf Has the Heart of a Middle-Aged Man!**

Localization editing

Developmental editing

Line editing

Copy editing

Proofreading

Localization of English translation of Japanese light novel.

Length: 67k+ words, 252 pages

Genre: Fantasy, action, comedy, genderbender

Full work

EVEN if we were prepared for the worst, it would have been terrifying if violence suddenly broke out. I just didn’t want anyone to die. We left the twins waiting in the woods—Cody refused to let them go that far for their Seminary thesis—and entered the village.

There was no sign of anyone even when we got close to the settlement. I would have been happy to hear even the breathy sounds of someone sleeping, but all I could hear was the wind whistling through cracks.

“We’ll avoid exposing ourselves by remaining out in the open. Please follow me.”

With Dekt at the front, we climbed over the fence behind the shade of a house. Montana sniffed the air and muttered.

“It smells like blood and...decay.”

His words made me stiffen, but I didn’t stop walking. We followed the Temple Knights carefully, trying not to make any noise or draw attention to ourselves. Corinne and Albert, their serious expressions a complete reversal of how they usually looked, did the same while keeping a wary eye on our surroundings.

Dekt, who was leading the way, quietly approached the nearest house. When he lifted the wooden boards blocking a window, a powerfully putrid stench flooded out and I instinctively covered my nose with my sleeve. Dekt shook his head and held up three fingers. His signal meant there were three bodies inside. Considering the size of the house, I wondered if all its inhabitants had been killed.

Dekt, perhaps having decided the attackers were gone, instructed his knights to spread throughout the village. Surveying in smaller groups would save us a lot of time. We followed Dekt and Cody into a particularly impressive building, a house so large it couldn’t be seen in its entirety just by peering through the door. Although it was a single story high, the inside was divided into several rooms. We needed to head in and investigate.

The bodies of a couple and their child were lying in what appeared to be a bedroom. They had probably been attacked in their sleep because it looked like they had died without ever leaving the bed. The attackers must have been quite skilled.

I closed my eyes, unable to bear the tragic sight. Thoughts churned in my mind. No one was alive. Was there any point in coming here? The strong smell of death made me want to throw up.

“We’ll split up and search the house. Haruka, you and your team to the left. We’ll go right.”

Despite his pained expression, Dekt handed out precise instructions. We did as he said and headed left out of the master bedroom. He and Cody went to the spacious living room, while our route took us to a hallway lined with guest rooms.

“Haruka, are you okay?” Corinne asked

“...I’m fine, thank you.”

“If you say so...”

I thought I’d answered in a way that wouldn’t worry her, but it was possible I’d actually made her worry even more.

I had seen dead bodies before at funerals, including my parents’. They had been beautifully made up, and though pale, looked almost the same as when they had been alive.

In contrast, the corpses of the people lying here all had expressions of pain or surprise. They were completely different from what you’d normally see at a funeral. The sight didn’t scare or disgust me. Instead, an overwhelming sadness welled up inside me when I thought about their futures being robbed by whomever had done this. My heart felt heavy, even though I didn’t know these people, had no connections to them.

I also felt angry, wondering what kind of monsters, whether beast or human, could do something like this. Did the villagers do something to deserve it? Could all of these people have committed such evil that they had been murdered for it? *No, that can’t be right. I can’t forgive this injustice.*

I hated injustice that befell others more than any injustice done to me. It frustrated me that I couldn’t do anything more here. When I was growing up, I had lived my life trying to deflect my anger by thinking that others must have had their own reasons for doing something to me personally, or that *I* must have done something wrong. Rather than blaming others, I’d lived my life hoping to be able to reach out to those in pain.

But now, I heard my heart screaming. That this injustice could not be forgiven. That no matter what I or anyone else did now, their deaths wouldn’t be avenged. I couldn’t help them. I couldn’t comfort them. There was nothing I could do anymore for them.

A storm of emotions surged inside me. My chest felt tight, like it would burst. And all I could do was grit my teeth helplessly.



Localization editing

Line editing

Copy editing

Proofreading

Localization of English translation of serialized Korean web novel.
Length: 102k+ words edited, chapters 91-150
Genre: Fantasy, action, wuxia

Full work

Client: Kiwi Vine

Project: The Baengri Clan’s Unwanted Granddaughter

Chapter 110

I'd never seen Grandfather like this before. At a loss, my gaze flitted frantically from him, to Father, then down at my feet, then back to him.

"I'm sorry," I said.

