

33 Buson summer, autumn and winter haiku

Key to translators mentioned —

Addiss = Stephen Addiss. *Haiga: Takebe Sōchō and the Haiku-Painting Tradition*. Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond, 1995. (He is Professor of Art History at the University of Richmond in Virginia. His profile is at: <http://www.americanhaikuarchives.org/curators/StephenAddiss.html> . See also his Web site: <http://stephenaddiss.com/>)

Cheryl A. Crowley — Professor of Japanese Language and Literature at Emory University. (Profile at: http://realc.emory.edu/home/people/faculty/cheryl_crowley.html) Some of these poems, but not all, can be found in her *Haikai Poet Yosa Buson and the Bashō Revival*. Brill, 2007.

Goldstein & Shinoda = Sanford Goldstein (poet) & Seishi Shinoda (translator)

Kumano = hokuto77 [Shoji Kumano] (熊野祥司) Web site: “Living in the World of Buson” (<http://www.hokuoto77.com/frame2-buson.html>) Retired Japanese teacher of English living in Yamaguchi / Miyazaki prefectures. (Profile at: <http://www.hokuoto77.com/preface.html>)

McAuley = Thomas McAuley at: <http://www.temcauley.staff.shef.ac.uk/waka1801.shtml> Professor at School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield (profile: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/seas/staff/japanese/mcauley>)

Merwin & Lento = *Collected haiku of Yosa Buson*, trans. by W.S. Merwin and Takako Lento. Copper Canyon Press, 2013. Merwin was born in 1927, has won numerous awards, and is our current poet laureate for the United States.

Nelson & Saito = William R. Nelson & Takafumi Saito, *1020 Haiku in Translation: The Heart of Basho, Buson and Issa*, 2006. (This is not the William Rockhill Nelson of the Nelson Museum of Art in Kansas.)

Robin D Gill — From a wiki entry: “Robin Dallas Gill, born in 1951 at Miami Beach, Florida, USA, and brought up on the island of Key Biscayne in the Florida Keys, is a bilingual author in Japanese and English, as well as a nature writer, maverick authority on the history of stereotypes of Japanese identity and prolific translator of, and commentator on Japanese poetry, especially haiku and senryū. He writes haiku in Japanese under the haigō (haikai pen-name) Keigu (敬愚).” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin_D._Gill)

Sawa & Shiffert = *Haiku Master Buson*, translated by Yuki Sawa & Edith Marcombe Shiffert. Published 2007 by White Pine Press in Buffalo, N.Y. . Yūki Sawa was a professor of Japanese literature in Japan.

Ueda = *The Path of Flowering Thorn: The Life and Poetry of Yosa Buson* by Makoto Ueda. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. (There are no entries on this handout for him, but his book is excellent, as are the translations. Makoto Ueda was a professor of Japanese literature at Stanford University.

Further reading suggestions:

Aitken, Robert. *The River of Heaven: The Haiku of Basho, Buson, Issa, and Shiki*. Counter Point Press, 2011.

Crowley, Cheryl A. *Haikai Poet Yosa Buson and the Bashō Revival*. Brill, 2011.

Hamill, Sam. *The Sound of Water: Haiku by Bashō, Buson, Issa, and Other Poets*. Shambala, 1995.

Sawa, Yuki and Edith Marcombe Shiffert. *Haiku Master Buson*. White Pine Press, 2007 (first published in 1978).

Ueda, Makoto. *The Path of Flowering Thorn: The Life and Poetry of Yosa Buson*. Stanford University Press, 1998.

Summer poems

The man and his wife
once to be punished by death
change into summer clothes

Ueda

Death penalty by their Lord Remitted;
The couple change clothes.

Kumano

They were not beheaded after all
but went on living as man and wife
and put on their summer clothes

Merwin & Lento

1

御手討の夫婦なりしを更衣

oteuchi no / myōto narishi o / koromogae

Kigo: 更衣 *koromogae* “changing clothes [putting away the winter clothes into storage; moving the summer clothes out of storage to regular closets]”

Note: Adultery was punishable by beheading, but these lovers were spared. (Merwin) In the Edo period 'Oteuchi' was the death penalty, mostly being cut to death by the sword, imposed by the Lord of samurai family, when his retainers committed some indiscretion or violated family bans. In former times, the custom of seasonal change of clothing, or *koromogae* was regularly kept, young and old, high and low. (Terebess Asia Online) Changing the clothes should be seen as a positive-nuance moment and the couple should be viewed as happy, not fearful, or, at least mostly happy. (Wallace)

