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FOXFIRE: THE SELECTED POEMS OF YOSA BUSON

A TRANSLATION

By

Allan Persinger

A Dissertation Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

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ABSTRACT

FOXFIRE: THE SELECTED POEMS OF YOSA BUSON
A TRANSLATION

By

Allan Persinger

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2013
Under the Supervision of Professor Kimberly M. Blaeser

My dissertation is a creative translation from Japanese into English of the poetry of Yosa Buson, an 18th century (1716 – 1783) poet. Buson is considered to be one of the most important of the Edo Era poets and is still influential in modern Japanese literature. By taking account of Japanese culture, identity and aesthetics the dissertation project bridges the gap between American and Japanese poetics, while at the same time revealing the complexity of thought in Buson's poetry and bringing the target audience closer to the text of a powerful and moving writer.

Currently, the only two books offering translations of Buson’s haiku are mainly biography, with few poems offered in translation. The first, Yuki Sawa's and Edith M. Shiffert's book, "Haiku Master Buson," contains 50 pages of biography but only has around 300 haiku. The second book, Makoto Ueda's "The Path of the Flowering Thorn," only contains around 150 haiku. My translation project includes translations of 868 haiku along with a critical introduction. This edition of Buson work is an important addition to Buson studies since over fifty percent
of the poems I include have not been translated before nor brought together in one volume.

The critical introduction included in my project supplements and expands the dialogue started in the previous two books on Buson. In the introduction, I also discuss translation theory noting how the translations themselves reflect the theory and represent the continuing debate of such scholars as Eugene Nida, Roman Jakobson, Jacques Derrida, and Paul de Man. Finally, I explain my choice to present the translations in free verse. In my translations, I concentrate on the content, the images, and the individual words since I hold it important that not only are the translations accurate, but that they fulfill esthetic expectations. Furthermore, while it is impossible to separate form and content, my translations privilege content over form since I believe it would be nearly impossible to keep the syllable count of 5/7/5 and not do drastic damage to the meaning. For example, a short one syllable word in Japanese "ka" is a three syllable word in English, "mosquito." Therefore to keep to the syllable count one would have to do drastic editing to the original.

Yet, as a form, haiku is more than just syllable count; a haiku also has to have a seasonal reference and convey a sense of a twist or a surprise within the closing line. Seasonal reference is part of content and is the easiest part of the translation. The twist or
surprise, that moment of enlightenment for both the reader and the poet, is very important for the genre and the translations in my dissertation especially convey that Zen moment haikus reveal along with the Japanese esthetic that is so important within Buson’s œuvre.

Signature: Allan Persinger _________________________________
Dedication

As in all projects of this scope, the large debt of gratitude that the writer incurs can never be adequately spoken nor recognized. Yet the need to thank and show appreciation is overwhelming.

To Dr. Kimberly Blaeser I owe much thanks for her kind support and guidance throughout. If it was not for her, I never would have been able to progress through all the stages of revision that this dissertation required. I am humbled by how much time and effort she put into helping me. I will sorely miss our conversations upon poetry and translation.

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To Dr. Robert Siegel, I will miss you. It was you who all those years ago first placed the idea of translation as an art within me when you spoke these words: “Translation reveals the weakness of the translator’s poetic language ability,” and “All poets should translate to hone their skills in their own language.” It was also you who opened up each creative writing workshop by having your students translate a poem of their own choosing. Little did you know, what inspiration those assignments were to prove.

And to my wife, Fusayo, who not only checked my Japanese and my transcriptions for errors, but who also read the poems for accuracy of meaning, I owe more than a simple thank you.
Foxfire: The Selected Poems of
蕪村乞謝  Yosa Buson

Translations by EP Allan
1: A Brief Introduction to Yosa Buson and the Edo Era

Yosa Buson (1716-December 25, 1784) is considered to be one of four major haiku poets and one the three great poets of the Edo Era. The other two poets of the Edo Era are Matsuo Basho (1644-November 26, 1694) and Kobayashi Issa (June 15, 1763-November 19, 1827). The fourth great haiku poet Masaoka Shiki (October 14, 1867–September 19, 1902) was not an Edo poet, but was from the Meiji Era instead. These four writers are generally understood to have directly shaped haiku into the art form that it is today: Basho elevated the haiku out of its comic base into a higher art form; Buson turned it into a very literary form; Issa gave haiku its personal touch; and Shiki is the one who insisted that haiku was a viable art form during the time when haiku and other Japanese works were considered quaint and outdated.

Yosa Buson was most likely born in the village of Kema in the Settsu Province, what is now known as Osaka Prefecture. Very little is known about his early life and what is known is mainly wrapped in speculation. It is assumed that Buson was born to a wealthy landowner. Some scholars debate the reason why Buson went to Edo, present day Tokyo, to study haiku under Hayano Soa (also known as Hayano Hajin). Some think it was because Buson had squandered the family wealth or even that he was illegitimate, because Buson was reticent about writing about his childhood, and those few poems that do
exist about his birth village express a bittersweet nostalgia as illustrated by the following haiku:

Hana ibara  
kokyau no michi ni  
nitaru kana

These flowering briars reminds me of the path in my hometown

While the briars, a type of wild rose, are beautiful, they are also thorny. In Japanese, to walk a thorny path means to suffer. From a distance the hometown looks beautiful, up close it is painful. Furthermore, while Buson later in his life lived less than thirty miles away, he never once returned to visit. He kept his distance, viewing his hometown in memory—not up close like the briars in the poem. Buson’s pupil, Takai Kito (1741-1789), when writing about Buson in *The Record of Master Yahantei’s Last Days*, omitted by Buson’s request any reference to Buson’s father, perhaps revealing Buson’s aversion to the subject.

Yet regardless of why Buson left his hometown, we do know that while in his twenties he traveled to Edo. Besides studying poetry with Hajin, Buson also studied calligraphy, Chinese style poetry (*kanshi*) and Noh chant-
ing (yokyoku). Some scholars wonder if Buson studied Chinese literature under a master or if he was self-taught. However, the number of references to Chinese literature in Buson’s poetry make it apparent that he was quite familiar with the subject.

According to Haruo Shirane in the book *Early Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology 1600-1900*, one of the things that changed during the 17th century was the rise of literacy. Literacy rose because the Tokugawa Shogunate severed the ties of the samurai (warriors) to the local lords or to the lands and instead tied them to the central authority, the Shogunate, located in Edo (modern day Tokyo). This changed the samurai into bureaucrats and politicians, making literacy and education important. By somewhere around 1650, all the samurai had become literate.

Furthermore, as Shirane writes, “The new Tokugawa rulers adopted a rule of law and morality—by letter rather than by force—requiring mass education” (11). Mass education gave rise to a literate populace of not only former samurai but also of upper class merchants and landowners. A large reading class grew and hungered not only for the literature of its day, but also for classical Japanese and classical Chinese literature. By the time Matsuo Basho was writing and changing the haiku, the farming classes had also became literate—all of which gave Basho a large audience.

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1 Before Tokugawa the samurai ruled as they saw fit, beheading people for even minor infractions. After Tokugawa, there were at least laws presiding over the samurai’s actions—though these laws were also harsh and kept class structure firmly in place.
It is interesting to contemplate how the three major Edo Era poets represent the widening circles of literacy. Matsuo Basho, while not a samurai, came from the samurai class; Yosa Buson came from the wealthy landowner class, and Kobayashi Issa came from the farming class. Furthermore, by the time Buson is writing, his audience would have been highly familiar with classic Chinese literature, classic Japanese literature, and with the more contemporary 17th century writers. So not only would Buson’s audience have been from a wide spectrum of social classes, they also would have known and enjoyed his references and subtle changes to well known poems and stories.

This period is known for more than just the rise of literacy. The Edo Era began when the Tokugawa Shogunate seized control. Shortly thereafter Japan became a closed country—that is, all but a few of its ports were closed to foreign trade, and those ports that were open, like Nagasaki, were not only isolated, but also served to tightly contain foreign elements and kept the foreigners themselves from penetrating Japanese society. Because the Shogunate perceived Christianity as a threat to Japanese sovereignty, he believed that sealing off Japan was also sealing out Christianity. Isolationism not only turned Japan inward and made the Edo period perhaps the most introspective of the Japanese periods, but at the same time gave a hunger and a mystique for things foreign—especially for things Chinese. During Buson’s lifetime, Chinese music, art, poetry, philosophy and horoscopes, reached a peak in popularity.
Furthermore, Buson was influenced by Chinese literati painting, known in Japanese as Nanga (southern-style) or as Bunjinga² (literati painter/painting). Buson took the principles of the Chinese literati painters as a model and adopted the painting styles of the Ming and Qing artists. Since the term Nanga refers to a Chinese painting style that occurred during Buson’s lifetime, this influence also shows how closely Japan was following Chinese culture.

After Hayano Hajin died Buson left Edo and moved to Kyoto, where he began life not as a haiku poet, but as a painter. In fact, up until his fifties Buson made his livelihood off of painting and it is not until he was fifty-one years old that Buson began to seriously write haiku. As Nobuo Tsuji in his essay, “The Creative Force of a Multi-Artist: A Guide to the Yosa Buson Exhibition,” states: “If I think about it, in Buson’s expansive universe, where image and word, coexist without qualitative differences, clearly it was natural for his haiku to influence his painting, and conversely, for his paintings to influence his haiku” (389). How painting influenced Buson’s poetry can easily be seen throughout many of his poems. See, for example, how in the following poem Buson uses landscape painting techniques:

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黄水若白葉たくし麦て
Wakaba shite
mizu shiroku mugi
kibamitari

² Nanga and Bunjinga as terms are almost interchangeable.
Under young green leaves
white water
yellow barley

Within this poem the vivid layers of primary colors are reminiscent of the paintings Buson did for Goin\(^3\) Festival Floats with their swirling blues and deep golds. Here the three dimensional positioning of the leaves, the water and the barley also give the poem a landscape feel.

Furthermore, the items within the poem reveal the passing of time—the verdant new leaves still freshly energetic at the start of summer, the still heavy run-off from the snows melting from the mountain tops and the now yellowed barley left over from the spring growing season. Within this moment of the haiku, there is also the triumph of youth, the young leaves, which are positioned over the old, the barley.

This capturing of the moment is essential to haiku and was one of the principal touchstones of Matsuo Basho’s poetic philosophy. Basho was extremely important to Buson, who looked at his own haiku as that of reviving Basho’s poetical movement. There are, however, some major differences between Basho and Buson. Haruo Shirane writes:

Unlike Basho, who advocated “Awakening to the high, returning to the low” (kouga kizoku) and sought “lightness” (karumi), or the poetics of everyday life, Buson advocated “departing from the common,” an exploration of the worlds through Chinese literature and painting as well as the Japanese classics, wandering freely in a world of elegance and imagination that he found far superior to the life immediately around him (540).

\(^3\) Goin is a district in Kyoto that is famous for its shrine and for Geisha.

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
Translated by Allan Persinger
The following poem offers a clear example of Buson “departing from the common”:

399

Kawataro no koisuru yado ya
natsu no tsuki

The Kappa
loves his house —
the summer moon

The kappa is a mythic half human-half turtle trickster with a bowl of water on its head who can be made to work for humans when enticed by cucumbers. Within this poem the common, the summer moon, becomes the dwelling place of the fantastical, the kappa; therefore, while looking at the mundane moon Buson has envisioned and invoked a feeling of mystery—in this case, because of the word love, a comfortable mystery. Not all of Buson’s imaginative poetry gives rise to a feeling of ease or comfort, but can in fact create a sense of sublime misgiving as in the following haiku:

383

Kusaikire hito shiniiru to fuda no tatsu
Being posted
in the fuming grass
a death notice

Notice how within this poem the word fuming not only raises the poetics out of the ordinary world but also gives the poem a hellish intensity. Not only is the hot summer grass fuming, that is to say giving off a strong reek within the broiling day, but the death notice takes on the smell of the grass and of death itself. The poem has risen above the ordinary and in doing so has left us uneasy.

As Shirane points out, Buson found the world of imagination superior to the mundane one. His preference for the elegant, for the fantastic, sometimes manifests itself as social criticism as revealed in the following poem, which at first glance the poem is about a fish that has been plucked by a fisherman out of the sea and is gasping for breath; however, the introduction to the poem establishes the event being described is a visit to a sick man:

When Kito called upon the ailing Senior Minister Heisha to offer sympathy, it was as if everybody was at the seashore listening to a traveling minstrel.

758
鉤の吹に
鰓を吹るや

Kogarashi ni
agito fukaruru ya
kaki no uo

In wintery wind
gills puffing —
a hooked fish
The social criticism within this poems revolves around the fact that, the man was a Senior Minister, a government official, or somebody from the samurai class. Instead of being powerful, however, the man is wailing while his mouth moves like a dying fish. In sickness the man has dwindled into an object of ridicule. Social positions have been reversed by the approach of death and the man once respected for his elite position is a now pitiable figure as he clings to his former self-worth. Furthermore, by clinging to his life, the man is breaking the tenants of the Bushido or Samurai Code, which advocates non-attachment as one of its essential essences.

Buson’s poetry then, like his artwork, is a complex mixture. Buson was a multi-genre artist, highly influenced by Matsuo Basho, by classic Japanese and classic Chinese literature, whose writing took the world of the moment and transformed it through the imagination. His works also show great appreciation for all types of art, including culinary arts (out of the three great Edo Era poets Buson’s poems contain the most references to food), and finally also contain moments that slyly critique the time and culture of his day.
All translation is colonization. A textual artifact is taken from the source language and reinvented in the target language, thus removing the original text from the confines of its culture, place and time. Writers like Walter Benjamin in "Task of the Translator" see this as resurrecting a text into a universal human consciousness that transcends the original limitations the text was written within. Yet even this freed text has been colonized, altered and is no longer the same, as it is reborn within a different time and culture. Therefore the translator has to decide how much the source is subverted during the translation process; how many foreign or "exotic" elements are allowed to remain; how to produce an aesthetically pleasing result that the target audience will want to read; and how to stay "true" to the original.

The idea of fidelity, that a translation is completely faithful to the source text, is what the novice to translation expects—a word-to-word plug-in without any human interpretation or variance. Perfection is then this strange idea of a symbiotic co-existence where accuracy can easily be proven. Furthermore, some people’s general attitude is that for a translation to have fidelity, it would have to be able to be translated back into the source language with the exact same words without a new, hypothetical translator having any knowledge of the original.

Eugene Nida in "Principles of Correspondence" writes about the type of translation where one word from the source text is replaced by a word in the
target language: "There are, for example, such ultraliteral translations as inter-
linears; while others involve highly concordant relationships, e.g. the same
source-language word is always translated by one—and only one—receptor-
language word" (153). However there is a great problem in doing this type of
ultraliteral, word by word, and interlinear, line by line, translation—languages
do not neatly match and there can be multiple choices for a single word. So
even within concordant translations choices have been made. Choosing a sin-
gle word, as Nida so emphasized, is extremely limiting and can in fact, un-
dermine the complexity and understanding of a text. Indeed, there might not
be an actual word that corresponds. As Roman Jakobson in "On Linguistic
Aspects of Translation" so aptly put, "On the level of interlingual translation,
there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code-units" (139).

How equivalency between code-units, or source and target language
words, fails, and how translators have to make interpretive choices even when
doing direct translation, can be seen when trying to translate the word 出 from
Japanese into English. Some of the meanings for 出 from Nelson's Japanese
Kanji— English Dictionary are appear, come out, emerge, exit, haunt, infest,
be found, get back, lead to, enter, leave, go out, attend, work at, find (oneself)
at, depart, break out, originate, and transmit. So direct equivalence does not
exist between the Japanese word 出 and English, many of the given meanings
are opposites and are also completely unrelated, such as break out and infest.
In Japanese the primary meaning is to leave, exit, go out, etc. Yet within
haiku, a form of poetry that delights in word play and multiple readings, the
translator has to make a choice of which word best fits the poetic meaning of 卸, which might not be the same as the literal meaning.

Here is one poem by Yosa Buson that illustrates the difficulty in concordant translation:

柳

根

若草に

わすれ

たる

Wakagusa ni
ne o wasuretaru
yanagi kana

In young grass
forgotten roots —
a willow

The above translation is concordant. Everything is practically a word per word correspondence with only one inversion of the words forgotten and roots taking place. Unfortunately, the translation does not reveal the multiple meanings that are happening in the poem. Wagagusa (young grass) can also mean young people, or can even be a derogatory word for a monk; and Ne o wasure-taru (forgotten roots) can also mean forgetting sense or mind. In the corresponding translation the willow resembles a weed whose roots have invaded the young grass or whose roots have not been completely extracted. To complicate matters, there is also a saying in Japanese, “a ghost will appear where a willow grows.” Therefore, two other possible translations could read: “The
youth are forgetting their senses — a willow”, or “The damn monk is out of his mind — a willow.” In these two translations, the youth and the monk have gone crazy by planting a tree that will attract ghosts, or both groups are seeing ghosts.

For this particular poem perhaps the direct translation method works the best since the result contains the denotative meaning. Yet the connotative meanings are lost. However, there is no neat way to span the chasm between the source and the target language while keeping within the confines of a haiku and the only choice is to give the reader the secondary meanings in a footnote, a failure in delivery that at times cannot be avoided.

Formidable questions spring up. What happens to fidelity when direct translation does not convey the denotative meaning, and in fact gives the target audience the wrong image or impression? And how can a translator maintain accuracy? One of the best answers to this conundrum was written by Constance B. West, "Whoever takes upon himself to translate contracts a debt; to discharge it, he must pay not with the same money, but with the same sum" (344). In other words instead of using matching correspondors, different code-units that convey the same meaning or image need to be used.

The age-old idea that the translator has entered into a contract in which they owe an almost marital oath that has to be repaid is taken up by Jacques Derrida in “What Is A ‘Relevant’ Translation:”

Now it would be easy to show (and I have tried to do so elsewhere) that all translation implies an insolvent indebtedness and an oath of
fidelity to a given original—with all the paradoxes of such a law and such a promise, of a bond and a contract, of a promise that is, moreover, impossible and asymmetrical, transferential and countertransferential, like an oath doomed to treason or perjury (431).

What Derrida is responding to is once again the idea that there can not be an equal correspondence—an impossibility that automatically leads to failure.

The following haiku by Buson illustrates both how direct equivalency fails, and how the translator has to pay a different currency with the same sum:

2*

かしらより

Hi no hikari
kesa ya iwashi no
kashirayori

This morning
the bright sun shines off
sardine heads

The above translation contains direct, equivalent code-units, however, the reader will not be able to understand or see the original image. Not only is there an ambiguity of where the sardine heads are (are they in the ocean, are they displayed in a market, or someplace completely different) or if the central image is that of just the head, or even if the heads are attached or severed from the body.

One possibility without using direct translation is:
The new year morning sun
brightly reflects off spears decorated
by sardine heads

While the poem above does not use direct translation, it does provide a much more accurate image. First, the poem is a new year poem. Second, it was a custom during the Edo period in some Japanese villages to nail sardine heads by spears planted near the gate of a house on New Year's Eve to ward off evil spirits. Gone are some the inaccurate and ambiguous meanings. The reader now knows exactly what time of year it is and that the heads have been severed. It is still not clear within the more interpretive translation that the heads have been hung by doorways for ceremonial purposes to guard the house from evil spirits. Yet ironically the new translation is now more accurate—the same sum has been paid—but the poem is no longer equivalent.

While strict equivalency gives the illusion of accuracy, interpretive moves by the translator can give the feeling of inaccuracy. Using the above poem as an example, if a reader who can read Japanese but does not have the cultural-specific knowledge of the Edo Period (1600 through 1868), they would instantly question the introduction of such words as "New Year", and "spear," neither of which were in the original, because there they were not needed to convey meaning.

One of the arguments for a more interpretive style comes from Walter Benjamin, "If the kinship of languages manifests itself in translation, this is not accomplished through a vague likeness between adaptation and original. It stands to reason that kinship does not necessarily involve likeness" (78).
However, if the relationship between the source and the translation is no longer the same, as in the second translation, then translations become more divergent. The choices then become almost unlimited, and all that remains of the bond between the old and the new is the belief that translators want to convey an honest interpretation.