"Then will you not do the same next time if something like it happens again?"

When I didn't reply, Grandfather sighed. "What's the point of just saying you're sorry?"

But... But...

I quietly gave my opinion. "If Father had saved me, then one of the other children would have been lost."

No matter how impressive Father's Fleetfoot Technique was, he still only had two arms, and escaping a landslide weighed down by three kids was...

"You're still only six," Grandfather said firmly. "Why are you worrying about things like that?"

At my silence, he sighed again. "Yeon, you can't give up yet. Even if you never pick up a sword, you are still my granddaughter. Do you understand?"

My eyes widened. He made it sound just like I'd thrown away my life out of despair over my ruined qi center. *But that's not it at all!* Besides, my qi center may not have recovered, but now I had the ability I received from the Divine Physician.

Then again, Grandfather still doesn't know about that. I considered it for a moment. *Should I tell him about my golden eyes right now?* Grandfather wasn't on the list of people I'd been planning to tell. He loved my father, but... That wasn't the same as loving me.

"Come here." When I inched toward him, Grandfather reached out and pulled me into his arms. "You poor thing, to think of all you went through, all alone in that grave....! I'm so glad you're back. You did so well."

* * *

Grandfather sent me away after that, saying he still had things to discuss with Father. I rubbed my arm as I left the room, all sorts of thoughts running through my head: Father freezing at the mention of the Palgwae Village landslide, Grandfather assuming I had given up on life...

But my thoughts were soon interrupted by someone stepping in front of me. "Yeon."

"Myung," I replied.

It was Baengri Myung. He looked like he'd been waiting for me.

"It's been a long time, Myung. You've gotten a lot taller."

Baengri Myung must've had a growth spurt in the past six months.

"How have you been?" he asked. "I was worried when I heard you were in a big accident, but I'm glad to see you safe and sound."

Our relationship hadn't been too bad when we'd last said our goodbyes, but it hadn't been good enough for him to be acting so friendly toward me either. His intentions were crystal clear.

Faking happiness at seeing him again, I asked, "What are you doing here?"

"I begged Grandfather to bring me. I wanted to come along."

I widened my eyes and tilted my head curiously. "But why? Wasn't it difficult coming all the way here?"

Of course, I knew why Baengri Myung was really here. He wanted Grandfather to see him as a good eldest child who looked after his younger cousins.

With an embarrassed cough, he answered, "Well, um, ahem, I was worried and wanted to check in on you."

No matter how two-faced he was, he was still just a kid. Cozying up to a cousin he'd been looking down on was probably awkward for him.

Playing dumb, I gave him a bright smile. "Really? Thank you!"

After asking about Grandmother, Uncle Euimook, and his wife in order, I carefully said, "And how is... Aunt Euiran?"

Baengri Myung's expression darkened. "She's... the same as usual."

I thought for sure that she'd leave the clan with Soh Wuak, but it was the twins who'd left while she stayed. I had no idea what had happened, but one thing was for certain: when Aunt Euiran heard Baengri Myung came along to pick me up, she was going to pitch a fit, since she was sure to have been nursing a grudge against me ever since the twins were sent to the Temple of Discipline.

And he came here fully aware of that. I was thinking about what to do about all this when my stomach suddenly let out a loud grumble. Baengri Myung looked blankly at me.

I grabbed at my shameless stomach with a deep inhale, but tensing up just made the sound echo even more loudly this time. *Come on! How embarrassing! Wait, no, this actually works out.*

"Myung, I haven't had breakfast yet," I said quickly. "Have you?"

"Huh? Uh, me neither."

"Then would you like to eat together?"

His face lit up as he nodded. "Yes!"

"Then let's go down to the first floor!"

"Do we have to? We can just eat in the room over there."

I blinked and looked over at the room Baengri Myung was pointing to. "Is that room empty?"

"This entire inn was rented out by the Baengri clan."

"The whole inn?"

"Yes. We'll be staying here for a day and then moving out tomorrow."

Come to think of it, Imperial Physician Seok *had* looked exhausted. I raised my head and looked around. The bustling inn was definitely a lot quieter than before.

"Uh... But weren't there people who were staying here before you got here?"

Baengri Myung replied carelessly, "We gave them money and sent them away."

"How much....?"

"I heard it was about ten times the original cost of the room."



Client: **Kiwi Vine**

Project: **For Better or For Worse**

Chapter 44

"I'm only human. Of course, I have weaknesses," Cedric said.

"Then, are you afraid of ghosts maybe?" Dillon asked.