Little cuckoo there is a mad woman
at the Iwakura waterfall
you could fall in love with her

Merwin & Lento

Night is short in the summer
the silvered folding screen
glimmers beside my pillow

Merwin & Lento

At a Place Called Kaya in the Tango Region

This is happiness
crossing the stream in summer
carrying my straw sandals

Merwin & Lento

All the way I have come
all the way I am going
here in the summer field

Merwin & Lento

An Idle Student by the Window

Whatever he learns goes in
one ear and out the other
a firefly

Merwin & Lento

scholarly brilliance
issues forth from your bottom
firefly

Cheryl A. Crowley

Cause the madwoman at Iwakura
to fall more deeply in love
O hototogisu

Cheryl A. Crowley

Short night;
Near the pillow stands
A silver folding screen

Kumano

stream in summertime—
this joy of wading across
with sandals in hand

Ueda

Walked and walked
Here still to go—
Summer fields

Nelson & Saito

All this study—
it's coming out your ass,
oh firefly!

Anon.

All this study—
goes right through me.
Fireflies.

Wallace

2

岩くらの狂女恋せよほととぎす
iwakura no / kyōjo koi seyo / hototogisu

Kigo: 子規 *hototogisu* "lesser Japanese cuckoo"

Note: Crowley's interpretation is more likely to be the correct one. (Wallace)

3

みじか夜や枕にちかき銀屏風
mijikayo ya / makura ni chikaki / gin-byōbu

Kigo: みじか夜 *mijikayo* "short night [and therefore a summer night]" I can't confirm this kigo.

4

(丹後の加悦といふ所にて)
夏河を越すうれしさよ手に草履
natsu-kawa o / kosu ureshisa yo / te ni zōri

Kigo: 夏河 *natsu-kawa* "summer river"

Note: He is on his way to visit a Buddhist priest at a temple in a nearby village. (Ueda)

5

行々てこゝに行々夏野かな
yuki yuki te / koko ni yuki yuku / natsuno kana

Kigo: 夏野 *natsu-no* "summer field"

6

学問は尻からぬけるほたる哉
gakumon wa / shiri kara nukeru / hotaru kana

Kigo: 蛍 *hotaru* "firefly"

Note: The set phrase is *shiri kara nukeru* "from the bum" and does indeed mean something close to in one ear and out the other. Fireflies, of course, have "bums" that light up. That is part of the joke. We should imagine as well, that there are fireflies just outside the window and the poet, rather than studying, is staring at them, composing this poem. (Wallace)

Mind somewhere else
a cat is chewing a flower
of the bottle gourd

Merwin & Lento

Cicada chorus
time for the head priest
to take his bath

Merwin & Lento

Summer afternoon downpour
a flock of sparrows
hanging on to the grass

Merwin & Lento

An evening shower!
Holding onto the bushes,
a flock of sparrows

Sawa & Shiffert

summer shower—
clutching the leaves of grass
a flock of sparrows

Ueda

Don't wake me from
This intoxicating dream
On this intoxicated night.
"Welcome luck! (Go away demons!)"

Wallace

7

夕貌の花噛ム猫や余ごゝろ
yūgao no / hana kamu neko ya / yoso-gokoro
Kigo: 夕顔 *yūgao* "evening glory [the flower]"

8

せみ啼や僧正房のゆあみ時
semi naku ya / sōjōbō no / yuami doki
Kigo: 蝉 *semi* "cicada"

9

夕だちや草葉をつかむむら雀
yūdachi ya / kusaha o tsukamu / mura-suzume
Kigo: 夕立 *yūdachi* "[summertime] late afternoon
thunderstorm"

10

よい夢のよひ寝さますな副ハうち
yōiyume no / yoi nesamasu na / fuku wa uchi
Kigo: This is tricky because of the playful nature of the poem. It is a summer poem. And bats are a summer kigo. Bats are usually pronounced *kōmori*. However, it can also be written: 蝠. This is similar to, and pronounced the same as 福, *fuku*, "good luck / wealth". On the last day of winter, Japanese go around the house tossing soy beans out of the house and placing them at key locations in the house, saying "Fuku wa uchi! Oni wa soto!" ("In with good luck, out with demons"). This poem plays with that idea, and so, in a sense, the season should be end of winter but there is no kigo "fuku". The word play is to take *fuku wa uchi* to mean "There are bats in my house!"