During the actual process in which a text is translated each choice precludes other choices. With each word forged within the new language, the translator has made a decision, and much like a word association game, each choice has to lead logically to the next choice. An example of how one choice changes others can be seen in a Buson poem that contains the 出 character, *deru*. Here is a brief, fragmented layout with all of the options that a translator has to make while working with this one haiku:

雉 砦 柴
の を 割
声 出 に
る や

柴刈 = Shibakari: gathering firewood, to gather firewood.
に = ni: at, on, in, by, to.
砦を = toride o: fort, stronghold, entrenchments.
出るや = deru ya: appear, come out, emerge, haunt, infest, be found, get back, lead to, enter, leave, go out, attend, work at, find (oneself) at, depart, break out, originate.
雉 = kiji: pheasant.
While the first choice is of minor importance, to choose between a gerund and an infinitive, the next choice of which preposition to use, will set the location of the poem’s event. However, a translator cannot decide which one to use without determining what the preposition is modifying.

The next decision is what type of location feels or seems the most appropriate. A selection is offered: fort, stronghold, or entrenchments. While all three contain a military related word, the first two offer some type of building or structure, while the third offers an image of trenches probably with wooden stakes protecting it. This choice is important in that it relates to the pheasant’s voice or song in the third line of the poem. Where is this sound coming from or going to? There is no neat, handy solution. It will depend on one of the options the translator picks.

All of these choices lead to the most important, and most difficult, decision in the poem: choosing the correct verb form for the word deru. Here is where we find ourselves in a converging labyrinth. Is this voice coming from the fort, going into the fort, or haunting it (which could imply either direction)? There is no one correct solution.

Finally, let’s take a look at the same poem translated in two acceptable ways, which are trying to fulfill what Derrida called the “oath of fidelity:”
While gathering firewood
the fort is haunted by
the pheasant’s voice

While exiting the fort
to gather firewood —
a pheasant’s song

Both of these poems have tried to recreate the meaning and feeling of the source text, but have done so in very different ways and have taken different routs. However, these are not only two possible paths within this garden, there are an almost infinite choice of others. Derrida once wrote: “1. ‘Nothing is translatable’; 2. ‘Everything is translatable’” (427). The above translations underscore his logic because so many options are available to the translator.

The personality of the translator is reflected by his or her choices. An examination of three different translations of the same haiku by Yosa Buson demonstrates that no two translators will ever take exactly the same path:

205

女 月 梨
あ に の
り 書 花
よ む (46).

Yuki Sawa and Edith M Shiffert translated this poem as:

Flowers of the pear—
reading a letter by moonlight
a woman (73).

Another translator, Alex Kerr, translated the same poem as:

A woman
reading a letter by moonlight
pear blossoms (58).
Where as yet another possibility exists:

Under pear blossoms
in moonlight reading a letter—
a woman

All three of these poems have their strengths and their weaknesses. The first translation keeps the images in the same lines as the source text but does so by rearranging the words in an awkward, overtly poetical manner, especially in the opening line, “The flowers of the pear.” The phrase, “pear blossoms,” is a lot closer, whereas a strict word per word translation would read, “pear’s blossoms”. Furthermore, “The flowers of the pear” reads as if it were written in an outmoded or dated rhetoric. Ezra Pound once commented that Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s translation of Italian sonnets was weakened by the very same flaw: “What obfuscated me was not the Italian but the crust of dead English,” and he then went on to conclude, “It is stupid to overlook the lingual inventions of precendent authors even when they are fools or flapdoodles or Tennysons” (88). Clearly, both Sawa and Shiffert’s flaw in this opening line is just that—they have not thought out what effect their language has upon the poem; or have used the spurious logic that since Buson lived in the 1700s, an outmoded English would suit the translations better. However, this makes him read like a bad poet.

The second line of the poem illustrates other aspects of how Sawa and Shiffert handled the text. This line would strictly exist as “moonlight in/by letter reading.” As can be seen, they rearranged these words into “reading a
letter by moonlight.” In other words, if the line is divided into two images, moonlight and reading a letter, they reversed the order. Also by interpreting the events within the poem as the woman using the moonlight to read the letter, they have underplayed the imagistic quality the poem contains and have failed to convey the multiple meanings so prevalent in haiku—the woman is not only using the moonlight to read the letter but she is also illuminated by the light. Sawa and Shiffert’s reading here shuts down meaning and does not reveal the full depth of the original.

The second translation, Alex Kerr’s, does perhaps the most radical rearranging of the text in that it moves the third line to the top and the first line to the bottom. Furthermore, he followed exactly Sawa and Shiffert’s rearranging of the text in the second or middle line—in other words not a single image comes in the same order of the source text. The effect of this is most curious, the final image, here of pear blossoms, seems quite disconnected from the woman and appears to be randomly thrown in. In addition, it lacks the poetic imagery that Buson the painter had. The result of this is two-fold. The first two lines sound very much, even more than Sawa and Shiffert’s piece, like standard English prose: “A woman reading a letter by moonlight.” However, the last line with its sudden arrival emphasizes the foreignness of the text by making it sound illogical. In addition, the overall effect of Kerr’s translation is one of stacked prose in which a prosodic sentence is randomly cut and scattered down the page to give the appearance of poetry without actually following the poetic demand for tension and reason.
The third and final translation here within our garden of alternating choices, tries to keep as close to the source text as possible. It keeps the major blocks of text, “pear blossoms / moonlight/ reading a letter/ a woman,” in the same order as the source, however, it has added the word “under” into the poem. This preposition helps to give the poem the same spatial quality of a painting. Furthermore, the added word places some line tension within the text that the other two lack by using enjambment. The other two translations use a type of end-stop line, made end-stop by the images in each single line not really needing nor connecting to the other, whereas under pear blossoms automatically sets the reader up for something else to follow. A sinuous tension now holds all three of the lines together, making it the ink-brush painting it was in the original with its sumie blacks (the night, the woman’s hair, the words in the letter) along side its whites (the pear blossoms, the moon light, the paper making up the letter, and the woman’s face). Under also takes into account the verb, ari or has, at the end of the poem. Since Japanese is constructed subject, object, verb, the pear blossoms somehow “have” the woman—all of which is neatly implied by the preposition under. Finally, the construction of the images within this milieu possesses a kind of physical, painted logic that Kerr’s lacks. The pear trees are taller than the woman and therefore are on the top of the poem in comparison to the woman who is under them.

While Kerr’s translation appeared in a Dover Thrift Edition titled The Classic Tradition of Haiku: an Anthology, it originally was in an article titled Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson Translated by Allan Persinger
“Lost Japan” published by the Lonely Planet—in other words a tour guide.

Therefore Kerr’s purpose was not to be a translator of poetry, but to be a cultural informer for the backpacker or student traveler (the audience the Lonely Planet targets). Kerr’s translation raises the question, should poets be the ones to translate poetry?

One writer who addresses the idea that poets should translate poetry is Paul de Man in his lecture on Walter Benjamin. While referring to Benjamin, de Man writes:

One of the reasons why he [Benjamin] takes the figure of the translator rather than the poet is that the translator, per definition, fails. The translator can never do what the original text did. Any translation is always second in relation to the original, and the translator as such is lost from the very beginning. He is per definition underpaid, he is per definition overworked, he is per definition the one history will not retain as an equal, unless he also happens to be a poet (233).

In this quote, de Man’s position is that only a poet can be on equal footing with another poet. Some examples of significant figures in the history of translation include Elizabeth Bishop and her translation of female Brazilian poets, Ezra Pound and his translation of Italian poetry, and Kenneth Rexroth and his translation of Japanese and Chinese poetry.

The work of poet translators notwithstanding, de Man’s idea that a translator fails because a translator can never do what the original text did needs to be addressed. While it is true that a translation can never match the source text because the combination of a given culture at a given moment in time that prompted the source text’s writer to compose the way he or she did cannot be reproduced, a translation can match the tone, image and power which has given the original both its longevity. Some examples of successful
translation are the claustrophobic madness of a vindictive world in Kobo Abe’s fiction or the Heian Court memoir of Sei Shonagon with her delightful thoughts that turn with sudden flashes of humor. In The Pillow Book, for example, Shonagon writes:

Suddenly towards dawn its [the cuckoo’s] song breaks the silence; one is charmed, indeed one is quite intoxicated. But alas, when the Sixth Month comes the hototogisu is silent. I really need say no more about my feelings for this bird. And I do not love the hototogisu alone; anything that cries out at night delights me—except babies (5).

Here the reader does not really need to know the politics, culture, and the time period to enjoy this passage. Its description of the delight the writer feels upon hearing the bird song before dawn and the sudden turn of how the only thing not enjoyable are babies crying at night still takes him or her by surprise as it would have its original readers.

In returning to de Man’s statement, the submissive relationship of the translator in relation to the original text needs examining. For de Man, the source text becomes Sacher-Masoch’s mistress with its boots, whips and furs demanding an almost impossible fidelity of the translator who is underpaid, over-worked, and then forgotten. While lamenting this unenviable position of the translator and tactically calling for the translator to enjoy a better position in relation to the text, de Man is also recognizing a fact—in literature readers are not reading a translation to read the translator but to read the original writer. If a hypothetical browser in a bookstore picks up a copy of Yasunari Kawabata’s House of Sleeping Beauties, for example, this person is interested in reading Kawabata and not Edward Seidensticker the translator. However,
this same browser might choose a Seidensticker translation over one by J. Martin Holman if they have previously read and enjoyed Seidensticker’s work or are aware that both Kawabata and Seidensticker knew each other and collaborated to produce the translations\(^4\) (though this is not to imply that Holman’s work is in any way inferior).

Not only does the translator suffer in his or her relationship to the original, the source text demands an almost impossible fidelity. In the context of translation, the idea of fidelity returns to a hypothetical reader’s assumption of a symmetrical relationship between the source and the translation. Lori Chamberlain in her essay, “Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation, writes:

> The sexualization of translation appears perhaps most familiarly in the tag *les belles infidèles*—like women, the adage goes, translations should be either beautiful or faithful… For *les belles infidèles*, fidelity is defined by an implicit contract between translation (as woman) and original (as husband, father, or author). However, the infamous “double-standard” operates here as it might have in the traditional marriage (307).

> It is extremely limiting to view a translation as either faithful or beautiful—couldn’t it be both at the same time? Certainly the unspoken agreement for accuracy could be viewed as something other than a contract under which a “double-standard” operates where one partner has to be faithful and the other doesn’t. Why couldn’t it be the meeting of two like minds? Furthermore, how could a source text be unfaithful? After all, the poem or the story was written with as much talent and insight as the original artist possessed.

\(^4\) In fact, not only did Kawabata give one third of his Nobel Prize award money to Seidensticker, Kawabata also stated in his address that one of the reasons why he won was the lyrical qualities of Seidensticker’s translations.
Since a translation can be both faithful and beautiful at the same time or even ugly and unfaithful, it would be useful to prove these claims by comparing some different translations. Here is a translation of Yosa Buson’s haiku 117 by Shigeru Nishimura:

117

の 終 春
た 日 の
り の 海
哉 た
り

The spring sea swells and falls, and swells—
Until the bell of tardy evening knells (53).

This translation is neither faithful, nor beautiful. The first line of the translation more or less translates the entire haiku. However, the second line, doesn’t exist at all within the original—there is no bell, no tardy evening knells—the translator simply made them up for the purposes of creating a couplet. Furthermore, the second, or new line, is in a heavy-handed iambic meter—a plodding bell ringing upon deaf ears.

What is interesting about Nishimura’s translation is that Nishimura was Japanese and felt the need to take the haiku and to appropriate it into a western form. This translation was first published in 1879, twenty-six years after Admiral Perry had forcibly opened up Japan to the world. This time period was tumultuous—the Emperor used Perry as a means of taking political control back from the Shogunates and set various scholars out to study the western world and bring back technology and new ideas, including a constitution.
thermore, Japanese culture, which had been so turned in upon itself during the
Edo Era, was now looked upon as old fashioned, quaint, or even feudal.

Nishimura took a haiku and in an attempt to bring the text to the English or
American reader, rewrote it into a rhymed couplet. His translation tries to re-
posture and modernize Japanese culture by using a traditional English form. A
more “faithful” translation would read:

The spring sea
all day long back and forth
back and forth

While the opening image of the spring sea has remained the same as
Nishimura’s translation, in the remainder of the poem, the translator has made
different decisions. First, in this translation the words omitted by Nishimura,
“終日” (hinemosu) which literary means all day, have been reinstated. Sec-
ondly, both translations deal differently with the repetitive “のたりのたり”
(notarintori). Nishimura handles it with the phrase swells and falls, and
swells. The second translation uses the image of back and forth. Both are,
more or less, correct; however, each approach the same idea differently. In
Nishimura’s translation the sea is going up and down or moving in a vertical
plane, whereas in the second version the sea is moving in a horizontal plane.
The second translation also uses line breaks (keeping to the same order as the
original) to add the vertical in: back and forth / back and forth. Furthermore,
the second line is longer than the third line, which is also in imitation of
waves—as the sea rushes out the shore becomes longer and then becomes
shorter as the sea rushed in again. Therefore, this second translation, while
being more faithful to the original, is also more beautiful.

To further underscore the point that fidelity and beauty are neither mutually exclu-
sive nor inclusive, I offer three other translations of a different Buson haiku:

108

馬 落 紅
の 花 梅
糞 燃 の
ら む

Sawa and Shiffert have translated this poem in two different ways. The first
translation on the left is from their book Haiku Master Buson which was pub-
lished in 1978, and their second translation on the right was printed in a col-
lection edited by Robert Hass published in 1994 titled The Essential Haiku:

Versions of Basho, Buson, & Issa:

The red plum’s
fallen flowers seem to be burning
on the horse’s droppings (70).

Fallen petals of red plum—
they seem to be burning
on the clods of horse shit (83).

While it is obvious that the main images are the same, and that it is in
essence the same poem, there are major shifts in both the blocks of text and in
register. Their first translation is closer to the source text and is better with its
only flaw being the handling of the last line. However, their second transla-
tion suffers from much the same kind of language that their earlier pear blos-
som haiku translation did: the use of a formal stilted kind of poesy in the open-
ing line, “Fallen petals of red plum.” What is more, in the second poem they
have deviated even more from the original. The opening line of the source
text is, “Red plum’s,” so that the first translation is not only more accurate but
is also better.

Also in both translations they have tried to soften the last line. The last
line in a word per word translation would read, “horse’s shit,” or in a more di-
rect English manner, “horse shit.” Their first translation tries to soften this
into the euphemistic phrase, “on the horse’s droppings,” which we can see in
their second translation, they instinctively knew didn’t work. However, in
their second translation they added in the words “clods of” once again going
for a more poetic diction. The question this raises, is why did they feel the
need to change the line, to soften it, and to put it in a sort of stilted language?

A more faithful, yet powerful translation would read:

The red plum
blossoms scatter—probably burning
on horse shit

First, it should be noted that “落” (chiru) means either to fall or to scat-
ter, therefore all the translations are idiomatically correct. Also this last trans-
lation has reversed the order of the two words blossoms and scatter. Scattered
blossoms would be more in keeping to the word order of the original, but then
a verb would have to be added for the line to work and to make sense, as in:
“the scattered blossoms are probably burning,” but this would be too long,
clumsy and wordy. Therefore, the easiest solution is to reverse the words and
to drop the to be verb (there is no to be verb in the original), keeping the poem
direct and simple, but also at the same time setting the reader up for the comic punch line at the close of the poem.

What is important here is that a translation can be “faithful” and “beautiful” at the same time, while even more importantly, contrary to de Man’s opinion, accomplishing much of the same thing as the source did. If the above poem is looked at carefully it will be seen that both the source and the last translation contain the same structure and meaning. While the poem starts out manipulating a stock, poetic, haiku image (the fallen red plum blossoms), it ends with a crude slap that is fairly comic. Both the blossoms and the horse shit are fallen and scattered—both share the same kind of relationship as something discarded. This symmetry is brought out by the use of the color red—the plum blossoms are red and the horse apples are brownish red. If the plum blossoms would have been white, the more common color, the symmetry would have collapsed. Red is what links both objects together, and even the verb, burning, is brings up a bright orange or red image. Here the image of plum blossoms representational of beauty and youth have fallen, likewise the dung, the symbol of something debased, crude or depraved, has also fallen, but now the fallen petals are withering away within this fallen, debased world.

The more literal translation red plum haiku has, in my opinion, not failed nor transgressed the bond between the source text and the translator. Yet the idea of failure is not so easily dismissed. One person, Faubion Bowers, the editor of The Classic Tradition of Haiku: an Anthology from which both Kerr’s and Nishimura’s translations have been taken, appears to agree with de
Man’s statement that a translator is bound to fail. In the editor’s introduction, Bowers writes:

Arthur Waley [1889-1966] an early translator of Japanese literature, wrote, “It is not possible that the rest of the world will ever realize the importance of Japanese poetry, because of all poetries it is the most completely untranslatable.” To our way of thinking, Japanese poetry lacks sentence structure. It is imprecise in articles, particles, plurals and gender (viii).

Before this can be analyzed, a brief look at who Arthur Waley was and his accomplishments as an oriental scholar and translator needs to be undertaken.

According to the online Columbia Encyclopedia:

Arthur Waley 1889-1966, English orientalist, b. London as Arthur David Schloss, educated at Cambridge. He was and still is considered one of the world's great Asian scholars. His most important works include his translations of Chinese poetry and of the Japanese novel, The Tale of Genji (1925-33) by Murasaki Shikibu. Among his other works are The No Plays of Japan (1921), The Poetry and Career of Li Po (1959) and The Secret History of the Mongols and Other Pieces (1964). He never traveled to Asia.

While Waley never went to Japan nor China, he was a specialist in oriental literature. One does not have to go to a foreign country to learn its language, but going to the source can be quite helpful. Language and culture interplay constantly even in such places as a market or a noodle stand, and this knowledge of how the language works on a daily level can lead to greater understanding of one of the most complicated and yet exacting products of language—literature. Yet how seriously should the reader take both Waley’s and Bowers’ claim that of all poetries Japanese is the most untranslatable, and
what are we supposed to make of this as an opening claim in a book of collected translations?5

Indeed, some of the qualities mentioned as making the poetry untranslatable do not really make it as impossible as it at first may seem. Part of haiku’s translatability may very possibly hinge upon daily, or common, conversational usage. For example, how the “lack” of articles and plurals might work in translation can be seen by comparing I like apples (りんごが好きです), to I ate an apple (りんごを食べました). These two simple sentences work to bring about an understanding of how the word “りんご” ringo or apple(s) is used. In both sentences, the plural first one and the singular second one, the noun apple is the same. However, neither sentence is all that difficult to translate, because common sense dictates idiomatically correct English.

This idea of how the translator fills in the article or the plural can further be seen as in the poem first quoted:

Under pear blossoms
in moonlight reading a letter—
a woman

The plural blossoms, and the article before the words letter and woman, have all been added to the translation—they did not appear in the source text. However, leaving them out does not really work as in, “Under pear blossom / in moonlight reading letter / woman.” Notice how here, the voice of the poem sounds stilted and ignorant in the target language. In addition, adding the plurals and the articles in is not that difficult. For one, it would be absurd to con-

5 The Classic Tradition of Haiku: An Anthology has the work of forty-three different translators.
template the image, in the context of this poem, of a single pear blossom, as most trees do not flower one blossom at a time. Nor does a singular work in any emotional way, because once again the logic of the situation does not demand it and it would then be a different poem.

The same logic, in reverse, applies to both the letter and the woman. It could be argued that this faceless, unnamed woman is reading several letters, however, she can only read one letter at a time. Therefore even if she had several, she would still just be reading one within the “snapshot” moment of a haiku. Also there could be more than one woman, however, “Under pear blossoms / in moonlight reading letters / women” while not technically wrong does not convey the same sense of drama as the single woman. With a lone figure more intent on the words in front of her instead of on the flowers, a sense of the common that is somehow not common is created. This fits in with Buson, who once wrote in a preface to a poetry collection from Shundei Kushu Jo: “The essence of haikai [kaiku] is to use ordinary words and yet to become separate from the ordinary. Be separate from the ordinary and still use the ordinary” (156). Ultimately, this is why the idea of the lone woman works, the image gives the taste of the unusual by leaving the questions of why she is trying to read a letter by only moonlight; what is so important about this letter that she doesn’t wait until she can read it in better light; and who this woman is and what she looks like go unanswered.