"I don't believe in them."

"What about insects?"

"When I come across one, I try to set it free outside so I don't have to kill it."

Their conversation was just as rhythmic as the sound of their footsteps clicking in unison. The heavy atmosphere between them had dissipated and the cadence of their dance reflected the lighter mood.

"You're no fun. Will you just tell me what you're bad at then?"

"I'm not foolish enough to give my enemy a weapon with my own two hands," he said with a solemn expression and Dillon burst out laughing, which made Cedric's serious face dissolve into a smile as well.

In turn, Dillon smiled even wider. Both gladly latched onto the familiar rhythm of conversation between them. "Oh well then. I guess I'll just have to figure it out myself. It shouldn't be too difficult. After all, we're in a house full of people who happen to know quite a lot about you," Dillon said with a devilish smile. Cedric narrowed his eyes suspiciously and Dillon whispered into his ear, "For example, I already know that you pronounced 'mille-feuille' as 'milly-filly' until you were six."

"Mother," Cedric said, sucking his teeth. It was obvious where Dillon would have heard stories about his childhood.

"Does that embarrass you?" Dillon asked slyly.

"Not at all. Foreign pronunciation is difficult for all six-year-olds."

"Okay then. Next time, I'll ask her for more useful information."

As Dillon finished speaking, the last notes of the song tinkled out from the turntable and their dance came to an end. Apart from one turn that Dillon had fumbled in the middle, it actually wasn't a dance she would have been embarrassed to show in public. The couple bowed politely to each other to finish it up neatly.

"I look forward to your next attempt. Are you meeting my mother tomorrow too?"

"Yes. We're going shopping together."

"Aha," Cedric muttered under his breath. "I wish you the best of luck."

Dillon immediately recognized the emotions hidden in his tone. He obviously felt resounding pity for the poor soul in front of him who was about to walk onto a battlefield. Cedric knew firsthand how passionate and picky his mother became when she shopped. After all, he was also one of her victims.

"I seriously doubt it will be as stressful as the dance lessons. I think it's going to be fun," Dillon replied brightly. Her practice routine the last few days had been especially harsh and merciless. Compared to that, shopping would be a walk in the park, and she might even be able to enjoy herself.

While shopping, there was no fear of getting a question wrong, no risk of having to drink revolting tea as punishment, and no need to be focused every second. She just needed to choose from among the options laid out in front of her.

Dillon didn't usually take pleasure in buying clothes or jewelry, but it was always an exciting feeling to have the luxury of choice. Plus, she had always gotten her clothes ready-to-wear back home. Yvette had explained that tomorrow, a tailor would take her measurements and then show her a catalog of different styles that could be custom-made to fit her. So Dillon wasn't worried—she was actually closer to being excited.

"I hope the day meets your expectations," Cedric said ominously.

"You look a little tired, Dillon."

"No, I'm fine," Dillon hurriedly lied in response to Yvette's concerns. To be honest, she was tired and had been for hours, but she didn't want to bring down Yvette's good mood. Also...

"I wish you the best of luck."

She didn't want to admit that Cedric had been right. Dillon forced her face into something approximating that of a person enjoying themselves. *How fun. You are having fun, Dillon. You need to have fun.*

Besides, it really was fun. This was her first time in a department store, and Elrod's Department Store—the one often featured in magazines—had moved buildings after a fire three years ago and was now even more magnificent than the pictures she had drooled over. The seven-floor building had hundreds of crystal tiles adorning the ceiling, which flooded the area below with gentle sunlight.

Each floor was filled with specialized stores for hats, shoes, menswear, womenswear, gloves, jewelry, and more, which made it convenient for shoppers to browse. All the stores contained famous brands too.

There was a store that only sold handwoven lace, each piece tagged with the name of its artisan. There was a store with hundreds of ribbons, in all different sizes and colors ranging from dark rose to lemon chiffon, that could be used to decorate an endless variety of garments. There was even a tailor who could explain state-of-the-art draping techniques and luxurious fabrics directly to shoppers. Every corner of the building was breathtaking and magical.

Dillon was definitely having fun, but this "fun" had now lasted for over six hours and exhaustion had slowly been overtaking her high spirits for some time. She enjoyed trying on different shoes but measuring and calculating the size for every one of the nine pairs she had bought today was a different story. She hadn't known before today that if a custom shoe was to fit her perfectly, her foot had to be measured differently depending on the height of its heel. Every single measurement of Dillon Hayworth's foot came out slightly different depending on whether it was for equestrian boots, ballroom shoes, or dancing heels.