I slurp cool gelatin noodles
three thousand feet of the Milky Way
upside down

Merwin & Lento

Making a mess
While eating noodles
three thousand feet of Milky Way

Wallace

11

ところてん逆しまに銀河三千尺
tokoroten / sakashima ni ginga / sanzen-jaku

Kigo: ところて *tokorote* “clear gelatin noodles”

Note: Tokoroten is a noodle dish. They are clear and served cool in the summer. “Sakashima” does have a meaning of “upside down” but it also means “doing something the wrong way”. That is clearly the meaning in this case. The last line is a real challenge. Literally: “Milky Way. Three thousand feet.” I really have no idea how to put these together. The phrase *sanzen-jaku* is used in Chinese poetry to refer to a certain very high and very narrow waterfall in Jiulong province. Li Po, a poet that Buson no doubt loved, mentions it several times. I think this is relevant but I am still not quite sure whether to think of the Milky Way itself as stretching beautifully above him (he is eating at a stall, outside) or the slight whiteness of very long noodles hanging down from his chopsticks reminds him of the high waterfall and/or Milky Way. This sounds unnatural, too. I'm missing something. (Wallace)

Autumn poems

In the flash of lightning
I hear the dewdrops rolling
down the bamboo leaves

Merwin & Lento

In his pillow talk the sumo wrestler
can't leave the subject
of the match he should not have lost

Merwin & Lento

at a flash
of lightning, the sound of dew
falling from a bamboo

Ueda

over the sumo match
he should have lost
a pillow talk

Ueda

12

稲妻にこぼるゝ音や竹の露
inazuma ni / koboruru oto ya / take no tsuyu

Kigo: 稲妻 *inazuma* “lightning”

13

負けましき角力を寝ものがたり
makumajiki / sumai o nemono- / gatari kana

Kigo: 相撲の節 *sumai no sechi* “[autumn] sumo match”

Under the Yugyo Willow
Leaves fallen from the willow
the spring gone dry
rocks showing here and there

Merwin & Lento

the willow is bare
the clear stream has dried, and stones
lie scattered here and there

Ueda

14

柳散清水涸石処々

yanagi chiri / shimizu kare ishi / tokorodoko

Kigo: 柳散る *yanagi chiru* “willows-fallen [bare willow trees because the leaves have fallen]”

Note: Yūgyō Willow: Named after a Noh play of this title in which the learned priest Yūgyō encounters the spirit of a willow tree. (Merwin) Except that Yūgyō means Saigyō.

This poem is in honor of him, who wrote at this spot:

alongside the road
a stream of clear water
shaded by a willow—
wanting to take a rest

I stopped—and I am still here

*michinobe ni / shimizu nagaruru / yanagikage / shibashi to
te koso / tachidomaritsure*

... a spot that Bashō then visits in *Narrow Road to the Deep North* and writes:

over an entire field
they have planted rice—before
I part with the willow

ta ichimai / uete tachisaru / yanagi kana

That is how Bashō spent time with the long dead Saigyō.

Now, Buson visits the spot and writes his haiku.

I find this interesting: is Buson suggestion that the good days of haiku has dried up? Here are links to the willow which, it is claimed, still stands. The second one has clearly been Photoshopped to make it a bit more grand than it really is. <http://www.bashouan.com/pbYugyouyanagi.htm>
<http://www2.ucatv.ne.jp/~jata-45.snow/image101.jpg>
(Wallace)

The autumn chill becomes part of me
in the bedroom I step on a comb
that belonged to my dead wife

Merwin & Lento

When it grows old
its voice becomes plaintive—
katydid

Addiss

It Would Be Easier to Die Before Forty
Flowers die young without knowing
the embarrassment of a gourd
still alive full of seeds

Merwin & Lento

*Upon Maruyama's Request for a Caption to His
Painting of a Black Dog*
His bark comes
from the darkness inside him
deep in the autumn night

Merwin & Lento

this piercing cold—
in the bedroom, I have stepped
on my dead wife's comb

Ueda

With age
Even the voice of the cricket
Is sad

Wallace

From his very soul,
There in the darkness he barks—
Midnight in autumn

Anon.