Having thus established that it is possible for the translator to choose whether to add an article or to make a noun plural without great difficulty, it is
also possible to show how Bower’s complaint that Japanese is imprecise in its prepositions is not the insurmountable hurdle that he claims it is. In fact, prepositions in Japanese lead to greater freedom by offering the translator more choices. Turning once again to the same pear blossom poem, the preposition “に” (ni) occurs after the word moonlight. Kenkyusha’s Lighthouse Japanese-English Dictionary gives some of the following English meanings for ni: to, at, in, on, for, by, and as (1250-1251). The words, to, at, on, for, and as can be easily discarded as options, because meaning would break down into something absurd like “Under pear blossoms / on moonlight….” which would then either reduce the woman into a fairy Peaseblossom or would even more improbably make the letter written on moonlight.

However, this menu of choices does offer two selections for a logical translation: “in” and “by”. The word “in” works slightly better than the word “by” because “in” becomes more inclusive by illuminating the pear blossoms, the letter and the woman. Whereas when the word “by” is used then the emphasis becomes on the missive as in “reading a letter by moonlight,” or “by moonlight reading a letter.” In these later two options, the moonlight now only illuminates the letter and disconnects the opening image of the flowers from the letter. However, neither of these selections is wrong. The ultimate choice reflects the degree of emphasis the translator places upon the relationship of the four images within the poem—the blossoms, the moonlight, the letter and the woman.
Once again Waley’s argument, and Bower’s agreement, that Japanese poetry is the most completely untranslatable, has long standing agreement. Waley’s argument is similar to what Roman Jakobson writes about in his essay “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation.” Jakobson begins by quoting Bertrand Russell’s statement that nobody can understand cheese if they have never seen it. Jakobson then goes on to write:

> If, however, we follow Russell’s fundamental precept and place our “emphasis upon the linguistic aspects of traditional philosophical problems,” then we are obliged to state that no one can understand the word “cheese” unless he has an acquaintance with the word in the lexical code of English (138).

By extension, nobody can understand Japanese poetry because we do not have the same lexical code and that is why Bower is lamenting that Japanese poetry lacks sentence structure. However, Jakobson does not end his argument with the idea that we require the exact same lexical code to understand “cheese”. Jakobson goes on to state that while one given language might not have a word for cheese it could put together other words which form the same concept, or that things can be translated. In short, people, and thus their language, are adaptable and capable of absorbing new words and ideas.

This idea of how texts are translatable because they are human endeavors is a key idea behind Kwame Anthony Appiah’s essay “Thick Translation:”

> What we translate are utterances, things made with words by men and women, with voice or pen or keyboard, and those utterances are the products of actions, which like all actions are undertaken for reasons. Since the reasons can be complex and extensive, grasping an agent’s reasons can be a difficult business (390).

This idea goes against Waley’s and Bower’s claim that Japanese poetry is untranslatable by claiming that since all texts are products made for a reason, they possess a purpose, and it is this purpose which makes things translatable,
even if the reason is difficult to comprehend or was unknown to the original writer. So when Buson wrote his pear blossom poem or any of his haiku, he had a reason or reasons, conscious or unconscious, for doing so. Therefore, translation becomes possible for any of his poems. Buson’s quote about haiku, “Be separate from the ordinary and still use the ordinary” (156), provides a basis for understanding and thus framing his general, over-arching, poetic purpose in translated verse.

The poems that have been examined so far reveal varying moments within poetic composition. The purpose behind the pear blossom haiku with its capturing of an intimate, human moment; the repetitive movement of the sea going back and forth all day long with its meditative zen-like quality; and the plum blossoms, a symbol of youth and purity, falling into an abased world—each one possesses both similar and yet different ideas. All three poems similarly capture a moment, that slice of life vignette which reveals something larger. The differences are the varying scenes and the meaning of these scenes in and of themselves. Furthermore, Jakobson’s idea that people, and their languages, are capable of absorbing new texts and ideas by understanding the reason of why the source text was written emphasizes the possibility of texts being translatable. Curiosity and the will to discover new ideas can lead to translation, and to understanding and poetical empathy on the part of the translator—an understanding which is missing in a lot of the translations in Bower’s book, and indeed in a lot of translations of haiku in general.
3 Applying Theory to Translation:

By now it has been established that complete accuracy in translation is impossible because translators make choices during their writing process, and translations vary from strict correspondence to interpretive ones. This raises the obvious question: How have Yosa Buson’s haiku been translated within this collection?

The first choice a translator of haiku has to make is which is more important, form or content? Eugene Nida wrote,

In poetry there is obviously a greater focus of attention upon formal elements than one normally finds in prose. Not that content is necessarily sacrificed in translation of a poem, but the content is necessarily constricted into certain formal molds. Only rarely can one reproduce both content and form in translation, and hence in general the form is usually sacrificed for the sake of content (154).

The translation methods used and followed throughout this collection concurs with Nida—content, image, and sense are prioritized. Therefore, the translations may not contain the correct syllable count. If they happen to naturally count out into 5/7/5 fine, but no moves have been made to force the poems in this way. Since usually Japanese words do not match English words such syllable equivalency is impractical. For example, "蚊屋" (kaya) in English is mosquito net—a two syllable word has become four syllables.

Yet, as a form, haiku contains more than just syllable count; a haiku also has to have a seasonal reference and convey a sense of a twist or a surprise within the closing line. Take for example the following poem:
On the Nara road
in a field of dong quai
a single cherry tree

Within the above poem the cherry tree becomes the seasonal reference and the twist or surprise.

The above poem is a direct translation, that is to say the words are as similar as possible and occur within the same line order. Throughout this collection, I began with direct translation and if it worked, that is to say if the translation paid the same emotional sum as the original, it was left alone. As the translation now stands, the only problematic image is *dong quai*, an English borrowing of a Chinese plant name. While dong quai is currently available in the United States in stores that sell herbal medicine, most people probably haven't heard of it, and probably do not know its purpose nor what it looks like while growing. Therefore, the only recourse because of poetic restrictions was to shore up the image within an endnote.

The endnote to the poem reads:

Touki, or dong quai, is an ancient Chinese/Korean/Japanese medicinal herb from the celery family that has purple stems and umbrella clusters of white flowers. It is used to treat cramps, infrequent periods,
irregular menstrual cycles, PMS, and problems associated with menopause. It is known as the female ginseng.

Reliance on endnotes is of course problematic. In an ideal world full of ideal translations, not one footnote would ever be needed because all the references would be completely known to the target audience. However, this is not possible. Instead, the goal of these translations has been to use endnotes only when necessary, I employ them here to convey information needed to understand cultural specifics like historical references, quotations of other poems or poets and the like, to reveal the sometimes multiple readings that are not able to be conveyed within a single poetic translation due to the separation between the source and target languages, to give the reader the ability to visualize the images, and to reveal the metaphors, plays upon meaning, and the artistry.

Take the above endnote as an example. Not only does it explain what dong quai looks like and thus enables a reader to visualize the images, it also gives the reader the ability to interpret the poem. Since cherry blossoms are symbols of the fleeting nature of youthful purity, it is most important that the flowers are blooming over a symbol of a woman who is either sexually experienced, or has moved beyond or is attempting to prolong her reproductive years. Since no cherry blossoms are falling in this haiku, the poem captures this precarious moment right before the descent into worldly or carnal knowl-
edge. This moment is a Zen moment, one capable of showing the importance of the past and future all made possible in this single now.

Another important element of methodology used in this translation involves transposition, or replacing one word by a different word of similar meaning. Take the following poem as an example. My first translation read:

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Kusa kasumi
mizu ni koe naki
higure kana
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The misty grass
silently cries
in the sunset

The first interpretive move was to replace the word misty with the word dewy. While the exact word in Japanese is misty or hazy, the following image is water crying silently. Mist or haze is too small or fine an image for the idea of tears whereas dew sounds heavier and conveys the idea. So the next translation read:

```
The dewy grass
silently cries
in the sunset
```

After arriving at the above moment in translation, my next step is to type in the original Japanese poem sometimes in whole or part into various search
engines with Buson's name either before or after the poem. Usually there are a plethora of sites, responses, ideas and interpretations, which range from more or less anonymous people airing their opinions to scholars of the Early Modern period. It is then a matter of sifting through this dialogue to see if I have already struck poetic gold.

What came up with the above poem involved a type of serendipity. There was a blog entry from an anonymous Japanese man made one hour before my lighting upon it. His viewed the poem as a landscape of a field with long grey spears of last years grass under which the vibrant green of new grass is springing up—all of which is wet with dew and that the falling dew was like somebody silent crying or weeping. He then went on to say how he preferred the image of a dying sun to a setting sun as an emotional correlation to the idea of weeping. For then the poem would become more of a death poem or a death haiku.

The poetic haiku tradition calls on the poet to compose their death poem, a last poetic statement to be recited or written shortly before death. Perhaps the most famous death poem is Matsuo Basho's, which reads:

    Sick on an autumn journey
    my spirit drifts
    over withered fields

    The Japanese blogger went on to say that he preferred the image of the dying sun along with the old, dead grass and the new grass weeping because he was suffering from terminal cancer and he only had a few more days left to
live. Therefore he was taking Buson's poem and claiming it as his death haiku, a statement that he felt revealed his own last days.

It should be noted that this was not Buson's death haiku (at the time of his death Buson recited three haiku in a row to his pupils). The last poem Buson wrote reads:

White plum blossoms
a dawn
in my late night

However, the new interpretation from the blogger changed the emotional weight of the poem for me. Going back to the second draft I realized, it would not move a reader towards that interpretation at all. So the next draft read:

The dew wet grass
silently weeps
in the dying sun

I kept the man's idea of the dying sun. Although, going from setting sun to dying sun is not a great leap, the emotional register is different. Both images contain the onset of night, but with the word dying the image of night takes on a new dimension. I also changed the dewy grass to the dew wet grass. Sonically, the poem sounds better with the two W sounds in the first line, which is repeated with the W in weeps. I also changed the word cry to weeps because the verb cry is also associated with a sound. Therefore weeps struggles less with the adverb silently while at the same time foreshadows the death metaphor that the poem now ends upon.
The above poem went through several steps to reach the final translation, and each step became a little more interpretive from the original literal meaning. Yet at the same time, the new translation does not stray all that far from the original. It remains still faithful, yet beautiful. However, there are other poems that went through more steps in translation and became more interpretive and less corresponding. These decisions were made in order that the poems might maintain their emotional weight. The struggle became to convey the brilliance of these poems in English without turning them into a series of opaque references. Yet, some of the poems are so anchored to the Middle-Edo Period, that they need quite hefty footnotes even in modern Japanese to explain the references. And if a language-one reader needs a long explanation, how much longer an explanation would a target reader require?

An example of a poem that depended more upon interpretation to convey emotional meaning was the following:

59*

霞 胡 指
哉 地 南
に 車
引 を
goes to
Southward bound
through barbarian lands —
mist

Shinansha o
kochi ni hikisaru
kasumi kana
As this final interpretive poem stands it represents a moment in time which begins with the narrator traveling south through a landscape controlled by a wild barbaric people. The poem then twists the reader's assumption about who or what was southward bound by ending with the subject, mist. The word mist transforms everything into something mysterious, strange and exotic.

While the translation stands as a poem, it does not convey the multiple meanings, nor captures the embedded historical references. The opening line literally reads, "The South Pointing Chariot." There is great distance between these two openings. The challenge here is that this haiku is doing two different things at once: it is recounting the mythical foundation of China and is capturing that Zen moment of now.

The South Pointing Chariot was an oxen drawn cart which had a male doll with his right arm pointing outward. At the beginning of a journey the doll’s arm was pointed south and then would automatically turn due to a series of axels and gears. While not the most accurate compass because it relied on gears and not magnetics, the South Pointing Chariot did accomplish its purpose. The story goes that the Yellow Emperor invented the chariot to defeat a barbarian king to the south who had conjured up a thick fog to hide his army. By defeating his enemy, the Yellow Emperor was able to form the first part of what was to become China.

The word barbarian then is literal—it is the barbarian’s fog that the South Pointing Chariot is to maneuver through. However, the poem is more
than a very clever recounting of Chinese history: it also captures a Zen mo-
moment. Because mist feels mythical or oneiric with its fantastical swirling grey
shapes, the landscape becomes timeless. The poem suggests that standing in
the heavy mist, the poet is reliving that mysterious moment of history as if he
were there. Furthermore, we the readers also become situated within the his-
torical inclusiveness of the moment.

As can be easily seen, my translation is not corresponding. I have
omitted the problematic image of the South Pointing Chariot since including it
would start the poem with an obscure historical curiosity. However, the char-
riot was used to travel south, hence, “southward bound”. Furthermore, as a
Japanese phrase does not have to state the subject, the poem now has two dif-
derent subjects, the implied “I” of the poet, and the mist or fog. Therefore my
translation opens up and invites multiple readings.

In many of the haiku throughout this collection, discerning the appro-
priate subject has involved some poetic debate. Harukiko Kindaichi, a Japa-
nese literary critic states that in modern Japanese when the subject is un-
known, the subject is by default the author. However, Kindaichi then goes on
to write that assuming the poet is the unstated subject within Early Modern, or
Edo Period, poetry becomes problematic because this was before the idea of
the assumed narrator was codified. This standard might or might not have
been true during Buson’s lifetime. Also the meaning of the poems can rad-
ically shift if an I is added in. In the haiku above, the poem works better with-
out an I. However, throughout this collection my approach varied based upon poetic needs. One example is in the opening haiku the “I” has been added to reveal the meaning or the feeling of the poem:

1*

老の春山Mono no zu
ほらりせむ

Hourai no
yama matsuri semu
oi no haru

Hourai’s New Year
decorations and I grow
old at spring

Here the I is added to give the emotional meaning of the poem, since it is not just a set of decorations growing old after the passing of the holiday—it is also the aging of the author that is being commented upon.

Although each translation involved debates such as those characterized above, the volume cannot explain every poetic choice made within these translations. Ultimately, the poems must stand by themselves. What remains then is the result of much debate, deliberation, and constant rewriting and the methods used to convey the poetics of Buson have varied according to need. The opening statement of this essay that all translation is colonization is true, it over simplifies and does not adequately honor the undertakings of an artistic

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6 During the Edo Period, New Years Day was sometime in February or March, was the first day of spring, and was also the day in which everybody became a year older.
transcription project. Literary translation becomes an intimate study of another writer who was shaped by a different culture and place, and who may or might have not lived in a different time. This study involves a constant surrendering of one’s own aesthetics. Yet at the same time, the translator can only work within the limitations of his or her linguistic and poetic sensibilities to form a work of art that can move a reader in a similar way as the original. The endeavor of translation recalls the old Zen adage spoken to initiates: one has to study the masters until their eyebrows and yours are intertwined.
Pronunciation Guide and End Notes:

As some readers might wish to sound out the poems in Japanese, all of the translations include a Romanized transcription of the original. For those that know Japanese, sometimes the transcriptions might seem to vary from normal Japanese pronunciation; however, the variations were based upon *fu-rigana*—a Japanese pronunciation guide.

The key to pronouncing Japanese correctly lies within the vowels. There are five major vowel sounds: A, I, U, E, O. They are pronounced as follows: A as in ah, bah or ta; I as in me, see or he; U as in moo, Sue, woo; E as in hey, way, they; and O as in so, mow to toe. There are three different ways of writing a long vowel, one is to put a dash above it, one is to follow the vowel with an H, and the other is to follow the main vowel with a u. I have followed the third way throughout this text.

After the vowels the consonants more or less follow English pronunciation. Therefore words like *kumo* (cloud) would be pronounced koomoe. One of the more difficult transcriptions to follow involves the phonetic letter *は* which can be pronounced ha or wa, depending on if the letter is part of a word (ha) or if it is standing alone and acting as a topic marker particle (wa). Part of the difficulty in this is that in Japanese writing there is no spacing between words. If Chinese characters (Kanji) are being used this doesn’t represent a problem; however, if the poem is written entirely in hiragana (one of the two phonetic alphabets) then it can sometimes be problematic. One example
of this situation would be ははは, which would be transcribed as haha (mother) wa and not hahaha. The other letter which can cause debate is を and is spelled wo but is pronounced o when it is not part of a word and is functioning as a subject marker. Therefore, in order for readers who are not familiar with Japanese to pronounce the poems correctly, the transcriptions are written to show how the words are pronounced and not how they are spelled.

As for the order and numbering of the poems, all of the poems are numbered and are in the same sequence as arranged by Takai Kito, Buson’s prize student. Furthermore, the poems are also organized by season, the traditional manner of that of the Kokinshu, also known as the Kokin Wakashu, a 21 volume set of poetry that was arranged by season and was published around 920.

Finally, any number that contains a * mark shows that the poem has an endnote. The reason for endnotes rather than footnotes at the bottom of the page, is that I wanted the poems to stand as poems and not as historical or cultural curiosities. Also I did not want several footnotes to clutter up the beauty of the page. Yet at the same time, there is the need to maintain both accuracy and cultural reference so that the reader can fully understand the artistic merit of the poem—hence the use of endnotes.
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Hourai no yama matsuri semu oi no haru

Hourai festival’s New Year’s decorations and I grow old at spring

Hi no hikari kesa ya iwashi no kashirayori

This new year morning sun reflects of spears decorated by sardine heads

Sanwan no zouni kayuru ya chouja buri

Three lacquered bowls of rice-cake porridge — a millionaire’s feast
“Separation”

4*

Uguisu no
achikochi tosuru ya
koie kachi

Warblers
darting here and there between
elegant nests

5*

As the sun sets
the warbler’s distant voice
also ends

6

The warbler’s
crude aspect —
a first song
7*

そ 雀 鶯
それも春
鶯を
雀賀かと見し

Uguisu o suzume ka to mishi
soremo haru

Warblers
sparrows?  See —
it must be spring

A title for a painting

8*

軒の梅
賢過たる

Uguisu ya kashiko sugitaru
ken no ume

The warbler —
so overly clever
in the plum’s shelter

9

高音裁

Uguisu no hie o ushiro ni
takane kana

The nightingale’s light
comes out from under branches
a high song

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Translated by Allan Persinger
飯時分
家内揺ふて
Uguisu ya
kanai soroute
meshijibun
A warbler
and all the household are sitting —
mealtime

高茨鶯
うくや
飛ぶ
Uguisu ya
ibara kugurite
takou tobu
The nightingale
dives under thorns
then soars

口啼う
明て
いす
さの
Uguisu no
naku ya chiisaki
kuchiaite
The warbler
cries from its small
open mouth
The Imperial Palace’s spring scenery in the pale blue dawn

13

艸 我 青
か 大 柳
木 君 や
か の

Aoyagi ya
waga oukimi no
kusaka kika

Green willow —
my sovereign’s
glass? tree?

14*

柳 な わ に
根 を 慮 れ タ ル

Wakagusa ni
ne o wasuretaru
yanagi kana

In young grass
forgotten roots —
a willow

15

や さ 梅
な び ち
ぎ し り
哉 く て

Ume chirite
sabishiku narishi
yanagi kana

Growing sad
as the plum blossoms fall
a willow
suteyarade
yanagi sashikeri
ame no hima

Abandoned
the willow shines
between the rains

Aoyagi ya
serifu no sato no
seri no naka

A green willow
in the middle of the village’s
parsley patch

Deru kuhi o
utau toshitari
yanagi kana

From out the picket fence
singing through the years
a willow
Souan Hermitage

19*

愛 す 哉
梅 に 遅 速 を

Futa moto no
ume ni chisoku o
aisu kana

On two branches
the plum blossoms bloom one by one —
love

20

薰 か な
皺 手 に か こ つ

Ume orite
shiwade ni kakotsu
kaori kana

Picking plum branches
my wrinkled hands
are fragrant

21*

鴻 墨 白
芳 梅

Hakubai ya
sumi kanbashiki
kourokan

The fragrance
of white plum blossoms and ink
Kourokan Palace
22

垣の外

しら梅や

誰むかしより

Shira ume ya
taka mukashiyori
kaki no gai

This white plum tree
was along time ago
outside the fence

23

梅がもと

場もふけりた

Mai mai no
niha maukerita
ume ga moto

Dancing, dancing
in a foot-worn track
round the plum tree

24

うめの宿

出べくと

Izubekuto
shite dezunarinu
ume no yado

I have to leave
but I don’t want to
The Plum Inn
The inn’s plum branches have become large enough to be picked.

Even while doing the impossible, washing dishes with a wooden pestle, the rulers are admonished to be punctual — the wise reign of spring.

Everywhere coldness remains — plum blossoms.