She had also taken it for granted that the two shoes in a pair were symmetrical, but apparently, that wasn't true either. The worker diligently measured both of her feet, sometimes all the way up to just above her ankles, and that was how Dillon had discovered that her right foot was one-twelfth of an inch longer than her left foot.

This precise manner of manufacturing clothes wasn't limited to shoes, either. For example, Dillon had never known that it was essential to measure the curve of her thumb to make a sheepskin glove that fit properly.

"They need to know the size of your thumb so that it fits snugly against your skin," Yvette explained as she showed her own precisely-fitted glove to Dillon. Dillon gazed at Yvette's perfect glove and stifled a pained yelp as she was poked and prodded.

"Mmf!"

"If the bodice is lined with lace, it looks better to make the waist tighter than usual. That way, the flowing pieces will stand out more," Yvette advised Dillon, who was getting her waist squeezed into a sample dress. Dillon sucked in her breath as much as she could.

I understand why clothing like this is reserved for special occasions, she thought. Not only was this dress made with so much care that she wouldn't feel comfortable going about her day while wearing it, but anyone who did wear this sort of thing on a daily basis would surely faint from oxygen deprivation.

In fact, Dillon felt like she wasn't too far from fainting right now. If Elrod's Department Store didn't have catering, she would probably be on her way to the hospital already, but Elrod's had a concierge service that matched the grandeur of its shops.

Although each store was staffed by its own employees, there were also workers employed by the department store itself who were stationed between the stores to help the shoppers with whatever they needed, as well as make the transition from one store to another smooth and efficient.

For example, if a customer bought a certain parasol from a store, the Elrod's employees would help them find a sample scarf to match. Without them, Yvette and Dillon would have been shopping for at least twelve hours, not six. Every time she found herself in range of one of their dazzling smiles, Dillon thanked them with all her heart, and her sincerity only grew when she learned that Le Paradis had a

Localization editing

Line editing

Copy editing

Proofreading

Localization of English translation of serialized Korean web novel.

Length: 360k+ words, 200 chapters

Genre: Romance, period, regency

Full work

Misc. Digital Publications

Magazines, briefs, etc.



Client: (the)MAGAZINE

Project: Airco Caravan profile

Developmental editing

Line editing

Copy editing

Proofreading

Profile on artist/activist Airco Caravan for small independent arts/fashion magazine (the)MAGAZINE.
Length: 950 words
Industries: Arts, fashion



INTERVIEW WITH
CONCEPTUAL ARTIST
AIRCO CARAVAN
- By Lee Lanier

CREATIVE RESISTANCE: THE IMPACT OF ARTIVISM ON SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS



Airco Caravan Unleashes Artistic Tempest
“I wanted an artist name that is not my passport name. I wanted to be free to create everything I wanted,” declares Airco Caravan. “Airco comes from air conditioning. In Dutch, we call an AC ‘Airco,’ meaning a fresh breeze.” And the name fits the artist, who challenges the status quo with her fresh perspective and provocative ideas.

During her time at the prestigious HKU Academy of Arts, Airco Caravan seized on conceptual art as her chosen medium for challenging oppressive norms and daring to address unpopular truths. Since then, her fearless artwork has established her as a powerful voice in the contemporary art world.

Each of Caravan’s pieces serves as a wake-up call, challenging norms, raising awareness about pressing issues, and demanding societal progress through art.

Artivism Impact
The Provocative Voice of Artistic Activism

“My art is a reaction to topics that are happening in our society,” Airco Caravan explains. “It’s direct and also colorful, bold, and humorous.”

The firebrand conceptual artist’s works have ignited both admiration and controversy. In the Netherlands, her uncompromising artistic vision has often been met with resistance. “People want art to be

aesthetic and not too political or outspoken,” Caravan suggests. “In some exhibitions, my art was censored.” One such case involved an exhibition denouncing the atrocities of the Assad regime and the Syrian war. Caravan’s paintings were initially removed, only to be reinstalled after a journalist intervened.

Caravan’s unwavering commitment to her values has also necessitated personal sacrifices, underscoring the delicate balance she has had to find between artistic expression and respecting collaborative spaces. “In another group show,” she recalls, “I was summoned to remove a wall tapestry because there was

a complaint from a passerby. I decided to remove it, under protest, because I was in a group show with my art collective and didn’t want to cause the whole show to close.”