15

身にしむや亡妻の櫛を閨に踏

mi ni shimu ya / naki tsuma no kushi o / neya ni fumu

Kigo: 身に入む *mi ni shimu* “to soak into the body, to penetrate the body, to feel keenly or sharply”

Note: The comb should be seen as a very intimate item once used by his wife. The Japanese feel that objects touched by hand over a long time by a certain person has something of that person in it. (Wallace)

16

としよればこえもかなしききりぎりす

toshi yoreba / koe mo kanashiki / kirigirisu

Kigo: きりぎりす *kirigirisu* “cricket” (early autumn)

17

(^{よそぢ}四十にみ^{しな}たずして死^{しな}んこそめやすけれ)

あだ花にかかる恥なし種ふくべ

adabana ni / kakaru haji nashi / tane-fukube

Kigo: 種瓢 *tane-fukube* “gourd kept for its seeds” — most gourds are marketed but at the end of the growing season, late in autumn, one was kept and hung from a shelf in the house, to use the seeds later. In poetry, this has been used as a symbol of a lonely life.

18

おのが身の闇より吼て夜半の秋

ono ga mi no / yami yori hoete / yowa no aki

Kigo: 夜半の秋 *yowa no aki* “autumn evening”

Note: Once the painter, Maruyama Okyo (1733-1795), drew the figure of a black dog and asked Buson to write an inscription to go with it. (Terebess Asia Online)

Autumn weighs upon me
but tomorrow will come
and I will miss tonight

Merwin & Lento

After its weather-beating
the Japanese lacquer tree
goes on quivering

Merwin & Lento

Secluded house—
The lord of this chrysanthemum:
Fox Spirit Hakuzōsu

Wallace

This evening, autumn chills me—
But there will be a day
When I will lovingly recall this evening

Wallace

19

身の秋や今宵をしのぶ翌もあり

mi no aki ya / koyoi o shinobu / asu mo ari

Kigo: 秋 *aki* “autumn”, I think it is as simple as that (as far as I know, *mi no aki* isn’t a kigo).

Note: There is something of a *kakekotoba* / pivot word in this poem which is unusual: *mi no aki ya koyoi* means “this evening that chills me” while *koyoi o shinobu asu* means “this evening that I will long for in coming days” (Wallace)

20

うら枯やからきめ見つる漆の樹

uragare ya / karaki me mitsuru / urushi no ki

Kigo: 未枯 *uragare* “drying/withering tips [o grade blades, tree branches etc]” — late autumn kigo, an early sign of winter

Note: The tree from which the sap is drawn to make lacquer (common name: Chinese lacquer tree) can be enormous in size. This is a possibility here, but not required. (Wallace)

21

かくれ家や菊のあるじハ白蔵主

kakure-ka ya / kiku no aruji wa Hakuzōsu

Kigo: 菊 *kiku* “chrysanthemum”

Note: Hakuzōsu is a type of fox spirit. Here is an example: <http://metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/49821> . (Wallace)

Autumn is nearly over
that person dressed in fine silk
has borrowed everything

Merwin & Lento

Winter poems

In the winter rain
I too hear the fleeting night
the old masters heard

Merwin & Lento

Fox fire at night
while the rain
fills a skull

Merwin & Lento

overcome by this cold falling rain:
how very similar,
my life to my old friend

Sanford Goldstein & Seishi Shinoda

A fox-fire and,
in a skull, rain has made
a pool tonight.

Sawa & Shiffert

22

行秋やよき衣きたる掛り人

yuku aki ya / yoki kinu kitaru / kakariudo

Kigo: 行く秋 *yuku aki* "the parting autumn" (late autumn kigo)

Note: A *kakariudo* is someone who depends on his or her survival entirely from the good graces, the money, of another. It literally means "one who relies upon [someone, something]. This pronunciation is vernacular, a bit casual. (Wallace)

23

しぐるるや我も古人の夜に似たる

shigururu ya / ware mo kojīn no / yoru ni nitaru

Kigo: 時雨 *shigure* "scattered light, cold rain that falls unexpectedly and briefly during the transition to early winter" (early winter kigo)

Note: Merwin is more convincing in taking *kojin* to mean "the old masters", since this is how Bashō uses the word. (Wallace)