The white plums at Kitanono Tea House have been reserved.
28
卓の上
うめ散や
螺鈿こぼる。

Ume chiru ya
raden koboruru
shoku no ue

Mother of pearl
scattered on the table —
fallen plum blossoms

29*
遊女かな
帯買ふ室の
梅咲て

Ume saite
obi kau muro no
yuujo kana

Flowering plums —
investing in an obi
a Muro prostitute

30*
あるじ哉
わたしで梅の

Genbachi no
watarite ume no
aruji kana

At Genbachi
plum blossoms cross the bridge —
mastery
Hi o okade
hito aru sama ya
ume ga yado

Highlighted people
place garden lamps
The Plum Inn

Ah what a difficult thing is syllabary spelling. If the sound makes sense let us spell the way we want.

Ume sakinu
dore ga mumeyara
umeji ya yara

The flowering plums
are they spelled “mume”
or “ume”

Shira ume no
kareki ni modoru
tsukiyo kana

The grey plum blossoms
on the dead tree come back
in the moonlit night
Azuki beans sold
from a small shop with budding plum blossoms

Here and there plum blossoms
falling in the south
falling in the north

An early spring

The Osaka woman
shivering in cold Kyoto —
a funeral service
Gyoki no kane
hibikuya tani no
koori made
Funeral bells resound
turning the valley water
into ice

Yabuiri no
yume ya azuki no
nieru uchi
Dreaming
of Servants’ Day — azuki beans
boiling at home

Yabuiri ya
yosome nagara no
atagosan
On Servants’ Day
apologizing for leaving
Mt. Atago
On Servants’ Day
an amulet case forgotten
in day lilies

On Servants’ Day
a gift of tooth blackening
under an umbrella

Servants’ Day
even for Nakayama Temple’s
sexton
On Man Day

43*

Nana kusa ya
hakama no himo no
katamusibi

Seven herbs
and my hakama’s belt
in an overhand knot

44

Korekiri ni
komichi tsukitari
seri no naka

Only here
could a path end surrounded
by parsley

45

Furudera ya
houroku sutsuru
seri no naka

At an old temple
an earthenware pot abandoned
in parsley
While vacationing with Kito at Wakinohama beach

46*

宵の春

Sujikai ni
futon shikitari
yoi no haru

The futon
spread at an angle —
in the spring eve

47

宵の春

Hiji shiroki
sou no kari ne ya
yoi no haru

The white arm
of the fitfully sleeping monk
in the spring eve

48

守良かな

Haru no yu ni
tattoki gyoshō o
morui kana

In the spring evening
A sacred old imperial palace
stands guard
49

木間より  
春月や

Springtime
paused in Inkindau Temple’s trees

Listening to the Koto on a spring evening

50*

おぼろ月

Soushyu no
kari no namida ya
oboro zuki

On Soushyu River
a wild goose’s tears —
a hazy moon

51

春の宿

Orikugi ni
eboshi kaketari
haru no yado

My cap is hanging
on a bent nail —
the Spring Inn
52*

Kindachi ni
kitsune baketari
yoi no haru

Lord master
the ghostly fox
in the spring eve

While the Tang poet, So Touba, regretted the passing of spring, Sei Shonagon praised the violet spring morning

53

Haru no yo ya
yoi akebono no
sono naka ni

In the spring night
the time between evening and dawn
is best

54

Onna gushite
dairi ogamon
oboro zuki

Together with a woman
at the Imperial Palace worshiping
the misty moon
Kusuri nusumu
onna ya wa aru
oboro zuki

A woman has
stolen the elixir of life
the hazy moon

Yoki hito o
yadosu koie ya
oboro zuki

A good man
living in a small house
the misty moon

Sashinuki o
ashi de nugu yo ya
oboru zuki

At night pulling off
my shashinuki with my feet —
the hazy moon
Viewing a field

58

日ぐれ哉
水に声なき
草霞み

Kusa kasumi
mizu ni koe naki
higure kana

The dewy grass
silently weeps
in the dying sun

59*

霞哉
胡地に引去ル

Shinansha o
kochi ni hikisaru
kasumi kana

Southward bound
through barbarian lands —
mist

60

霞かな
よらで過ゆく

Komabune no
yorade sugiyuku
kasumi kana

An ancient Korean boat
slowly passes through
mist
The sun sets and there is no bridge — spring water

Spring water under the Shijo Gojo bridges

My weak legs cross through muddying spring water
Haru no mizu
sedo ni tatsukuran
to-zo omou

Spring water
the field at my backdoor
wants tilling

Haru no mizu ni
utata unaha no
keiko kana

In spring water
more and more roped cormorants
practicing

Hebi o ou
masu no omoi ya
haru no mizu

A snake
and a heavy trout fight
in spring water
壁を洩る人住みて煙

Harusame ya
hito sumite keburi
kabe o moru

Spring rain
escaping from the walls of houses
smoke

春のぬ種あらのめしつ

Monodane no
fukuro nurashitsu
haru no ame

A seed bag
soaked in
spring rain

着たりけり春雨や

Harusame ya
mi ni furu zukin
kitari keri

In spring rain
I’ve gotten soaked even while
wearing a hood
Hurusame ya
koiso no kogai
nururu hodo

A fine spring rain
wets the small beach’s
small shells

Takiguchi ni
hi o yobu koe ya
haru no ame

At Takiguchi
a guard calls for a light —
spring rain

Nunawa ou
ike no mikasa ya
haru no ame

Watershield sprouts
in the increasing lake water
spring rain
A dream poem

73*
あはれなる春雨や

Hapusame ya
mono kakanu mino
aware naru

I cannot write
in the spring rain —
how nice

74
けふも有はるさめや

Harusame ya
kurenantoshite
kyo mo ari

In spring rain
existence becomes dark
like today

75*
蓑と傘ものがたりゆく

Harusame ya
monogatari yuku
mino to kasa

Two walk in spring rain sharing
a straw raincoat and an umbrella-
a love story
76*
春の雨
柴漬の
みやらで

Fushizuke no
shizumi mo yarade
haru no ame

A wooden fish-trap
submerged in
spring rain

77*
海半
いさよふ月
春雨や

Harusame ya
isayou tsuki no
umi nakaba

In spring rain
the departing full moon
half in the sea

78*
小でうちん
綱が袂に
はるさめや

Harusame ya
tsuna ga tamoto ni
kodyouchin

In spring rain
on Tsuna’s kimono sleeve
a small light

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In an old garden
a camellia blooms —
a tea-whisk

How sadly
the nodding camellias fall
hiding a puddle

Gems opening
by the jeweler’s side
camellias
The Hatsuuma Festival in every household quickly folded kimonos.

Hatsuuma ya 
sono ie ie no 
sodedatami

The Hatsuuma Festival in Southern Kyoto —
crowing roosters

Hatsumuma ya 
tobayotsutzuka no 
tori no koe

At Hatsuuma Festival people selling flowers in sunshine

Hatsumuma ya 
monodaneuri ni 
hi no ataru
85

Tsubomito wa
naremo shirazuyo
fukinotau

Buds
you bloom without knowledge —
butterbur

86

Miyoubu yori
botamochi tabasu
higan kana

The court lady’s
rice dumplings are a present —
the equinox

87

Sokosoko ni
kyo misugoshinu
tanishi uri

In such a hurry
he couldn’t stop to see Kyoto —
the snail seller
Natsukashiki

Nostalgic
eating Tsumori Village’s
mud snails in dressing

Shizukesa ni

In the stillness
enduring the clear water
mud snails

Kari tachite

The surprised mud snail
shuts its door —
a landing goose

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Kari yukite
kadotamo tooku
omo waruru

The flying geese
make the rice-field gate
so far away

Kaeru kari
tagoto no tsuki no
kumoru yo ni

Returning geese
the moon reflected in every paddy
this cloud dappled night

Kinou ini
kyou ini kari no
naki yo kana

Some left yesterday
and some left today —
no geese this evening
In outskirts of Kyoto

94

白名陽
きも炎
飛らぬ
虫の

Kagerou ya
na mo shiranu mushi no
shiraki tobu

In the simmering air
nameless insects
flying white

95

めづる
箒に土を
かげろふや

Kagerou ya
ajika ni tsuchi o
mezuru hito

In the heat waves
a bamboo basket of earth
loved by a man

Poems written by the Basho Hut

96*

なくなる
うごかぬ雲も

Hatautsu ya
ugokanu kumo mo
nakunarinu

While plowing a field
the clouds don’t move
yet they pass away
97

鐘が鳴
こちの在所
はた打よ

Hatauchi yo
kochi no zaishyo no
kane ga naru

While plowing the field
the country town’s
bell rings

98

鐘供養
木間の寺の
畑打や

Hatautsu ya
konoma no tera no
kanekuyou

While plowing the field
through the trees a temple’s
funeral bell

At Ohara, Northern Kyoto

99*

清水中雨

Harusame no
naka ni oboro no
shimizu kana

Spring rain
an empress reflected in the water
the hazy moon
100

山辺かな
雉子うつ春の
日くら
に

Hi kururu ni
kiji utsu haru no
yamabe kana

As the sun sets
hunting pheasants —
spring mountains

101

雉の声
砦を出しに
柴刈に

Shibakari ni
toride o deru ya
kiji no koe

While gathering firewood
the fort is haunted by
the pheasant’s voice

102*

亀山へ
通ぶ大工や

Kameyama e
toufu daiku ya
kiji no koe

At Kameyama Mansion
letting the carpenter pass
the pheasant’s voice
きじのこえ
何にかれて
兎山や

Hageyama ya
nan ni kakurete
kiji no koe

On the bald mountain
where is it hiding?
The pheasant's voice

104

宝雏で
雛追ふ犬や
むくと起て

Mukuto okite
kiji ou inu ya
takara dera

Get up and look
a dog is chasing a pheasant
at Takara Temple

105

きさす哉
兎類ひ住ム
木瓜の陰に

Boke no in ni
kaho tagui sumu
kigisu kana

The melancholic quince bush
perfectly matches
the pheasant
106*

Imo ga kakine
samisen kusa no
hana sakine

A young lover’s hedge
shepherd’s purses
in bloom

107*

Koubai ya
biku yori otoru
bikuni dera

The red plum blossoms
at the monk’s temple are worse
than the nun’s

108

Koubai no
rakka moyu ramu
uma no kuso

Red plum blossoms
scatter probably burning
on horse shit
Kakigoshi ni
mono uchi kataru
tsugiki kana

Through the fence
talking about household things
a grafted tree

Uramon no tera
ni houchiyakusu
yomogi kana

The back gate
to the temple faces
wormwood

Hata uchi ya
housanshou no
fudanomoto

Fudanomoto
still follows ancient laws —
plowing fields
Kiji naku ya
kusa no musashi no
Heishiji

The pheasant’s call
chivalry hidden in the grass
The 8 Taira clans

Kiji naku ya
saka o kudari no
tabiyadori

The pheasant’s cry
at the bottom of a hill—
a stage coach hut

Yamadori no
bi o fumu haru no
irihi kana

The copper pheasant’s
tail goes through spring’s
setting sun
In the long spring day
pheasants swoop down
onto a bridge

In the long spring day
planning to go so far away
a long time ago

The spring sea
all day long back and forth
back and forth
118
山かげに
鳥さへ啼ぬ
うつや

hata utsu ya
tori sae nakanu
yama kage ni

While plowing the fields
if only the birds didn’t cry
in the mountain’s shadow

119
あ五稲
る石や
じの

Tagayasu ya
gokoko no zoku no
aruji gao

Cultivating
25 bushels of millet
the master’s face

120
親雀
たけごろや

Tobika hasu ya
take gokoro ya
oya suzume

Flying through lotuses
and bamboo — the heart
of sparrow parents
121

燕
落しゆく

Otsu ei ni
fun otoshi yuku
tsubame kana

On a painting of Otsu
scattered droppings —
swallows

122

つばめ哉

Yamatoji no
miya mo wara ya mo
tsubame kana

On ancient Japanese roads
in shabby straw shrines and houses
swallows

123

吹れ愈

Tsubakura ya
mizuta no kaze ni
fukare gaho

Camellias
in a windy rice-paddy —
blowing faces
124

小家裁

夜蛇をうつ

Tsubame nakite
yoruhebi o utsu
koie kana

A swallow cries
as a night-snake strikes
its poor house

125

春の風

むらさきの幕や

Akebono no
murasaki no baku ya
haru no kaze

Dawn —
a purple curtain
in a spring breeze

126

春のかぜ

法師が旅や

No hakamono
houshi ga ryou ya
haru no kaze

Wearing a haka
a Buddhist priest journeys
in spring wind
In Katamachi City
the pottery is imbued with
spring wind

The east spring wind blows
through a curtain —
a small shop

On Kawauchi Road
the east spring wind wafts over
a shrine maiden's sleeve
The moon listens

The moon listens to a frog staring up
from a rice paddy

Sitting in a palace

a distant frog

listening to night

In a bed of rice-seedlings

square as drawing paper

playing frogs
133

Hi wa hi kure yo
yo wa yo ake yoto
naku kawazu

From sun up to sun down
from evening to dawn
singing frogs

134*

Renga shite
modoru yo toba no
kawazu kana

Composing Renka
while returning to Toba
frogs

135

Tokkokamakubi
mizukakeran no
kawazu kana

Crooked necks
in an endless argument
frogs

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
Translated by Allan Persinger
A dream —
the soul picked up
by a butterfly

At daybreak
rain in black burned fields
greens new pampas grass

All night
in a soundless rain
a seed-bag
Furukawa no
nagare o hikitsu
tane oroshi

Channelling water
from Furukawa River
to sow seeds

Shinonome ni
kosame furidasu
yakeno kana

At day break
a light rain begins falling
in burnt fields

Walking along a river on a spring day Kosobe no Nyudo wanted to buy a small brocaded
silk bag for Noin Hoshi before he went down from the mountains. However Kosobe
found some dried frogs which he gave instead. Noin gave Kosobe a return present of
wood chips. Both were pleased.

Yamabuki ya
ide o nagaruru
kannakutzu

Yellow roses
drifting in Ide River —
wood chips
142
すみれ哉
居りたる
舟を上れば
Suwaritaru
fune o agareba
sumire kana

Staying in
a boat going up stream
violets

143*
薑かな
骨拾ふ
人にしたしき
Kotsuhirou
hito ni shitashiki
sumire kana

A bone gatherer
sifting through the ashes —
a violet

144
枯つじ
いざ物焚ん
わらび野や
Warabi no ya
iza monotakan
kare tsutsuji

In a field of bracken
gathering firewood
dead azaleas
No totomo ni
yakuru Jizou no
shikimi kana

In a burnt field
a child’s blackened guardian statue
with grave branches

Tsutsuji no ya
aranu tokoro ni
mugibatake

Azaleas
in an unexpected place —
wheat fields

Tsutsuji saite
ishi utushitaru
ureshisayo

Blooming azaleas
can even move a stone
with delight
Chikamichi e
dete ureshi no no
tsutsuji kana

On a short cut
through Ureshino field —
azaleas

Tsutsuji saite
katayamazato no
meshi shiroshi

Blooming azaleas —
in a remote mountain village
eating white rice

Iwa ni koshi
ware raikuwau no
tsutsuji kana

Sitting on a rock
I am the Raiko
of azaleas
The Doll Festival

151*

袖古呑

Furubina wa
Mukashi no hito no
sodegichyau

An old doll
timidly hides its mouth
a sleeve for a screen

152

雛顔箱二対

Hako o deru
kao wasureme ya
hina ni tsui

Taking a pair of dolls
out from their boxes —
forgotten faces

153*

雛の鼻

Tarachine no
tsuma mazu ari ya
hina no hana

Picking up
a cute doll by pinching
her doll’s nose
154

Degawari ya
haru samezame to
furutsutzura

Relief appears
spring rain raining and
an old suitcase

155*

Hinamise no
hi o hikukoro ya
haru no ame

At the Doll Market
it’s time to take in the lights
a spring rain

156

Hina matsuru
miyako hatzure ya
momo no tsuki

While in the countryside
the Girl’s Doll Festival is happening
under the peach moon
157

桃 牛 喰
花 に ふ
な て
ら 寝
ば て

Kuute nete
ushi ni naraba
momo no hana

Eating, drinking, sleeping
like cows under
peach blossoms

158

も 吼 商
も る 人
の 犬 を
花 あ
り

Akindo o
hoyuru inu ari
momo no hana

The shop keeper
with the howling dog has
peach blossoms

159

小 桃 さ
家 に く
哉 し ら
た よ
し り
き

Sakura yori
momo ni shitashiki
koie kana

Instead of cherry blossoms
peach blossoms would fit
this little house
160*

も 中

家の宿

さむしろ振る

Kachiyuushiyu ni
samushiro furuu
momo no yado

At home shaking straw mats
for government officials
to view peach blossoms

161

ありどころ

きのふの空

Ikanobori
kinou no sora no
aridokoro

A kite flies
in today’s sky
at the same place

162

いの

たいて過ぬ

Yabuiri no
mata ide suginu
ika no ito

Servant’s day
still hasn’t passed —
 flying kites
The light airing of horse hooves

163

散らばる蹄の木
さののくかげ
らぜがや

Ko no shita ga
hitzume no kaze ya
chiru sakura

Under the trees
in the wind of hooves
falling cherry petals

164

桜の夢
手まくらの

Te makura no
yume wa kazeshino
sakura kana

Arm for a pillow
I dream of a beautiful woman
and wake to cherry blossoms

165

山の徒力
従に見過ごぬ

Gauriki wa
tada ni mi suginu
yama zakura

A mountain guide
usually doesn’t overlook
mountain cherries
Kato Kyotai is now in Fushimi. We enjoyed our companionship in Saga.