Caravan’s most celebrated work, “Monument for Martin

Luther King,” exemplifies her fearless approach to activism through art. “I was grateful to work with a bronze foundry who thought it was a great idea to put the statue in Martin Luther King Park in Amsterdam illegally, in broad daylight,” she says. The daring installation of a 4 ft. tall bronze statue of Dr. King commemorated the 50th anniversary of the iconic civil rights activist’s assassination.

Creative Advocacy
Exhibitions Beyond Borders

Though Airco Caravan is based in New York and Amsterdam, her artistic endeavors have taken her across the globe in the hope of transcending geographical and cultural boundaries.



Caravan’s socially charged artworks have graced the walls of prestigious institutions worldwide, including the Museum de Fundatie, MOTI Museum, Amsterdam Museum, MOYA Vienna, Arte Museum Korea, and the Museum of Memory and Tolerance in Mexico City. But she is firm that her artistic journey defies the confines of traditional gallery spaces.

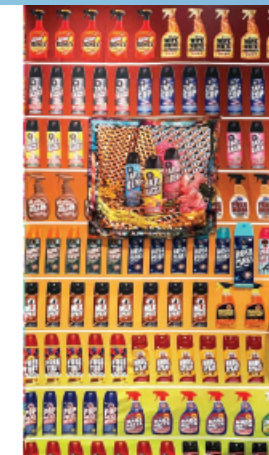
“It all blends and changes all the time,” Caravan says. “When I have an opportunity to do an exhibition, I will do that and create an installation with the series ‘Pest AC. For A Better World’ or show some separate pieces from that collection. Always in dialogue with the venue.”

Beyond the prestigious venues in major cities that have hosted her solo exhibitions, Caravan’s activism extends into the streets, where she fearlessly creates attention-grabbing guerrilla art in public spaces.



“The [‘Pest AC’] series is the basis of it all,” Caravan says. “The labels of the spray cans and spray bottles are first designed on the computer and then materialized into different mediums. Like the huge solid cast resin spray bottles. Or woven tapestries, wallpaper, stickers, and real spray cans and spray bottles.”

Caravan’s unconventional choice of medium—spray cans and bottles—is vital to the “Pest AC” series.



(the)MAGAZINE

These everyday objects, typically associated with pesticides and household cleaners, become potent symbols of exterminating conceptual “pests” through the transformative power of art. Each can or bottle features a unique design that either demands eradication of the ills that afflict humanity (think misogyny, racism, and other forms of inequity) or urges protection of the virtues that uplift it.

Other Notable Works

Caravan’s “Whiteness” series offers a poignant critique of the deeply rooted biases that pervade the beauty industry. Through a striking collection of oil paintings on wooden panels and digital collages, Caravan dissects the insidious concept of “whiteness” as the pinnacle of beauty, exposing its damaging effects on identity and self-worth.



Relatedly, Caravan’s “Decolonization of Beauty” series serves as a powerful protest against racial discrimination in the beauty industry, challenging its longstanding exclusion of diverse beauty standards and advocating for a more inclusive and equitable landscape.

In her role as founder and curator of the ground-breaking Nasty Women Amsterdam exhibitions, Caravan rallied nearly 400 artists from 27 countries to create 500 artworks and raise \$45,000 for causes including Planned Parenthood, Women on Waves’ abortion boat, and LGBTQ rights advocacy groups.

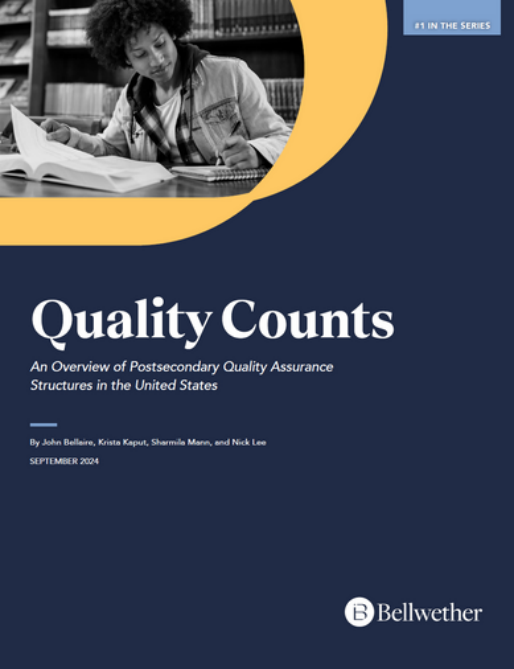
Into The Future

With each new project, Airco Caravan solidifies her position at the vanguard of artistic activism and social justice. Whether in the hallowed halls of galleries or in bustling city streets, her work demands attention and challenges complacency, inspiring action toward a more just and equitable world.