24

狐火や髑髏に雨のたまる夜に

kitsunebi ya / dokuro ni ame no / tamaru yo ni

Kigo: 狐火 *kitsunebi* "foxfire" (luminous gas phenomenon caused by gas from rotting wood but believed by the early Japanese to be the breath of foxes) (kigo for the third month of winter)

Endless bare fields
not even a bush
nowhere to abandon a child

Merwin & Lento

Basho's Tomb at Konpuku-ji Temple
I will die too
let me be a dry grass flower
beside this monument

Merwin & Lento

The first light snow
then when the bowl of the sky is empty
the moon is hanging in the bamboos

Merwin & Lento

A narcissus flowers
the beauty appears to have
a headache

Merwin & Lento

after death, I too
will be here by the monument—
withered pampas grass

Ueda

First snow done—
moon among bamboo.

Wallace

Narcissus!
and a lovely woman
with a headache.

Sawa & Shiffert

25

子を捨る藪さへなくて枯野哉
ko o sutsuru / yabu sae nakute / kareno kana
Kigo: 枯野 *kareno* "withered fields/moors"

26

我也死して碑に辺せむ枯尾花
ware mo shishite / hi ni hotori semu kare-obana
Kigo: 枯尾花 *kare-obana* "withered susuki grass / Japanese pampas grass" (Jse pampas grass is much smaller than the pampas grass growing wild in the Bay Area at the side of the highways and such) (kigo for the third month of winter)
Note: む in this poem shows soft volition along the lines of "I plan to, I intend to ...". (Wallace)

27

初雪の底を叩けば竹の月
hatsu-yuki no / soko o tatakeba / take no tsuki
Kigo: 初雪 *hatsu-yuki* "first snow"
Note: *Soko o tatau* means "to empty out fully" (such as a wallet); in other words, to use up so much of something that you see the bottom of the container it was in. The kireji for this poem is the grammar form *ba* and so the phrase that needs emphasis is not the snow but the ending of the snowfall. (Wallace)

28

水仙や美人かうべをいたむらし
suisen ya / bijin koube o / itamurashi
Kigo: 水仙 *suisen* "narcissus" (kigo for near the end of winter)
Note: Merwin is more accurate but perhaps there is something of the Sawa translation in this meaning. (Wallace)

You who pray to Buddha beating your gourds
you are nobody at all
not even village priests

Merwin & Lento

(Part of eight verses on the humble life)
Stay honest whatever happens
says the bamboo bent under snow
over my window

Merwin & Lento

(Part of eight verses on the humble life)
A mouse peeps out
its eye on the freezing oil
of my lamp

Merwin & Lento

(Part of eight verses on the humble life)
I can tell my neighbor dislikes me
from the way he clatters his cooking pots
in the cold night

Merwin & Lento

In the night with my few teeth
I try to chew the ice
off the tip of my writing brush

Merwin & Lento

"Never give up!"—
says the snowy bamboo
darkening my window.

Wallace

With exposed teeth
the ice on the writing brush
is bitten off tonight.

Sawa & Shiffert

29

木の端に坊主のはしや鉢たたき
ki no hashi no / bōzu no hashi ya / hachi-tataki
Kigo: 鉢叩 *hachi-tataki* “drumming-the-gourd”
Note: “From the 13th of November until the 31 of
December, the priests and lay people of the Kuya Hall walk
the streets of Kyoto, hitting the gongs and dancing.”
(<http://darumapilgrim.blogspot.com/2005/09/kuya-shonin.html> this is a great Web site for all things Kuya, one
of the early founders of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan)
(Wallace)

30

愚に耐よと窓を暗す雪の竹
gu ni tae yo to / mado o kurōsu / yuki no take
Kigo: 雪 *yuki* “snow” (If 雪の竹 “snow on the bamboo” is a
kigo I have not heard of it.)

31

氷る燈の油うかがふ鼠かな
kōru hi no / abura ukagau / nezumi kana
Kigo: 氷る *kōru* “to freeze”

32

我を厭ふ隣家寒夜に鍋を鳴らす
ware o itou / rin-ke kan-ya ni / nabe o narasu
Kigo: 寒夜 *kan-ya* “cold night”

33

齒あらはに筆の氷を嚙ム夜哉
ha arawa ni / fude no kōri o / kamu yo kana
Kigo: 氷 *kōri* “ice”