166*

桜 出 夜
人 て 桃
あ 林
c
つ
き
嵯
蛾
Yoru taurin o
idete akatsuki saga o
sakurabito

After night in the peach forest
I’m also enjoying the dawn in Saga cherry blossoms

167
山 春 暮
ざ を ん
く を と
ら し す
ほ
の
Kurentosu
haru o woshiho no
yamazakura

As the season ends
spring pushes open
the mountain cherry

168*
山 入 銭
ざ る 買
く や て
ら よ
の
Zeni kaute
iru ya yoshino no
yama zakura

Getting pennies
to climb up the Yoshino mountains
for cherries
Drooping Cherries

169*

いと雨 ゆき暮 ゆ れる宿 や
itozakura

Yuki kurete
ame moru yado ya
ittozakura

Melting snow
drips through a crack in the roof —
cherry petals

170*

山 松 哥 ざに屑 れて
yamazakura

Utakutzu no
matsu ni fukarete
yamazakura

Bad poetry
blowing through the pines —
mountain cherries

171*

山 散 たりとも見 ゆれ
yamazakura

Mada kitomo
chiri tomo miyure
yamazakura

Watching blossoms open
even as blossoms fall —
mountain cherries
From the people of Saga
a sun — Mr. Kannin’s
cherry blossoms

On a short cut
to Yoshino —
cold mountain cherries

The wayfarer’s
nose looks so cold —
the first cherry
175

Umi te yori
hi wa teritsukete
yamazakura

Near the sea
since the dry sunny weather
mountain cherries

At Yoshino

176

Hana ni tooku
sakura ni chikashi
yoshinogawa

Cherry blossoms framed
by faraway clouds of blossoms
Yoshino River

177

Hana ni kurete
wagaie touki
no michi kana

The cherries are darkening
and my house is so faraway
down this small path
Hana chiru ya
omotaki oi no
ushiroyori

Carrying on my back
a heavy wicker pannier
and fallen blossoms

Hana no onou
sugite yo o naku
naniwabito

Moved to tears
by a night of Noh and flower viewing
Osaka people

Akokuso no
sashinuki furuu
rakka kana

A dirty boy’s
divided skirt brushed clean
of fallen blossoms
The day leaving Koyasan

181*

謡 花
か に
な 真
田 住
gakurenai
hanani sanada ga
utai kana

Kakure sumite
hana ni sanada ga
utai kana

Sanada
living hidden in blossoms —
a Noh song

182

流 高 玉
れ 野 川
去 の に
花や
Tamagawa ni
kouya no hana ya
nagare saru

In Tamagawa River
Koyasan’s cherry blossoms
float away

183*

花 一 木
当 飯 た け
当 飯 た け
Nara michi ya
touki batake no
hana hitoki

On the Nara road
in a field of dong quai
a single cherry tree
Leaving Arashiyama at dusk

184
 Saga e kaeru
hito wa itzuko no
hana ni kureshi
Returning to Saga
where are all the people —
the blossoms are darkening

185
Hana no ko ya
saga no tomoshi
kiyuru toki
Fragrant cherry blossoms —
Saga’s torches
fading with time

Rainy days while vacationing in Arashiyama

186*
Ikadashi no
mino ya arashi no
hanagoromo
A raftsman’s
straw raincoat in a storm
coated in blossoms
Keisei wa
nochinoyo kakete
hanami kana

A courtesan
risks her purity
cherry blossom viewing

Hana ni mawade
kaeru sa nikushi
shirabyoushi

It’s so hard to leave
as cherry petals twirl down —
dancing women

Hana ni kite
Hana ni ineburu
itoma kana

I’ve come for the flowers
and they’ve made it difficult
to say good-bye
Osaka residents visiting Kiyamachi Road

190*

朝 草 花
寝 履 を
哉 も 踏
見 し
to

Hana o fumishi
zouri mo miete
asane kana

Looking at flowers
while treading on them in sandals
a sleepy morning

191*

も 後 居
do

Suifuro ni
goya kiku hana no
modori kana

Sitting in a bath
listening to early morning bells —
time to leave

192

花 の 山

Uguhisu no
tamatama naku ya
hana no yama

A nightingale
unexpectedly singing —
the mountain flowers
In the lethargic
spring the double cherry blossoms
are late

Spring dwindles one petal at a time

Searching for cherry blossoms —
the beauty’s stomach
has grown thin

Peeping around
a flower curtain I see Kenkou’s
beautiful woman
Living in such a lonely place — the young nobleman with a shaved head

196*

咎けり 花 見る人を 小冠者出

Kokwaja dete
hanamiru hito o
togame keri

Coming out to scold
people for cherry blossom viewing
a young boy

197

春の暮 衣も畳まず

Nioi aru
kinu mo tatamazu
haru no kure

My kimono
is too fragrant to fold —
the end of spring

198*

はるのくれ ひくき枕そ

Tagatame no
hikuki makura zo
haru no kure

Whose
unfashionable low pillow is this
spring is ending
Heichyou no nishiki taretari haru no kure

The brocade was hung over a temple’s exhibition the spring evening

Utatane no samureba haru no hikuretari

While taking a nap the chilly spring’s sun sets

Haru no kure taenamu tosuru kou o tsugu

In the spring evening the incense is almost burnt out
Hana chirite
konoma no tera to
nari ni keri

Blossoms scatter
through the trees of a temple
the season’s set

Nawashiro ya
kurama no sakura
chiri ni keri

In a bed of rice seedlings
Mr. Kuruma’s cherry blossoms
have fallen

Kahigane ni
kumo koso kakare
nashi no hana

Clouds hanging over
the peaks of the high mountain —
pear blossoms
205

Nashi no hana
tsuki ni fumi yomu
onna ari

Under pear blossoms
in moonlight reading a letter
a woman

206

Hitonaki hi
fuji ni tsuchikau
houshi kana

Alone today
just cultivating wisteria —
a priest

207

Yama moto ni
kome fumu oto ya
fuji no hana

At the foot of a mountain
noisily trampling rice to see
wisteria blossoms
208
藤の花
春うちはあけて
うつむけに
Utsumuke ni
haru uchi akete
fuji no hana
Announcing spring’s arrival — drooping wisteria blossoms

A Spring Scene

209
日月菜
ははの
西東花
ににや
Na no hana ya
tsuchi wa higashi ni
hi wa nishi ni
Rape blossoms
and the moon in the east
the sun in the west

210
小風呂敷
葉見ゆる
のはなや
Na no hana ya
takenoko miyuru
koburoshiki
Mustard blossoms
and bamboo shoots peek out
of the small wrapping cloth

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In a peaceful fishing village
with fields of mustard blossoms
whales approach

Staying at Kito’s house after a gathering on a spring evening

In a peaceful fishing village
with fields of mustard blossoms
whales approach

Staying at Kito’s house after a gathering on a spring evening

In a peaceful fishing village
with fields of mustard blossoms
whales approach

In a peaceful fishing village
with fields of mustard blossoms
whales approach
Late Spring

214
遅く春や
Yuku haru ya
The departing spring

遅く巡って
shunjun toshite
hesitates

おそザクラ
oso zakura
late cherry blossoms

215
哥主
Yuku haru ya

歌者をうらむ
senjya o uramu
Regretting

行春や
uta no nushi
the departure of spring

216
洗足の
Senso koku no
Washing my feet

すも漏りて
tarai mo morite
in a leaking tub —

ゆく春や
yuku haru ya
spring departs
Kyo nomi no
haru o aruite
shimai keri

Only today
spring has walked
away

Staying at Shoha’s villa

Yuku haru ya
shiroki hana miyu
kaki no hima

In the departing spring
looking at white flowers
through the slatted fence

Haru oshimu
zasu no rengu ni
mesare keri

I’ve been invited
for Zasu’s renka gathering
spring’s passing away
In the departing spring
a cold purple
Mt. Tsukuba

The day is still
growing longer but spring has
reached its limit

The departing spring
ascends Yokawa Pagoda —
a prayer for syphilis
The inexperienced maiden cannot return a poem — spring has ended

A spring regret — at the Shiga Inn a standing charcoal brazier
夏の俳句

Summer Poems
更衣
家中ゆし
し

Kinu kisenu
kachyuu yuyushiki
koromogae

No longer dressed in silks
the whole family complains —
Seasonal Clothes Changing

226

こよ辻
ろき駕
も人
がの
へつ

Tsuji kago ni
yokihito no setsu
koromogae

In a street palanquin
a noble man dressed for the occasion —
Seasonal Clothes Changing

227

更衣
大兵の
甘からまりや

Taihyou no
hatachi amari ya
koromogae

The big man
looks more than twenty years old
Seasonal Clothes Changing
228

Koromogae
inrou kai ni
shyoke futari

On Seasonal Clothes Changing Day
buying seal cases
two acolytes

229

Koromogae
noji no hito
hatsuka ni shiroshi

On Seasonal Clothes Changing
the man on the field’s path
is a faint white

230*

Tanomoshiki
yukazu no nushi no
awase kana

Trustworthy
as a Yukazu arrow —
a lined kimono
Yase zune no ke ni bifuu ari koromogae
A breeze on my thin leg’s hair —
Seasonal Clothes Changing

Oteuchi no meoto narishi o koromogae
A husband and wife spared the death sentence —
Seasonal Clothes Changing Day

On receiving a letter accompanying an old kimono missing its thick cotton liner from a woman I knew long ago

Tachibana no kagoto gamashiki awase kana
The mandarin orange scent returns memories -
At the Seasonal Clothes Changing
I am decently attired
for a pittance

The Tomokiri Sword
unsheaths itself —
a cuckoo

A cuckoo flying
over the Heian Castle
diagonally
Hototogisu
hitsugi o tsukamu
kumoma yori
The cuckoo
catches a coffin
under a cloud rift

Haru sugite
natsukanu tori ya
hototogisu
Though spring has passed
he still hasn’t visited —
the cuckoo

Hototogisu
matsu ya miyako no
sorada nome
Waiting for the cuckoo
to visit the capital —
a vain hope
240*

四郎次郎
絵にない東

Hototogisu
e ni nake higashi
shirojirou

The cuckoo
painting the eastern
white sky

241*

子規
狂女恋せよ

Iwakura no
kyoujo koiseyo
hototogisu

Iwakura’s
madwoman has fallen in love
the cuckoo

242*

時鳥
御茶たぶ夜や

Inabadono no
ocha tabu yoru ya
hototogisu

Lord Inaba
served evening tea
the cuckoo
Wasurunayo
hodo wa kumosuke
hototogisu

Don’t forget
the wandering robber —
a cuckoo

Uta nakute
kinuginu tsurashi
hototogisu

How painful
no return poem from a departed lover
the cuckoo

Kusa no ame
matsuri no kuruma
sugite nochi

Grass in rain
after the festival cart
has passed
246

打かさなりぬ

Botan chirite
uchikasanarinu
nisan pen

Falling peony blossoms
pile up together —
two, three petals

247*

吐んとす

Enma-o no
kuchi ya botan o
hakantosu

The King of Hell’s
mouth spits blood —
a peony

248

ぼたん哉

Seki toshite
kyaku no taema no
botan kana

In the hush
between guests peonies
silently bloom
Jiguruma no
todoro to hibiku
botan kana

A wagon’s
rumble echoes through
tree peonies

Chirite nochi
omokage ni tatsu
botan kana

Reminding me of
an image of falling after death
tree peonies

Botan kitte
ki no otoroishi
yuube kana

Cutting peonies
my spirit withers
this evening
Yama ari no
akarasama nari
haku botan

So distinguished
in the white peonies —
black mountain ants

hironiwa no
botan ya
ten no ippou ni

Viewing a courtyard’s
peonies —
heavenly women

Kyaukoji no
kubi ni kaketa
kakakkodori

The insane layman
drumming on his neck —
the cuckoo
Kankodori
tera miyu bakurinji
toya iu

The cuckoo —
Bakurin hermitage’s
lonely visitor

Yamabito wa
hito nari kankodori wa
tori nari keri

The Mountain man
is a man — the lone cuckoo
is a bird

Meshi tsugi no
tei tatakü oto ya
kankodori

Like hitting the bottom
of an empty rice-tub —
a cuckoo’s song
“It is said that Kanji characters were made from bird footprints.” (Forward from an early Han Dynasty dictionary)

258

Ashi ato o
ji ni moyo marazu
kankodori

These footprints
were never used for Kanji
a solitary cuckoo

259*

Uhe mienu
kasagi no mori ya
kankodori

Not overlooking
a hat left behind in the forest
a solitary cuckoo

260*

Mutsukashiki
hato no reigi ya
kankodori

A difficult situation —
a dove’s good manners and
a lonely cuckoo
261

Kankodori
sakura no eda mo
fundे oru

A solitary cuckoo
steps on a cherry twig
and remains standing

262

Kankodori
ka mo naku fuka mo
nakune kana

A lone cuckoo
neither good nor bad at singing
or silence

On the local commissioner “Sanemori”

263*

Nanore nanore
ame shinohara no
hototogisu

“Who are you - who are you”
at Shinohara in the rain
a cuckoo
たべかれ
かきつばた
べたりと鷺の
Kakitsubata
betari to tobi no
tarettekeru

Splashed
over an iris
hawk droppings

たれけてる

雨に音なし
Yoiyoi no
ame ni otonashi
kakitsubata

Every evening
in a soundless rain
irises

On bidding farewell to my old friend Urenbou

更にた

にじか夜や

Mijikayoya
rokuri no matsu ni
fuke tarazu

The short summer night
under the Rokuri pine tree
passed too quickly
Ayu kurete
yorade sugiyuku
yoha no kado

Bringing a trout
my friend left immediately
by midnight’s gate

Mijikayo ya
kemushi no ue ni
tsuyu no tama

After a short night
on the caterpillar’s hairs
dew drops

Mijikayoya
doushin shuu no
kawa teutzu

In the short night
a catchpole ritualistically
washes his hands
270*

銀枕にちかき

Mijikayo ya
makura ni chikaki
ginbyaubu

In the summer night
my pillow is too close to
my bright silver screen

271

蟹の泡

Mijikayo ya
ashi ma nagaruru
kani no awa

In the short night
between reeds a wandering
crab’s bubbles

272

大井川

Mijikayo ya
niseki ochiyuku
ooigawa

In the quick summer night
the Oi river’s water level
has slowly fallen
On the guard Roukin

273*

翁 丸
眠 ら で も る
や

Mijikayo ya
demurade moru ya
okinamaro

Through the short night
the guard never slept —
an old dog

274*

捨 筥
浪 う ち 際 の
短 夜 や

Mijikayo ya
namiuchi giwa no
sutekagari

In the summer night
at the edge of the waves
a bonfire

275

白 拍 子
い と ま 給 る
み し か 夜 や

Mijikayo ya
itoma tamawaru
shirabyoushi

Given permission to leave
after a short night —
a woman dancer
Mijikayo ya
komise aketaru
machi hazure

All summer evening
the small shop lit up
the town’s end

On seeing a friend from Edo off from Otsu Station

Mijikayo ya
hitotsu amarite
shiga no matsu

This summer night
on the last stage of the Tohoku Road
Shiga’s pines

Mijikayo ya
fushimi no toboso
yodo no mado

In the short night
Fushimi’s hinged doors were shut
as Yodo’s windows opened
Unohana no koboruru fuki no kouyo kana

On the wide leaves of butterbur spilled deutzias — tofu waste

Kite mireba yuube no sakura mi to narinu

I’ve come at night to look at cherry blossoms but there is only fruit

On the sad condition of those who go against Saigyo’s wishes

Mizakura ya shini nokoritaru an no nushi

Still alive after the cherries have fallen — the hermitage’s master
282

蓼の雨
zensu

Shinonome ya
kumo mienaku ni
tade no ame

In the dawn
no clouds can be seen yet
rain drops on water pepper

283

流れ越す
nakami

Sunagawa ya
aruiwa tade o
nagare kosu

In Sunagawa River
perhaps water pepper
is floating by

284*

雀詫
murayama

Tade no ha o
kono kimi to mouse
suzumezushi

Water pepper blossoms
thou have this honor
striped mullet sushi
Miidera ya
hi wa go ni semaru
wakakahede

At Miidera temple
the noonday sun nears
a young maple

Tsurishinobu
kaya ni sawaranu
sumai kana

The hanging onions
do not touch the mosquito net
what a dwelling

Kaya o dete
Nara o tachiyuku
wakaba kana

Exiting the mosquito net
it is time to leave Nara
young leaves
Mado no hi no
kozue ni noboru
wakaba kana
A window’s light
climbs to the tree tops —
fresh green leaves

Fuji hitotsu
uzume nokoshite
wakaba kana
Mt. Fuji alone
remains untouched
by green leaves

Zecchou no
shiro tanomoshiki
wakaba kana
The mountain’s summit
and castle have become great —
youthful leaves
291

Wakaba shite
mizu shiroku mugi
kibamitari

Under young green leaves
white water
yellow barley

292

Yama ni soute
kobune kogiyuku
wakaba kana

Under the mountains
a small boat rowed slowly
through bright green leaves

293*

Hebi o kitsute
wataru taniji no
wakaba kana

Cutting a snake in half
crossing over the valley road
young leaves
294

Kaya no uchi ni
hotaru hanashite
aa rakuya

Releasing fireflies
inside the mosquito net —
ah, fun!

295

Amadera ya
yoki kaya taruru
yoizukiyo

The convent
has such good netting
this moonlit evening

296*

Ara suzushi
susofuku kaya mo
nenashigusa

A cool breeze
blows through the mosquito net —
a rootless wanderer
Kaya o dete
uchi ni inu mi no
yo wa akenu

With no netting
I live inside
awake all night long

Throughout the night at Sanbongi’s Tsuiro Inn — a banquet

Ake yasuki
yo o kakushite ya
higashiyama

A quick dawn —
Higashiyama hid
the short night

Furuido ya
ka ni tobu uwo no
oto kurashi

In an old well
mosquitoes fly — the dark
sound of fish
Wild mosquitoes slowly drift over Nogawa River in a surface breeze. An offering by the monk’s side, a mosquito coil at Sangenya Tea House. The Osaka man’s mosquito coil.
303

Ka no koe su
nindou no hana no
chiru tabini

Every time
a honeysuckle blossom falls
mosquitoes whine

304

kaya tsurite
suibi tsukuramu
ie no uchi

A green mountain
inside the house —
my mosquito net

305*

Wakatake ya
hashimoto no yuujo
ari ya nashi

Young bamboo —
the courtesan in Hashimoto
is she still there
306*

Takenoko no
yabu no anai ya
otoshizashi

Bamboo shoots
the field guide’s
vertical sword

307

Wakatake ya
yyuhi no saga to
nari ni keri

Young bamboo
Saga’s evening sun
grows dark

308

Takenoko ya
oi no houshi ga
tera towan

A monk’s nephew
visits the temple —
bamboo shoots
309*

あらぬ哉
籬すべきも
けしの花

Keshi no hana
magaki subeku mo
aranu kana

Poppy flowers
they have passed through
the bamboo hedge

310

かやりかな
墓の避行
垣越て

Kaki koete
hiki no sakeyuku
kayari kana

A toad runs away
slipping under the fence —
a smoking mosquito coil

At Saga while relaxing in the Gain Brothel

311

枕もと
音なき麦を

Uwakaze ni
otonaki mugi o
makura moto

Silent wheat
in a surface breeze
around my pillow
The village has no basket for the wheat chaff — a long journey

The invalid’s palanquin carried passed early wheat

A traveling performer’s mirror held up by wheat stalks
Going out to lecture on the scenery before my eyes at Basho’s Hermitage, east of Kamogawa River

315*

穂麦哉 京をかくして
Soba ashiki kyou o kakushite
homugi kana

Kyoto’s soba is still bad but the haiku —
growing wheat

316*

麦畑 いづこ河内の狐火や
Kitsunebi ya itzuko kawachi no
mugibatake

Foxfire! where are Kawachi’s wheat fields

Myself, a student and Kito at Nunobiki Waterfall

317*

水車穂麦や
Usutzuku ya
homugi ya naka no
mizuguruma

Ground by a mortar
ears of wheat caught in a waterwheel
At Kaya Village in Tamba

318*

手に草履

越すれしさよ

Natsukawa o kosu ureshisayo
te ni zouri

Joyfully wading
across a summer stream
sandals in hand

319*

遺恨哉　

生をあるじの

Naresugita
sushi o aruji no
ikon kana

Overly ripe
sushi — a master chef’s regret

320

床几哉　

これへと樹下に

Sushioke o koreeto juka ni
shyougi kana

A bowl of sushi
served under the trees
on a wooden bench
Sushi sukete
tare matsu toshi mo
naki mi kana

While making sushi
some wait a whole year —
not me

Funazushi ya
Hikone ga jyou ni
kumo kakaru

Carp sushi —
Hikone Castle
hung in the clouds

Writing about Tosoku’s third year memorial service that was held early in April but which
should have been held on July 14th

Mugikarinu
chikamichi kimase
nori no tsue

Taking a shortcut
to harvest early wheat —
a pilgrim’s staff
谷の房

karisome ni
sayuri iketari
tani no bou

Early lilies
 casually arranged
the valley’s hermitage

Climbing the East Hill

似たる哉

Hana ibara
kokyaun no michi ni
nitaru kana

These flowering briars
remind me of the path
in my hometown

いばらかな

Michi taete
ka ni semari saku
ibara kana

The path ends
in fragrant blossoms —
wild roses
Ureitsutsu
oka ni noboreba
hana ibara

Worrying while climbing the hill —
wild roses

In Eastern Kyoto on the day of the completion ceremony for Basho’s Hermitage

ji moku hai
chyou koko ni tamamaku
bashou an

A jewel for my ears, eyes, lungs and bowels —
Basho’s Hermitage

Aoume ni
mayu atsumetaru
bejin kana

The beautiful woman’s eyebrows pucker together —
green plums
Aoume o
utebakatsu chiru
aoba kana

Beat by a stick
the green plums
and green leaves fall

Kawahori ya
mukai no niyoubou
kochi o miru

Across from me
my wife is looking here —
a flying bat

Yuukaze ya
mizu aosagi no
hagi o utsu

In the evening breeze
water splashes
a blue heron’s leg
Tachibana no
kawataredoki ya
furuyakata

Orange blossoms
in the gloaming light
an old mansion

On saying farewell to Shoutou in Osaka

Chimaki toite
ashi fuku kaze no
oto kikan

Listening to the sound
of wind blowing through reeds —
untying steamed dumplings

Natsuyama ya
kayoi naretaru
wakasabito

Wakasa merchants
feel so familiar —
summer mountains
Reminiscences

336*

にほひ哉
人もすさめぬ

Shii no hana
hito mo susamenu
nihoi kana

Yellow oak blossoms
people never appreciate
your fragrance

337

真孤刈
利謙鳴らす

Mizu fukaku
toki kama narasu
makomo kari

In deep water
a sharp sickle reaps
water reeds

338

麻冦
しのめや

Shinonomeya
tsuyu no afumi no
asabatake

In the dawn
an inlet’s dewy
flax field
339*

倉夫哉

採薄を

ふ修根の

Saijun o

utau hikone no saufu kana

Singing

“Water shield” Hikone’s bumpkins

340*

月片藻む

の花や

Mo no hana ya
kata warekara no tsuki mosumu

Residing in blooming duckweed
a single warekara bug and the moon

341

宵の雨

bijihana saku

Michinobe no
karu mohana saku yoi no ame

Along the roadside cut duckweed flowers in an evening rain
342

Mushi no tame ni
sokonaware otsu
kaki no hana

Insects harmed
the falling petals —
persimmon blossoms

A poem written at a banquet in Maryuma where haiku poets from all parts of Japan gathered for a banquet with the Osaka poet Oemaru