And Airco Caravan’s artistic activism shows no signs of slowing down.

“I think I will create art until the day I die,” she says.

aircocaravan.com @airco_caravan @pest_ac
Upcoming Events and Exhibitions: Mural at Park Ave., Harlem, NY (Between 124th & 125th St.)
Ongoing: Monument for Martin Luther King, Kunstgemaal, Bronkhorst, Netherlands.



Client: **Bellwether**

Project: **Quality Counts**

State governments play multiple pivotal roles in ensuring institutional and academic quality, often independent of the regulatory triad framework.

The U.S. Department of Education, state regulators, and accrediting agencies all face considerable capacity constraints that hinder their ability to effectively oversee postsecondary institutional quality.

Copy editing

Proofreading

First in series of three briefs on postsecondary education quality assurance in the U.S.
Length: 24k+ words, 68 pages (complete series)
Industries: Education, policy

Full work

See also: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#)

The Role of Accrediting Agencies

Independent, nonprofit accrediting agencies assess the academic quality of postsecondary institutions and programs in the U.S. and serve as the gatekeepers of institutional access to federal Title IV funding.²⁴ The U.S. Department of Education recognizes two types of accreditors: institutional and programmatic/specialized (Table 3). All recognized accrediting agencies conduct institutional site visits, review data, and solicit self-assessments to measure institutional or programmatic quality.²⁵

TABLE 3: TYPES OF POSTSECONDARY ACCREDITORS

Accreditor Type	Overview	Examples
Institutional Accreditors	Review postsecondary institutions across an entire campus or at the system level. Operate either nationally or in specific geographic areas. The U.S. Department of Education currently recognizes 38 institutional accreditors. ²⁶	Middle States Commission on Higher Education; the New England Commission of Higher Education; Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges; the Distance Education Accrediting Commission ²⁷
Programmatic/Specialized Accreditors	Evaluate specific programs, departments, or schools within a larger IHE, such as medical sciences, education, law, music, and art. ²⁸ The U.S. Department of Education currently recognizes 32 programmatic accreditors. ²⁹	The American Bar Association; the American Dental Association; the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education ³⁰

Authors' Note: As of 2020, the U.S. Department of Education no longer distinguishes between regional and national institutional accreditors and refers to them all as "institutional accreditors."³¹

7 Quality Counts: An Overview of Postsecondary Quality Assurance Structures in the United States

Constraints on QA Efforts

Despite the importance of postsecondary QA, state bodies, accrediting agencies, and federal entities face substantial barriers to supporting continuous institutional and program improvement. The following main barriers pose challenges to existing quality improvement structures and efforts.

Capacity Constraints on the Program Integrity Triad

The U.S. Department of Education, state regulators, and accrediting agencies all face considerable capacity constraints that hinder their ability to effectively oversee postsecondary institutional quality. At the federal level, the Office of Federal Student Aid's limited capacity has prevented it from keeping up with the "scope and scale of problems in higher education in the country."⁴¹ Increasing numbers of student loan borrowers and new delivery models have further exacerbated the U.S. Department of Education's capacity.⁴²

Accrediting agencies largely rely on a volunteer workforce under a limited budget, restricting their ability to evaluate IHEs in a thorough and timely manner.⁴³ Moreover, resource scarcity exacerbates the natural tension inherent in the oversight of fee-paying institutional members. Finally, although many states require IHEs to report data, state authorizing agencies often lack the staffing necessary to meaningfully analyze the data they receive. Many states also continue to operate without a robust digital infrastructure for authorization and data collection, delaying processes and hindering sufficient oversight. **To address these capacity concerns, QA advocates nationwide can work to financially and legally bolster oversight capabilities across the program integrity triad.**

Reverence for Institutional Autonomy

Interviewed QA experts noted that IHE regulators, who often have experience serving as professors or administrators themselves, have a strong reverence for institutional autonomy and faculty independence. This reverence may compel regulators to defer to institutions' own decision-making and avoid taking necessary enforcement actions. **Regulators can still pursue QA by monitoring data over time, providing clear guidance to institutions, and collaborating with an IHE's governance structures.**

9 Quality Counts: An Overview of Postsecondary Quality Assurance Structures in the United States

Get in touch.