343*

Ukikusa o
fuki atsumete ya
hana mushiro

Duckweed
blown together —
a floral mat

344

Samidare no
utsuhobashira ya
oi ga mimi

An early summer rain
in the box gutter —
my poor ears
Mt Fuji
reflected in a lake —
a May rain

In an early summer rain —
two houses near
the swollen river

Discarded
in the May rain —
altar flowers
Odawara de
kappa koutari
satsukiame

At Odawara
buying a straw raincoat
for May rains

Samidare no
ooi koshitaru
kashikosayo

In the early summer rains
I have crossed the Oi River —
I’m so clever

Satsuki ame
tagoto no yami to
nari ni keri

A summer rain —
the terraced rice fields
have become dark
Though I met Seihan Hoshi for the first time, we talked like old friends

351*

Mizuoke ni
unatzuki afuya
urinasubi

In a bucket of water
eggplants and bitter gourds
nod

352

Izuko yori
tsubute uchi kamu
natsukodachi

Someone threw
a small stone into the quiet
thicket of summer trees

353

Sake juuda
yuri mote yuku ya
natsukodachi

Ten horses sway
carrying barrels of sake through
a shady summer grove
354*

なつ
野
奥
に
地
震
置

Oroshi oku
oi ni nae furu
natsuno kana

Putting down the heavy
case — an earthquake
in a summer field

355

夏
野
か
行
こ
に
行
々

Yukiyukite
koko ni yukuyuku
natsuno kana

On the way
here going on and on
summer fields

On a friend’s visit from Tohoku

356*

瓜
ば
た
け
の
葉
が
く
れ

Hagakure
no makura sagaseyo
uri batake

Finding a pillow
hidden in the leaves —
a melon in a field
360*

ほたる哉

Gakumon wa
shiri kara nukeru
hotaru kana

Education
emitted from the ass —
a firefly

361

にじり書

Dedemushi ya
sono tsunomuji no
nijirigak

Writing “horn”
in Chinese —
a snail’s tentacles

362

うつせ貝

Dedemushi no
sumihateshi yado ya
utsuse kai

Living in
a movable house —
a snail
363

Komori ite
ame utagau ya
katatsuburi

Confined inside
by the dripping rain —
a snail

364*

Yukinobu ga
hae uchi harau
suzuri kana

Yukinobu
brushing a fly
from her ink-stone

365

Kotoba ooku
hayauri kururu
onna kana

Talking non stop
that the bitter gourd season’s arrived —
a woman
By the dam’s gate
the water rail
squealed

The snoring
asp is also sleeping
in the leafy shade

Taking a nap
in my hometown —
pesky flies
For Shouha Kuroyanagi

369*

鵜川哉

誰住て

Tare sumite
shikimi nagaruru
ukawa kana

Who lived here —
grave branches drifting
in Ukawa river

370

鵜浅し

しのめや

Shinonome ya
u o nogaretaru
uo asashi

In the cloudy dawn
surface fish escape
the cormorant

371

鵜詞老なりし

見えぬ哉

Oi narishi
ukai kotoshi wa
mienu kana

Growing old —
this year I cannot see
cormorant fishing

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson

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Tonobara no
Nagoyagao naru
ukawa kana

The friendly faces
look like Nagoya retainers —
cormorant fishing

Ubune kogu
mizu kiwamareba
tomoshi kana

Rowing the boat
to the end of the fishing hole —
hunting deer

Gehyaukunichi
sumi mo yugamanu
kokoro kana

100 summer days
writing calligraphy —
mindfulness
375

Hi o motte
kazouru fude no
gegaki kana

Counting
handwritten sutras
divided by days

On Keishi recounting his dream when he was sick

376*

Furi kahete
hie o hatachi no
kewai kana

Turning to gawk
Mt Fuji’s twenty times
taller than Mt Hiezan

377*

Nugi kayuru
kozue mo semi no
ogawa kana

Cicadas
undressing the treetops
Ogawa River
The stone cutter pauses to cool off his chisel in spring water.

All sound disappears in the river’s meeting — clear water.

Aoto, who spent 500 yen to find the 100 yen he dropped in the river, wouldn’t know about this spotted turtle hidden in clear mountain water.

Spotted turtle
Aoto doesn’t understand
pure mountain water.
清 詩

Futari shite
musubeba nigoru
shimizu kana

Two people drinking
from their hands muddied
clear water

水 哉

Waga yado ni
ika ni hikubeki
shimizu kana

How can I return
to my inn
mountain spring water

三 哉

Kusaikire
hito shiniiru to
fuda no tatsu

Being posted
in the fuming grass —
a death notice
Sixty miles along this Tang Dynasty road morning glories

Ideally the blossoms would be yellow — moonflowers

A cat has chewed the moonflowers — a cold spirit
Looking at Ritsuen Temple

387

うき葉哉

Tobiishi mo
mitsu yotsu hasu no
ukiba kana

Stepping stones
three, four lotus’s
floating leaves

388

茎二寸

Hasu no ka ya
mizu wo hanaruru
kuki nisun

The lotus’s fragrance
separated from the water
on three inch stems

389*

蓮見哉

Fukigara no
ukiha ni keburu
hasumi kana

While lotus viewing
smoldering on the floating leaves
tobacco
The monk pauses
contemplating cutting
the white lotuses

Waterlilies
both halves blooming
in the rain

The silk gauze
obstructs the lotus’s
fragrance

Byaukuren wo
kiran tozo omou
sou no sama

Kouhone no
futa moto  saku ya
ame no naka

Usumono ni
saegiru ren no
nioi kana
393

なみだ哉

曇る国司の 雨乞に

Amegoi ni
kumoru kukoshi no
namida kana

Begging for rain
a governor’s gloomy
tears

394*

旱かなる

守敏も降らず

Makebara no
shubin mo furasu
kideri kana

A defeated heart
Shubin also failed —
a drought

395

奇雨大特か

祈雨は粒な

Ootsubu na
ame wa inori no
kidoku kana

A large drop
of rain — a prayer’s
miracle
396*
夏の月
里人の声や
夜水とる

Yomizu toru
satobito no koe ya
natsu no tsuki

Watering the paddies —
the villager’s voices
and the summer moon

397
夏の月
小草ながめつ

Doumori no
ogusa nagametsu
natsu no tsuki

A building guard
looking down on the short grass —
the summer moon

398
夏の月
浅瀬わたるや

Nukegake no
asase wataru ya
natsu no tsuki

Stealing a march
on crossing the shallows —
the summer moon
399  
夏の月恋する宿や
Kawataro no koisuru yado ya  
natsu no tsuki
The Kappa’s lovely house — the summer moon

400  
隱君子月にやおはす
Uri goya no tsuki ni yaowasu inkunshi
In moonlight a melon clings to the hermit’s shack

401  
瓜の花雷に小家は焼かれて
Kaminari ni goya wa yakerete uri no hana
After lightening burned down the shack melon flowers
Adabana wa
ame ni utarete
uri batake

Rain pelts
the vain flowers —
a melon patch

Yumitori no
obi no hososa yo
takamushiro

Thin
as a warrior’s belt —
a bamboo mat

Hosohagi ni
yuukaze sawaru
takamushiro

My thin legs
hindering the evening breeze
a bamboo mat
Amazake no
jigoku mo chikashi
Hakoneyama
Sweet sake —
hell is also close
to Mt. Hakone

Mihotoke ni
hiru sona hekeri
hitoyosake
An afternoon’s
offering to the Buddha —
evening sake

Guchimuchi no
amazake tsuku
matsugaoka
Making such sweet sake
for shallow-witted men —
a nunnery
Kakurinji Temple

408*

せみの声
閑を模や
半日の
Hanjitsu no
kan wo enoki ya
semi no koe

Half a day lounging
in the coolness of the hackberry tree —
the cicada’s voice

409*

せみの声
あなた宮様
Daibutsu no
anata miyasaka
semi no koe

You share the calmness
of the temple’s great Buddha —
the cicada’s voice

410*

午の刻
蟬鳴や
行者の道る
Semi naku ya
gyauja no suguru
uma no koku

Shrill cicadas cry —
pilgrims going past
noon
411

Semi naku ya
sou jyoubou no
yuamidoki

While bathing
at the high priests residence
shrill cicadas scream

412*

Kakegou ya
nani todomaru
semigoromo

Which fragrance will remain
the feather light summer kimono’s
or the sachet’s

413

Kakegou ya
oshi no musume no
hitoto nari

Fragrant incense shows
a mute daughter is now
marriageable
Formality forgotten —
a fragrant kimono’s been folded
any old way

Wondering how Ganto is doing

Gazing through the back
at the painting on the fan’s front
hazily guessing

Doing so much
my stringless bamboo hat
is a fan
Euchiwa no
sore mo seijuro ni
onatsu kana

On the painted fan
Seijuro and Onatsu
united

Tesusabi no
uchiwaega kan
kusa no shiru

A diversion —
painting the round fan
with grass sap

Watashi yobu
kusa no anata no
ougi kana

Summoning the ferry
from the grassy distance —
a fan
Gione ya
makuzugahara no
kaze kaoru

At the Goin Festival
on the mountain terraces
a fragrant wind

Gione ya
sou no toiyoru
kaji ga moto

During the Goin Festival
a monk visits
Ms Kaji’s teahouse

Placing a long bench on the west bank of Kamogawa River

Jyouzan no
guchi ga sugitari
yuu suzumi

Jyouzan
said too much —
a cool evening
423

涼かな
網打の
見えず
なり行

Amiuchi no
miezunari yuku
suzumi kana

Too early to watch
net fishing yet still going out
in the coolness

424

ながれ川
都を縦に
すくしや

Suzushisa ya
miyako wo tatsu ni
nagare kawa

Coolness
throughout the capital —
a flowing river

The Kappa are calling souls

425*

便にも
蓮からまたく

Kawayuka ni
hasu kara matagu
tayori nimo

A river balcony
straddling lotuses —
an invitation
Kawayuka ni
nikuki houshi no
tachii kana

On the river balcony
blocking the view —
a standing priest

Suzushisa ya
kane o hanaruru
kane no koe

The coolness
separates the bell
and the bell’s voice

Kawagari ya
roujyou no hito no
mishiri gao

Net fishing —
the man on the balcony
is a familiar face
The moon followed rain —
while fishing by torchlight
a white leg

Towards the moon
you threw the net —
splash

River fishing
and I heard a voice say
“I’m returning home”
432

一 千 言

ゆ ふ だ ち や

筆 も か は か ず

Yuudachi ya
fude mo kawakazu
issengen

After a rain shower
my writing brush hasn’t dried —
one thousand letters

433*

人 だ め り

白 雨 や

門 脇 ど の

Yuudachi ya
kadowaki dono no
hitodamari

In an evening shower
gathered at Kadowaki’s gate
many people

434

む ら 鳥

草 葉 を つ か む

Yuudachi ya
kusaba wo tsukamu
murasuzume

In an evening shower
clinging to blades of grass —
flocks of sparrows
The grumpy monk walks along spilling his relief rice

Yesterday’s parched barely and buckwheat was eaten at the hermitage

Parched barley such wise hospitality — a widow shop owner
At my back
on the 20th day of my journey —
thunderheads

Youshuu’s
port begins to be seen —
thunder clouds

The rain became
lovely transparent —
thunderheads
441*

涸てより

四沢の水の

雲のみね

Kumo no mine
shitaku no mizu no
karete yori

Mountains of clouds —
Shitaku’s spring water
has dried up

442

小家より

富士の裾野

Haari tobu ya
fuji no susono no
koie yori

Wing ants hover
at the foot of Mt. Fuji
a small house

443*

あつさ哉

日帰りの

Higaeri no
Hageyama koyuru
atsusa kana

On a day trip
passing a bald mountain
heat
444
暑か
に
居たる
Suwaritaru
fune ni neteiru
atsusa kana
Sitting
sleeping on a boat —
heat

445
扇か
刀にかえる
Atsukihi no
katana ni kayuru
ougi kana
In the hot day
a sword is changed
for a fan

446*
大葛宗
水給
Soukan ni
kuzumizu tamou
otodo kana
Soukan
given arrowroot water
by a lord
うらみ哉

葛を得て
清水に遠き

Kuzu o ete
shimizu no touki
urami kana

Though I have arrowroot
clear water is so far away —
what a pity

暑かな

端居して
妻子を避る

Hashii shite
tsumako o sakuru
atsusa kana

Sitting on a veranda
avoiding my wife and children —
heat

竹帰人

かたい親父よ

Houkoji wa
katai oyaji yo
chikufujin

Layman Pang
the beggar father —
a bamboo pillow
450

Mushiboshi ya
oi no sou tou
Toudaiji

Airing clothes
the monk’s nephew visits
Toudaiji Temple

451*

Tokoroten
sakashima ni ginga
sanzenjaku

Jelly noodles
in a black bowl — an upside-down
Milky Way

Miyajima Island

452*

Kunpuu ya
tomoshi tatekanetsu
itsukushima

Wavering in the balmy breeze
lights reflected in water —
Itsukushima Shrine
Hadakami ni
kami utsurimase
natsukagura

The naked body
possessed by God —
the summer dance

Tsukubouta
negide kotosumu
misogi kana

While squatting
even a low priest can perform
summer purification

Kyuu no nai
senaka nagasu ya
natsuharai

Washing way
the back’s moxa cautery scars —
summer cleansing
Idemizu no
kamo ni hashi nashi
natsuharai

Flood waters
wash away Kamogawa bridge —
summer cleansing

Village fields on the banks of the Karogawa River

Yuugao ni
aki kaze soyogu
misogi kawa

Moonflowers
tremble in the autumn wind —
a purifying river
秋の俳句

Autumn Poems
Now I realize autumn’s arrived —
achoo!

Autumn has arrived —
what is the fortune teller’s surprise?

Chased tirelessly by poverty —
this autumn morning
461

Akitatsu ya
sayu kaubashiki
seyakuin

Autumn arrives
the fragrance of hot baths —
Seyakuin Temple

462

Hatsu aki ya
yoso no hi miyuru
yoi no hodo

In the early autumn
looking at distant lights
around night

In the Autumn night by the quiet window I count all my dead friends

463*

Tourou wo
mitabni kakagenu
tsuyu nagara

I lift the lit
lantern up three times
amidst the dew

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
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Many times
the high garden lantern’s light
has been extinguished

Mulberry leaves
gathered for a recitation’s
bookmark

For different loves
offering colored threads that were
once white
Tsuto iri ya
shiro hito ni au
hyaushinuke

Unannounced amateurs
arrive with sacred tools —
disappointment

Ajikina ya
kaya no suso fumu
tamamatsuri

Tastelessly
stepping on the hem of a mosquito net
at a funeral service

Tamadana wo
hodokeba moto no
zashiki kana

The spirit shelf —
the drawing room’s fragile
foundation
Relaxing for 16 days and nights in the vicinity of the Kamogawa River

Daimonji ya
aumi no sore mo
tadanarane

Daimonji’s
effigy meets the unusually
low sky

Sauami no
yoine okosu ya
daimonji

Like Amida
I go to bed early to wake for
Daimonji

Setsutai ni
kiseru wasurete
nishi e yuku

Going to Nishi Temple’s
tea reception forget
your pipe

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
Translated by Allan Persinger
In praise of Hanabusa Ichou’s painting

473*

お 月 四 ど 落 五 人
哉 か に る

Shi go nin ni
tsuki ochi kakaru
odori kana

With four, five people
the falling moon begins
the dance

474

躍 か な 喋 町 越 て
ひ た と 犬 の

Hitato inu no
naku machi koete
odori kana

Immediately the dog’s
howl floats over the town —
the dance

475

お ど り 哲
さ そ ひ 合 せ て

Ukikusa no
sasoi awasete
odori kana

Floating weeds
join together — an invitation
to dance
By Kanagawa’s coast

476*

きくた摺

Inatzuma ya
hachijuu kakete
kikuta zuri

Suspended lightening —
Hachijuu Island’s hanging
yellow silk

477

いせのうつむ

Inatzuma ya
hitoami utsu ya
ise no umi

Lightening
strikes completely
Ise’s bay

478

宵の空

Inatzuma ya
katada domari no
yoi no sora

Lightening
anchors the hard dry rice field
to the evening sky
After the lightening
the sound of dew dripping
off bamboo

A poem for Shunya

All day long
humiliated regularly
sumo wrestlers

Diving into things
a mysterious people —
sumo wrestlers
The evening dew
and Fushimi's sumo wrestlers falling down

Maku majiki
sumahi o nemono
gatari kana

For defeated sumo wrestlers sleep comes hard

While wandering around willow trees

Yanagi chiri
shimizu kare ishi
tokorodokoro

Drifting here and there
like dry pebbles in clear water —
fallen willow leaves
Kogitsune no nan ni musekemu kohagi hara

The fox pup what a playful spirit in the bush clover

Susuki mitsu hagi ya nakaramu kono hotori

So close yet so difficult to see — bush clover

Yama wa kurete no wa tasugare no susuki kana

The mountains darken and in the twilight the fields are so pale
Ominaeshi
somo kuki nagara
hana nagara

Golden lace
in spite of its long stems
it is still a flower

Satobito wa
sato mo omohaji
olinaeshi

The villagers
and the village are ashamed —
golden lace

Aki futatsu
uki o masuhono
susuki kana

Autumn — the second
rainy season swelling the fields
faintly
Ibara oi
suzuki yase hagi
obotsu kana

Fading roses
in pale thin clover —
a sacred place

Inoshishi no
tsuyu ori kakete
ominaeshi

The wild boar
snaps the dew off
golden lace

Shirahagi o
haru waka chitoru
chigiri kana

White clover —
gone the youthful spring’s promise
Passing through the fence
a single red stalk
of pampas grass

Morning glories also
look at the flower shop —
Jibutsudau Temple

The deep waters of the valley stream are an indigo blue

A morning glory
its singularly profound flower
in the abyss
497
朝顔や
手拭のはしの
を拭顔かのや
つし
Asagao ya
tenobii no hashi no
ai o kakotsu
Morning glories and
an acolyte complaining about
his indigo towel

498
花香夜
白にのかれてや
Yoru no ran
ka ni kakurete ya
hana shiroshi
The evening orchid —
a hidden fragrance
blooming white

499
楠狐蘭
を夕炊くらし奇
Ran yuube
kitsune no kurashi ki
yare o takamu
Evening orchids
a dark fox strangely burning
in the camphor tree
Sir Benkei

500*

武蔵坊
ひと夜はなびけ
花すすき

Hana susuki
hito yoru wa nabike
musashibou

The flowering plume grass
bowing in the evening —
Musashibou

501

ぬさしるつる
さつ男の胸毛

Shira tsuyu ya
satsu o no munagi
nururu hodo

The white dew
on the man’s chest hair
is so wet

502

ゆはずかな
露はらひもの

Mono nou no
tsuyu warai yuku
yuhazu kana

The essence of Noh —
tears and laughter moving
on a bow string

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Translated by Allan Persinger
Mt Meyugi

503

Tachisare koto
ichiri meyugi ni aki no
hou samushi

Departing the eyebrows
of Mt Meyugi are two miles apart
in the cold peak of autumn

504

Shiratsuyu ya
ibara no hari ni
hito tsutzutzu

White dew
on the briar’s thorns —
the man continues

505

Karikura no
tsuyu ni omotaki
utsubo kana

The hunting preserve’s
dew — heavy as
arrows in the air
The market hawker’s goods are a swindle —
in the dew

I’m an island
in Yokawa River — time
to wash silk

Stepping in the bedroom
I am pierced by
my late wife’s comb
Asatsuyu ya
mada shimo shiranu
kami no ochi

Morning dew
I still do not know the frost
of falling hair

The arrowroot’s shelf like leaves thickly cover the edge of the eaves — a dark afternoon wall

Kuzu no ha no
urami gao naru
kosame kana

Arrowroot leaves
bitter faces
in misty rain

Asagao ni
usuki yukari no
mukuga kana

Morning glories
thinly connected
to the Rose of Sharon
512

市の音
村千軒
朝雲や

Asagiri ya
mura senken no
ichi no oto

In the morning fog
a city of one thousand eaves —
market noises

513

丁打音
朝霧や

Asagiri ya
kuize utsu oto
tautau tari

In the morning fog
a stake is pounded and then
an axe rings

514

か花火
舟遠て

Mono taite
hanabi ni touki
kakari fune

Burning sparks
far away fireworks
hanging over a boat
Hanabi seyo
yodo no ochaya no
yuuzukiyo

Fireworks
reflected in a teahouse pool —
the moonlit evening

Hatsusaku ya
sate osu yori wa
futsukagetsu

October first
and now tomorrow meets
the second day

Hatsushiho ni
oharete noboru
kouo kana

The first tide
drives away ascending
minnows
At a neighboring hermitage

518

桂 河

月 よ り うつ

す

Sui hitosuji
tsuki yori utsusu
katsuragawa

A line on the water
the moon above moves down
Katsura River

519

朝 寝

か こ と が

ま し き

Mushiuri no
kagoto ga mashiki
asane kana

The insect dealer’s
basket of summer increases
my morning sleep

520

小 河

で ゆ ち に

む し 喋

や

Mushi naku ya
Kawachi gayoi no
kodeuchin

The insects cry
going to Kawachi
in a small paper lantern
Minomushi ya
akihi darushi to
naku nameri

The bagworm
so heavy in the autumn sun
cries

mushibamete
shitaba yukashiki
tabako kana

Worm eaten —
the sweet lower leaves
of tobacco

kobyakushou
utzura o toru oi
nari ni keri

A pretty farmer —
the quail captures aging
as its song ends
Hohotzuki ya
dame ga
konyo urashi

The woman’s Chinese lantern
really does look like
a ground-cherry

Hi wa naname
konyo no yari ni
tonbo kana

The oblique sun
spears through a shop’s gate —
a dragonfly

In this moonlit night it has been ten days without friends or visitors

Nakanaka ni
hitori arebasa
tsuki o tomo

Very alone
in the wild leaves
my friend the moon
Meigetsu ni
inokoro sutsuru
shimobe kana

The harvest moon
abandoned with the pigs
a manservant

Mi no yami no
tzukin mo touru
tsukimi kana

Melancholic
I walk along in a hood
viewing the moon

Tsukitenshin
mezushiki machi wo
touri keri

The moon at its zenith
the destitute town’s
road ends
A single pine tree rests against Tadanori’s ancient grave

530*

やどり哉
松にかへたる

Tsuki koyoi
matsu ni kaeta
yadori kana

This evening the moon
has returned home —
a pine tree

531

池のうへ
雨を溜たる

Meigetsu ya
ame o tametaru
ike no ue

The harvest moon
collected in rain
above a pool

532*

詣訪の海
うさぎのわたる

Meigetsu ya
usagi no wataru
Suwa no umi

In the harvest moon
the rabbit crosses
Lake Suwa

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Translated by Allan Persinger
533

雨 笠 旅
の人
の 島 月
tere

Tabibito yo
kasashima katare
ame no tsuki

A wayfarer
talking about Kasashima Island —
the moon in rain

534

舞 出 よ
月 今 宵

Tuki koyoi
aruji no okina
maiide yo

Tonight’s moon —
a masterful old man
begins dancing

535

け 魂 仲
ふ 祭 丸 の
月

Nakamuru no
tamamatsuri semu
kefu no tsuki

Nakamaru’s
Spirit Festival enshrines
tonight’s moon

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Translated by Allan Persinger
536

Meigetsu ya
yo wa hito sumanu
mine no chaya

The harvest moon
nobody stays at night
in the summit’s tea house

537

Yama no ha ya
umi o hanaruru
tsukimo ima

Now the mountain ridges
and the sea are as isolated
as the moon

538

An no tsuki
aruji o toeba
imo hori ni

The hermitage’s moon —
thinking about the master
digging sweet potatoes
Katsumata no
ike wa yami nari
kefu no tsuki

Once again
the lake is gloomy
tonight’s moon

Though Richau is drunk, looking at his face as he falls down, he is as elegant as Gyoku-
zan

Tsuki mireba
namidani kudaku
chichi no dama

While moon viewing
the dew drops broke
into thousands of jewels

The flower guard
and the field watch is inferior
to tonight’s moon
Pondering an ancient prayer for rain

542

Meigetsu ya
Shinsenen no
uo odoru

The harvest moon
in a shrine’s garden spring —
fish dance

On the high monk “Ganji”

543*

Itsukau no
gen ya hayama ni
tsuki o insu

A party of wild geese
in the foothills imprinted
across the moon

544

Ki no di ni mo
orizu yo o yuku
kari hitotsu

A road narrative
the coming night swoops down —
a single goose
An adapted title “A Far Away Deer In Rain”

545

角ばかり
恋の雨
は

Ame no shika
koi ni kuchinu wa
tsuno bakari

A deer in rain
even budding antlers doesn’t stop
its love

546

枯木哉
角も身に添ふ

Shika samushi
tsuno mo mi ni suu
toboku kana

A cold deer
its body and antlers merge
with a dead tree

547

あればけり
ははその木未

Shika nakite
haha sono kozui
are ni keri

The deer cries
to its mother over there
in the twigs
Na batake no
shimoyu wa hayashi
shika no koe

A mustard field
in an early frosty night
a deer’s voice

Mitabinakite
kikoezu narinu
shika no koe

Crying three times
without stopping to listen —
the deer’s voice

Zenshou Mansion with a late night moon

Shika nagara
saneimon ni
iru hi kana

With a deer
the sun enters
Saneimon gate
All night while sleeping at a mountain temple, I was listening to a deer kicking and a novice monk slurping tea, as if I was in Shinshi’s comic poem

551*

な 小 鹿
か 坊 の
角

Shika no koe
kobouzu ni tsuno
nakari keri

The deer’s voice —
this novice doesn’t have
antlers

552

鹿 の 声
門 こ そ 叩 け

Oru ashiku
kado koso tatake
shika no koe

A broken ankle —
also striking against the gate
the deer’s voice

An old longing

553

秋 の 暮
又 さ び し ひ そ

Kyonen yori
mata sabishiizo
aki no kure

Since last year
sadness has again returned —
autumn darkens

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
Translated by Allan Persinger
Chichi haha no koto no miomou aki no kure

A father and mother’s planned pregnancy — autumn’s end

Achira muki ni shigi mo tachi tari aki no kure

From over there the snipe also stands exposed to the darkening autumn

“Sarumaru Daifu”

Ware ga de ni ware o maneku ya aki no kure

By myself I have beaconed a dark autumn end
Passing through the gate
I also become a wanderer —
autumn darkens

Dying
in song the wild field ends —
autumn darkens

I’m lonely
having forgotten my cane —
autumn darkens
Farewell to Deceased Friends

560
秋ひとり行 木曽路
Kisoumichi
yukite izan to shyoran
aki hitori

Aging as I go
down Kosoumichi road —
alone in autumn

561
あきのかせ 釣 の糸 吹 か
Kanashi sa ya
chou no ito fuku
aki no kaze

Mournful
decoys on strings blow
in the autumn wind

562*
成 に げ り 秋 の風
Aki no kaze
fumi mushiba mazu
nari ni keri

Autumn wind
my book is not
worm eaten

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Translated by Allan Persinger
Kinbyou no usumono wa taga
aki no kaze

Somebody’s silk and gold screen —
autumn wind

Aki kaze ya hiuo kaketaru hamabisashi

In autumn wind from the eaves of a beach house
dried fish hang

Thinking about the late Ichiku

Kyorai sari ichiku utsurinu
iku aki zo

Kyorai’s gone
Ichiku’s passed
so many autumns
Junrei no
me hana kakiyuku
fukube kana

Writing about
a pilgrim’s eyes and nose —
a gourd

Fuku no chu e
ha wa nuke kerashi
tane fukube

Extracting teeth
from out of an abdomen —
gourd seeds

Ada hana ni
kakaru hajinashi
tane fukube

These fruitless blossoms
bear no shame —
gourd seeds
Throughout life
sitting on its butt —
a gourd

My foot
cut the head off
a scarecrow

Near the old imperial palace
a persimmon and very drunken face
a scarecrow
Seimei wa
nanishi ka gou wa
kagashi kana

The name
of all children —
scarecrow

Miwa no ta ni
tzukin kete iru
kagashi kana

In Miwa’s rice paddies
existing in a hood —
a scarecrow

Yamakage ya
tare yobu kotori
hita no oto

In the shelter of the mountains
who summoned all the small birds
with a frightening sound?
When Unribo was setting out on a trip to Kyushu he tried to persuade me to go — but I couldn’t

575

Aki kaze no
ugo kashite yuku
kagashi kana

The autumn wind
moves the agitated
scarecrow

576

Mizuochite
kosohagi takaki
kagashi kana

A sunken chest
and tall thin shins —
a scarecrow

577*

Furusato ya
sake wa oshiku to
soba no hana

Preferred
over my hometown’s sake —
buckwheat flowers
Miyagi no no  
hagi sarashina no  
soba ni izure

Which is better  
Miyagi’s bush clover  
or Sarashina’s buckwheat?

Michi no be ya  
te yori koborete  
soba no hana

Spilling from my hand  
on the side of the road —  
buckwheat flowers

Otsuru hi no  
kugurite somuru  
soba no kuki

The falling sun  
passes through dying  
buckwheat stalks
Title: Shirogawa River

581*

Kurudane no tonari wa shiroshiso soba no hana
From Black Valley
the White River is next to buckwheat blossoms

582*

Natsukashiki shioni ga moto no nogiku kana
Nostalgic — from out wild chamomiles asters

583

Men tsumi ya tabako no hana o mite yasumu
Gathering cotton the tobacco flowers look asleep
Sankei no juppo ni tsukite
tade no hana

The ten paths in the hidden hermitage garden exhaust water-pepper flowers

Kaigane ya hotade no ue wo
shio karuma

Mt. Kaigane —
bunches of water pepper on a salt cart

Haze tsuri no kobune kogunaru
mado no mae

Catching sandfish the small boat rows by in front of the window
Hyakunichi no koi kiri tsukite suzuki kana
The hundred day limit has run out — cutting carp bait for sea-bass

Tsuri ageshi suzuki no kyokou tama ya haku
Pulling in a sea-bass by its big mouth it disgorges the lure

Alone near Ohara’s fields is a wet traveling minstrel, and though the fields are decaying, the lower leaves of the plants are still withstanding the frost even as a few flowers bloom and since the cold autumn sun is unreliable — everything is so pathetic

Sui karegare tade ka aranu ka soba ka hi ka
In the dwindling water is it water pepper or not? is it buckwheat or not?
590

板ばさし
音うれしさよ

Kotori kuru
oto ureshisayo
itabasashi

Small birds come
with such happy sounds
to the wooden bridge

591

鵙おとし
とかく過ぎり

Kono mori no
takaku sugi keri
mozu otoshi

From this forest too
somehow or other the shrike
passes through the bird trap

592

寝にもどる
樫の老木に

Yama gare ya
kaya no oiki ni
ne ni modoru

Mountain sparrows
and the old plum-yew tree
return to sleep
On monk Chikukei living outside of Kyoto in Tango Provence

593*

ふ 眠 た る つ
法 鴫 師

Tatsu shigi ni
Nemuru shigi ari
futa houshi

The standing snipe
the sleeping snipe —
two priests

594

な 秋 鴫
が 天 立
め ひ て
哉 き

Shigi tachite
shouten hikiki
nagame kana

A snipe flying away
into the autumn sky —
a humbling view

595

寺 林
こ こ を せ に せ ん

Watari tori
koko o senisen
tera hayashi

Migrating birds
here in the trembling
temple woods

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Translated by Allan Persinger
Migrating birds
woven in the clouds —
embroidered silk

Sinking in the shallow fields
Shiga’s setting sun —
salmon in the bay

Meeting the colt
is a grand matter —
a white forehead
In the autumn sunset
the Jizou at the crossroads
has an oily shine

Autumn lamps
yearning for Nara’s
Dougu Market

On an autumn journey
a monk shaves his disciple —
a highway robber
In autumn rain
crossing over a river bottom
filled with weeds

In praise of Maruyama Okyo’s painting “Black Dog”

That soul’s
spooky cry draws near
in the dead of an autumn night

In Kouga
ninjas gamble
in the autumn midnight

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Translated by Allan Persinger
605

刀
か

か の 上
な 夜
を
守
る

Makuragami
aki no yo o moru
katana kana

Protecting the bedside
from the autumn night —
a sword

606

翌
今
も
あり

身の 秋
や し の
ふ

Mi no aki ya
koyoi o shinobu
asu mo ari

The soul of autumn —
this evening endures
onto the next

607*

き ば 小
ぬ ら 路
た か 行

Kouji yuki
bara kaku kiyuru
kinuta kana

Going down the alley
the roses scratch listening
to the “kinuta”

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
Translated by Allan Persinger
Uki hito ni
te o utaretaru
kinuta kana

A cold lover
slaps my hand —
“The Kinuta”

Ochikochi wo
chikochi to utsu
kinuta kana

Far or near
somewhere striking the ground
the kinuta

Uki ware ni
kinuta uta kyo wa
mata yaminu

I am so miserable —
today the “kinuta” song again
never stopped
611
きぬた哉
狐守夜の石を打
Ishi o utsu
kitsune moru yo no
kinuta kana
Striking a stone
a fox defends night from
the kinuta

612
野分哉
五六騎しきく
Tobe dono e
gorokuki isogu
nowaki kana
The Lord of Toba’s
56 horsemen — quick
as a wintery blast

613
野分かな
老婆子薪を
Mon mai no
sutaki musaboru
nowaki kana
In front of the gate
the old woman covets the young firewood
a wintry blast
Fumoto naru
waga soba sonsu
nowaki kana

At the foot of the mountains
my buckwheat field remains
in wintry wind

Ichibito no
yobe toi kahasu
nowaki kana

City folk
call out to avoid
the chill wind

Kyakusou no
nikai ori kuru
nowaki kana

A traveling priest
comes down from the second floor—
a chill wind
Poem written at a teahouse looking at the top of Mt. Miiyare

617

ひびく 秋寒し
Aki samushi
touda ga kabura
hibiku toki

In the cold autumn
Touda arrowheads
reverberate in time

618

牛祭 いざ月もよし
Tsunomoji no
iza getsu mo yoshi
ushi matsuri

Now the moon is also
a perfectly written horn —
the Cow Festival

619

漆の樹 うら枯や
Ura gara ya
karakime misturu
urushi no ki

The bare
dead tree top looks like
lacquered wood
Monokaku ni
ha ura ni metzura
bashou kana

Writing poetry
with love on the bottom
of banana leaves

Ine kakete
kaze mo hikasaji
oi no matsu

Rice drying on a rack
the wind also passes through
an old pine tree

At Lake Hirosawa

Sui karete
ike no hitzumi ya
nochi no tsuki

The water is drying up —
in the pools of hooves
the hunter’s moon

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
623

後の月

山茶花の間見せけり

Sanzenkuo no kono mise keri nochi no tsuki

A camellia flower seen through the trees — the hunter’s moon

624*

十三夜

泊る気で

Tomaru ki de hitori kimaseri juusanya

I intended to stay and arrive alone — the thirteenth night’s moon

625

後の月

今宵はしにくれ

Juugatsu no koyoi wa shigure nochi no tsuki

In this October night’s drizzle the hunter’s moon

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
Translated by Allan Persinger
On the thirteenth night’s moon my days have become very refined

626*

の 此 唐 ち 花 人 の 過 は 月 て

Karabito wa
kono hana sugite
nochi no tsuki

A Chinese custom
before the flower opens —
viewing the hunter’s moon

627*

も 伏 日 ら 水 で
ひ の り 小 ど り 菊 し

Hideridoshi
fushimi no kogiku
morai keri

After a year of drought
Fushimi’s small chrysanthemums
are a gift

My old master departs with his ink stone after viewing Yamaga’s chrysanthemums — this poem is written for him

628*

い 受 き て く の 菊 の て

Kiku no tsuyu
ukete suzuri no
inochi kana

The ink stone received
dew from chrysanthemums —
may it prolong life
On a still-life of chrysanthemums

It’s time then
to throw flowers in a vase — chrysanthemums

Mt. Gōsan in snow
white chrysanthemums
under an umbrella

The candle reveals
a pallid waxy face and
yellow chrysanthemums
632*

見 え ぬ 哉

菊 な き た か ど も

Mura hyakyto
kiku naki kado mo
mienu kana

By the poor village’s
one hundred gates and doors I see
chrysanthemums

633

菊 里

桃 の 落 葉 よ

Asamashiki
momo no ochiba yo
kikubatake

The silly
peach leaves fall in
a field of chrysanthemums

634*

奴 か な

汝 は 菊 の

Kiku tsukuri
naraji wa kiku no
yakko kana

Harvesting flowers
thou valet of
chrysanthemums
As I go to Western Kyoto
I take out my bedding —
autumn leaves

In a field of sheep
falling maple leaves suspended
in the sun set

The valley water
has dried up — scorching
the maple leaves
もみち哉
藤沢寺の
も

Yoraide suguru
fujisawadera no
momiji kana

Before reaching
Fujisawa temple —
maples

なつかしき
会津商人
むら紅葉

Mura momiji
aitzu akindo
natsukashiki

Seeing the town’s autumnal
foliage a merchant from Aitzu
is nostalgic

640*

須磨の秋
笛の音に
波もより来る

Teki no ne ni
nami mo yori kuru
suma no aki

The sound of a flute
comes closer in waves —
Suma Temple in autumn
641*
雨乞の
とき水
小町が果や
Amegoi no
komachi ga hate ya
wotoshi mizu
Praying for rain
the beautiful woman ends by
throwing water

642
寝し水
寝こころ更ぬ
Muramura no
egokoro fukenu
otoshi mizu
Many villages
sleep comfortably through the night-
water drains into the fields

643*
舟見下せ
毛見の衆
Kemi no shyu no
fune sashi kadase
mogamikawa
Admiring their hair
many people on a boat ride
down Mogami River
644

も 坂 新
が 田 米
み は の
河 早
し

Shimmai no
sakata wa hayashi
mogamikawa

The new rice
on the hill fields is early —
Mogami River

645

あ 日 落
ゆ あ 穂
み た 拾
行 る ひ
方
へ

Ochibahiroi
hi ataru kata e
ayumi yuku

The gleaning
sun happens to touch my side —
going for a walk

At a mountain hut

646*

兎 夜 猿
か 寒 ど
な 訪 の
ゆ の
く

Saru dono no
yu samu toiyuku
usagi kana

Which field is the sly monkey
visiting in the cold night —
a rabbit

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
Translated by Allan Persinger
Kabedonari
monogoto tsukasu
yosamu kana

Just a wall between neighbors —
a messenger of things to come
the cold night

Kakekakete
tsuki mo naku naru
yosamu kana

Completely broken
the moon is lost and dead —
the cold night

Okite ite
mou ne tatoifu
yosamu kana

Daily life —
ah sleeping through
the cold night
北枕

小懐者臥たり

The young servant
layed in the cold night
head to the north

651*

こ通長

ぼ夜き

Nagaki yo ya
staying up writing renga —
the broken edge of the moon

652

夜長哉

枝踏かゆる

Yamatori no
steps up and down on a branch —
what a long night
653*  
夜半の秋
子鼠のよの
秋と
啼や

Konezumi no
chichiyoto naku ya
yawa no aki

The young mice
cry “father”
in the dead of the autumn night

654  
漁酒秋
者肆風
樵に許うた

Shiufuu ya
shyushi ni shi utau
gyoshya seushya

In the autumn breeze
the liquor store song sings
“Fishermen - Lumberjacks”

655  
なつかしき
そばの不作も

Aki wa mono no
soba no fusaku mo
natsukashiki

An autumn thing
longing for buckwheat noodles —
crop failure
A vision while visiting Genchouan hermitage

656

音
聞き
む
椎
に
む
か
し
の

Marubon no
shii ni mukashi
oto kikamu

From the round tray
I can still hear the sound
of ancient oaks

657

い
と
ま
哉
横
河
の
児
の

Shii hirou
yokawa no chigo no
itoma kana

As I lounge
a young child in Yokowa valley
gathers acorns

At the ancient army headquarters

658

と
う
か
ら
し
か
ら
き
淚
や

Kareii ni
karaki namida ya
tougarashi

In cooked dried rice
hot tears —
cayenne peppers
Tawara shite
osame takuwahenu
taugarashi

The straw bag saves
the recently reaped
cayenne peppers

Ori kururu
kokoro kobasaji
ume modoki

Breaking and thinning
the heart overflows —
the winterberry

Ume modoki
oru ya nenju wo
kake nagara

Winterberries —
broken prayer beads
dangling
Nishiki ki wo
tatenu kakine ya
taugarashi

A decorated proposal tree
has been placed by a wall —
cayenne peppers

Osanego no
toki natsukashimu
ichou kana

A young child
has no time for nostalgia —
a ginkgo tree

On an outing for mushrooms in Narutaki, Northern Kytoto

Take gari ya
kaube o ogureba
mine no tsuki

Mushroom gathering —
the heads are full
as the peak of the moon
Bukuriyau wa
fushi kakure shouro wa
arawarenu

shouro mushrooms
cannot be seen —
red fungus

Ureshisa no
mi ni amaritaru
mukago kana

I’m delighted
with my undeserved winnowing fork
mountain yam bulbs

Oni tsura ya
shinshyu no naka no
bin ni shyosu

The devil succeeded —
such poor behavior
from new sake
Kuri sonau
eshin no saku no
midabotoke

Chestnut offerings
for Eshin’s statue —
Midabotoke

Nishiki ki wa
fukitafu sarete
keitoukuwa

A blown over
decorated proposal tree —
cockscomb flowers

Kure no aki
iusogu no hito wa
yado ni masu

In the dark autumn
the knowledgable man
stays home
671

暮 の 秋

いささか な

Isasakana
woime kowarenu
kure no aki

Even though debts are few
I cannot beg —
the darkness of autumn

672*

掛 り 行

り き 秋

Yuku aki ya
yoki kinu kitaru
kakari udo

In the departing autumn
wearing expensive clothing —
a freeloding lodger

673*

暮 の 秋

師 の 行 方 か ら

Seki kakasu
shi no yukigata ya
kure no aki

In which direction
are my master’s hidden footprints -
autumn darkens

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
Translated by Allan Persinger
Staying at Rakutou, Basho’s hermitage, in Eastern Kyoto

674*

こ 時 冬
こ 雨 ち
よ の か
り 雲 し
ぞ も

Fuyu chikashi
shigure no kumo mo
kokoyorizo

Winter is close
the late fall rains and the clouds
start here in the east
冬の俳句

Winter Poems
675

Minomushi no etari kashikoshi hatsushigure

The bagworm is so clever —
the winter rain begins

676*

Hatsushigure mayu ni eboshi no shitsuku kana

The winter rains begin —
an Eboshi hat over the eyebrows drips

677

Kusu no ne o shizuka ni nurasau shigure kana

The roots of the camphor tree
so calm in the damp
early winter rain
678

まごとより

籾買ふ人の時雨るや

Shigururu ya
kino kau hito no
makoto yori

In the early winter rain
buyers of straw raincoats
sincerely choose

679*

琴音の上の鼠のわたる

Shigururu ya
nezumi no wataru
koto no ue

In the early winter rain
a rat crosses over
the top of a koto

680*

時雨哉に古傘の姿
姿と月夜の

Furugasa no
basa to tsuki yo no
shigure kana

An old umbrella
flapping in the moonlit night —
an early winter rain
An early winter rain—
my night and the ancient’s
are the same

In the evening rain
the hidden toad
grieves

Many people hiking in Takeo Mountain offer one branch of red maple at its temple, when
the Gods are away visiting the Izumo Shrine, and the old leaves are enduring the frost

The smoke from
the lit hearth shapes
the red maple leaves
Hatsufuyu ya
hiyori ni narishi
Kyoto hazure

As winter begins
the weather became fine
on the outskirts of Kyoto

Eneburite
ware ni kakuren
fuyugomori

While dozing
I am dead to the world —
hibernating

Fuyugomori
kabe o kokoro no
yama ni yoru

While hibernating
my walls rest against
the heart of the mountains
687

冬こもり
かかれたり
灯下に書すと
たより
と

Fuyugomori
touka ni shosu to
kakare tari

In hibernation
I am beneath a lamp writing
catching a cold

688

冬こもり
勝手まで
誰が妻子そ

Katte made
dare ga tsumako zo
fuzugomori

Still in the kitchen
whose wife and children
are hibernating

689

冬こもり
仏にうとき

Fuyugomori
hotoke ni utoki
kokoro kana

In hibernation
the image of Buddha is a cold
spirit
Ransetsu to
futon hikiau
wabine kana

Ransetsu’s
tug of war with the futon —
a lonesome sleep

Ibariseshi
futon hoshi tari
suma no sato

Having been pissed on
the futon has sufficiently dried
Suma Village

Furusata no
hito yo wa fukuru
futon kana

In Furusato
the villagers stay up late —
futons
Kashira heya
kaken susoe ya
furobusuma

At the head of a room
suspended by its hem
an old quilt

Taihyau no
kari ne awaremu
futon kana

Taking pity
on my great stature’s light sleep —
a futon

Tora no o o
fumitsutsu suso ni
futon kana

Stepping on
a tiger’s tail — the hem
of a futon
The Tenth Night*

696

Anatau to cha mo dabudabu to juuya kana

You and the tea are shaking, quivering — the tenth night

697

Mino kesa no ihatsu tsutaete shigure kana

Assuming the mantle of a straw coat and hat I weather the early winter rain

698

Yoko hiki ya inu no tagamuru hei no uchi

Drawn to a night’s entertainment a dog scolds behind a fence
699
日くれたり
枇杷の花
鳥もすさめず

Biwa no hana
tori no susamezu
hi kuretari

The birds also praise
loquat blossoms
as the sun sets

700
おぼつかな
茶の花や
白にも黄にも

Cha no hana ya
shironi mo kini mo
obotsu kana

Tea blossoms —
a white and yellow
heaven

701
路を取
石をめぐりて

Cha no hana ya
ichi o megurite
michi o toru

Tea blossoms
-growing around a rock
catch the road

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
Translated by Allan Persinger
I think it is strangely blooming out of season — butterbur

To begin talking —
how often do the monks of Gozan dimly shine

To begin talking —
staying at the small castle town isn’t free
Ro biraki ya
setsuchuuan no
ararezaki

Uncovering the brazier —
Setsuchuuan Hermitage’s
“Hailstone Sake”

Kitsunebi ya
dokuro ni ame no
tomaru yo ni

Foxfire —
a skull in rain
endures the night

Haori kite
tsuna mo kiku yo ya
kawa chidori

Wearing traditional coats
strung in a straight line —
river plovers
千夜風

Kazegumo no

yo sugara tsuki no

chidori kana

Wind clouds
under the moon all night long —

plovers

鳥す雲

Iso chidori

ashi o nurashite

asobi keri

Plovers along the beach
getting their feet wet

て

playing

遊足磯

Uchiyo suru

nami ya chidori no

yoko ariki

Through the pounding
waves the plovers

walk undisturbed

夜すがら月の

ら

月

の

風雲の

哉がの

ら

月

の
Mizudori ya
hyakushuu nagara
yumi yatorii

Waterfowl —
together the peasants grab
their bows and arrows

Sato sugite
furue ni oshi o
mitzuketari

In the village before
Furue I’ve caught sight of
mandarine ducks

Suidori ya
fune ni na o arau
onna ari

Waterfowl —
on a boat washing greens
a woman
714
小夜鶯
加茂人の
火を熾音や
Kamo bito no
hi o kiri oto ya
sayo chidori
The increasing fires from people
grow out of control and an alarm sounds
night plovers

715
都鳥
嵯峨寒し
 Saga samushi
iza mazu kudarite
miyakodori
Saga is cold
hey let’s be the first to descend
seagulls

716
早梅や
御室の里の
Saubai ya
omuro no sato no
uri yashiki
Early plum blossoms
from the village’s greenhouse
sold from a stand
The main responsibility of daffodils — to be seen in the Godless Month

In Osaka, Takatsu at a new neighborhood restaurant ten sailors came in and sat on the straw mats, demanding that the restaurant quit hiding its drink, only to begin quaffing from half-filled quart glasses

Becalmed in the Indian summer
ten men going full sail — thirty-seven gallons of sake

Winter plums blossoms today they are falling over stones

Transcribed by Allan Persinger
Chiba dono no kariya hiketari kare obana

The Lord of Chiba’s temporary residence has drawn withered plume grass

Tanpopo no wasure hana ari michi no shimo

Dandelions — forgotten flowers in the frost’s path

On a painting of an old woman by a fire

Ono no sumi nihou hioke no aname kana

The coal from Ono in the wooden brazier glows hurting her eyes
This year too
I will still have
my old wooden brazier

The coal has been burning
and finally a boiling
pot of food

Selling coal
while gazing in a mirror —
a woman
726

火桶かな
心に遠き
裾に置て

Suso ni oite
kokoro ni touki
hioke kana

Wearing long underwear
the mind is so far away
from the wooden brazier

727

覗ひげり
火桶の穴より

Tadon houshi
hioke no ana yori
ukagai keri

Staring at the charcoal balls
in the pit of a wooden braizer —
a priest

For a short time while traveling down a road in Takamatsu, a married couple sat together happily after entering that house today

728*

野早炬
河あしを
て

Kotatsu dete
satsu ashi motono
nogawa kana

Quickly the couple
slipped under the kotatsu —
Nogawa River
Koshi nuke no sai utsukushiki kotatsu kana
The wife looked beautiful extracting her butt from out the kotatsu

Shyami ritsushi kororikorori to fusuma kana
The junior Ritsui priest suddenly rolls over a folding screen

Nokogiri no oto mazushisa yo yowa no fuyu
The sound of poverty sawing charcoal in the dead of a winter night
Hidayama no shitzuya to zashinu
yowa no fuyu

Hidayama’s pawnshops don’t close
in the wintry midnight

Musasabi no kodoriwa mi oru
kareno kana

Flying squirrels
and small birds inhabit
the desolate fields

Daitoko no kuso hiri ohasu
kareno kana

The virtuous priest’s excrement—an unreasonable burden
in the desolate field
735
駕 枯 水 木 鳥 や
二 挺 の 中 に
Mizudori ya
ekareki no naka ni
kago nichau

Waterfowl
amid the withered trees
two palanquins

736
枯 薮 子 野 さ を 哀 へ 捨 な る
子 を 捨 る な くて
Ko o sutsuru
yabu sahe nakute
kareno kana

In a withered field
even the thicket is crying —
an abandoned child

737*
通 狐 草 こ wellbeing
り の 枯 飛 て 脚
tour keri
Kusa karete
kitsune no hikyaku
touri keri

In withered grass
a fox carrying messages
passes by
Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson

Translated by Allan Persinger

738

Kitsunebi no
moe suku bakari
kare obana

Foxfire
only a bewitching flame
in brittle pampas grass

739*

Ikitsue ni
ishi no hi o miru
kareno kana

A resting staff
looks like a flash of fire
in the withered field

On visiting Basho’s grave at Konbukuji Temple.

740*

Ware no shishite
hi ni hotori semu
kareobana

When I am dead
may my tombstone also be near
withered plume grass
741

枯 い 馬
野 ば の
哉 ら 尾
の に
か
る

Uma no bi ni
ibara no kakaru
kareno kana

A horse tail
c caught in the briers
of a withered field

742

枯 野 裁
い ば ら の か る

Shoujou toshite
ishi ni hi no iru
kareno kana

Passing desolation —
the sun dropping into the rocks
of a withered field

Poem about a sick senior minister praying to be reinstated

743

鶴 病 瘦
寒 よ 脠
し

Yase hagi ya
yamu yori tatsu
tsuru samushi

Standing on
thin legs with open sores —
a cold crane
Machibito no ashi oto touki ochiba kana

The expected visitor’s footsteps sound so far away — fallen leaves

Kiku wa ki ni ame orosuka ni ochiba kana

Yellow chrysanthemums in a sporadic rain fallen leaves

Furudera no fuji asamashiki ochiba kana

An old temple’s foolish wisteria in fallen leaves
Coming, going, never waiting
passing through the fields —
fallen leaves

Poor Chinese pick up decaying leaves in place of paper — thus writing from the heart as if they were wealthy. Yet Japanese poetry talks about the pain of fallen leaves from the inside — raked together only to be thrown away. I have followed both ways a great many times.

What if grass stalks were used instead of old fallen persimmon leaves

Blown by western winds to the east suffering fallen leaves
750

Fukujiro no yado aka aka to tamoshi keri

Abalone soup
the household’s bright shining light

751

Fukujiro no ware ikite oru nezame kana

I subsist by staying awake for abalone soup

752

Shyuufuu no gobito wa shiraji fuku to shiro

Autumn wind’s donation to pure poetry — abalone and soup

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
Translated by Allan Persinger
753

鰒叩音はせ僧よ

Oto naseso
tatakuma sou yo
fuku to shiro

Making an uproar
a monk claps his hands
for abalone and soup

754

白眼ム哉世上の人を

Fugu no tsura
sejou no hito o
niramu kana

The blowfish’s face
stares coldly up at
the world of men

755

友とはいなき世の

Hotogi utsute
fuku ni nakise no
tomotowamu

Hitting the earthen jar
the abalone alone in its world
and no friends visit

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson Translated by Allan Persinger
At my gate is my student Kakuei. The sadness from the loss of his favorite child endures as he makes his own sutra chanting, “Buddha, Buddha.”

When Kito called upon the ailing Senior Minister Heisha to offer sympathy, it was as if everybody was at the seashore listening to a traveling minstrel.
759

戻り馬

Kogarashi ya
hitato tsunatzuku
modori uma

The cold wind
strikes piercing
the returning horse

760

目に見ゆる

Kogarashi ya
hatake no koishi
me ni mieru

The eyes can see
the field’s grit blowing
in the winter winds

761

家に世わたる

Kogarashi ya
nanni yo wataru
ie go noki

The winter wind —
what in the world is living
in the house’s five eaves

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
Translated by Allan Persinger
762

荻の風
ここの頃までは

Kogarashi yo
konogoro made wa
ogi no kaze

The winter wind recently arrived
blowing the reeds

763

吹てる
木枯や
鐘に小石を

Kogarashi ya
kane ni koishi o
fuki ateru

The winter wind is blowing so hard pebbles
strike the bell

764

水の声
岩に裂行

Kogarashi ya
iwa ni seki yuku
mizu no koe

The winter wind
rips through the reef —
hissing water

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
Translated by Allan Persinger
Thirty-three pestles

Suribachi no
miso mi meguri ya
tera no shimo

Going around curiously
looking at the mortars for miso —
a temple in frost

Mugimaki ya
hyaku made ikiru
kao bakari

Planting buckwheat
and living until one hundred —
his only aspects

Hatsuyuki ya
kiyurebazo mata
kusa no tsuyu

The first snow
melts away and again
the grass is dewy

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
Translated by Allan Persinger
Hatsuyuki no tei o tatakeba
take no tsuki

The first snow —
the floor of a bamboo woods
struck by moonlight

The seven steps of poetry:

Yukiore ya
yuki oyu ni taku
kama no shite

A snow break
and the snow starts to boil
under the kettle

Yuki no kure
shigi wa modotsute
iruyouna

The snow is ending
the snips are returning
to live
771

Utzumi hi ya
wage kakure ga mo
uki no naka

A lonely fire —
my house is secluded
by snow

772

Iza yuki mi
katachitsukurisu
mino to kasa

Lets go watch the snow
our appearances shaped by
straw coats and umbrellas

773

Nabe sagete
yodo no kobashi o
yuki no hito

Hanging pots —
on a bridge over an eddy
snowmen
774*

Yuki shiroshi
kamo no ujibito
uma deute

In the white snow
Kamo clansmen
out on horses

775*

Yukiore ya
yoshino no yume no
sameru toki

Bent by snow
my dream of Yoshino cherries
fade in time

776

Gyuke samushi
sake ni kashira no
yuki o taku

The fisherman’s house is cold
yet all the sake in my head
makes the snow boil
777*

Asa shimo ya
muro no ageya no
nattojiro

On a frosty morning
in a room of a brothel —
natto soup

778

Niudou no
yoyoto maiirinu
nattojiro

Just entering the priesthood
and already avoiding the temple —
natto soup

779*

Asashimo ya
tsurugi o nigoru
tsurube nawa

The morning frosts
grips the sword and
the bucket’s rope
Yado kasanu
hokage ya yuki no
ie tsutzuki

Each separate home
casts shadows of firelight on
the silent snowy houses

On returning from Kitou and Naniwa*

Shimo hyakuri
shu chyuu ni ware
tsuki o ryausu

One hundred villages in frost
I am on shipboard as
the moon reigns

Kiba samuki
utsubari no tsuki no
nezumi kana

With a cold eye tooth
gnawing the girders of the moon —
a rat
783
ぼたん
哉
In the mountains
together in the snow —
peonies

784*
小風呂敷
町はづれ
Going out to the edge
of a town wearing a hood —
a small furoshiki

785
頭巾哉
 아직があぱれむ
Piteously drawn back
behind my ears —
a hood
いとをし
みどり子の

Midori ko no
tsukin mabukaki
itooshimi

An infant’s
eyebrows peaking out from a hood—
love

ふたぎけり

Meshi tsubude
kamiko no yabure
futagi keri

Grains of cooked rice
in ripped paper clothing
two prostitutes

おもひけり

Kono fuyu ya
kamiko kiyou to
omoi keri

This winter
I expected to wear
paper clothes
Oo o yama e
suteshi semo aruni
kamiko kana

In the old mountains
generations have thrown away
paper clothes

Waga zukin
ukiyo no sama ni
nizumo gana

My hood
matches the condition
of this fleeting world

Sasa megoto
zukin ni katzuku
haori kana

Everybody whispering
my hood resembles
a broken wing
792*

Zukan kite
koe komoriku no
hase houushi

Wearing a hood
the Hase priest’s voice
is muffled

On Love

793*

Kao mise ya
yogi o hananaru
imo ga moto

Meeting for the first time
at the younger sister’s house
wearing louse night clothes

794

Kaomise ya
sude ukiyo no
meshijibun

Meeting for the first time
and already its a floating world —
mealtime

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
Translated by Allan Persinger
The frost at daybreak looks to be breaking up but then reneges on its promise and the day becomes gloomy with a heavy snow

795

東山

顔見せや

ふとんをまくら

Kaomise ya
futon o makura
higashiyama

Meeting for the first time
wearing a heavy quilts —
Mt. Higashiyama

796*

冬至

新足石

誘う

Shinimon
Jyasoku o sasou
tougi kana

In the painting of
Shinimon Gate Jasoku invokes
the winter solstice

797

冬至

故園に遊ぶ

Shoki tensu
yue en ni asobu
tougi kana

A ceremonial scribe
walking in Yue-en garden
the winter solstice
Here and there in cold Kyoto —
daffodils

Buying daffodils
the beautiful woman looks pained

A shrike in the grass stalks
and still the daffodils aren’t blooming
冬されて
小鳥のあさる

Fuyu sare ya
kodori no asaru
nira batake

Exposed to winter
the small birds are pecking
the leek field

翁かな
韮を刈取
霜があれて

Shimo arete
nira o karitoru
okina kana

The frost has
wilted the leeks
and the old man

帰けり
枯木の中を
葱買て

Nebuka kaute
kareki no naka o
kaeri keri

Buying stone leeks
amid the dead trees life
returns
Hitomeji no kita e karefusu furuba kana

With old drooping withered leaves to the north — a leek

Ekisui ni nebu ka nagaruru samuki kana

In Ekisui floating garlic leaves in the cold

Sara o fumi nezumi no oto no samusa kana

The sound of a rat stepping on my plate — coldness
In the suburbs of Kyoto

807

冬の月 かしの木はらや
静なる

Shizuka nara
kashino ki hara ya
fuyu no tsuki

In the stillness
an oak tree’s spirit —
the winter moon

808

わすれたり 冬こだち
月に隣を

Fuyu kodachi
tsuki ni tonari o
wasuretari

The forgotten
moon boarders
bare winter trees

The next two haiku are from a dream

809

冬こだち 二村に
質屋一軒

Futamura ni
shichiya iken
furukodachi

For two village’s
a pawn shop in one house —
bare winter trees

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
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This village is inhabited by monkeys and bare winter trees.

Even the mandarine duck’s charm has no meaning under bare winter trees.

Carrying an axe I smell the fragrance of frightened bare winter trees.
A cry approaches
and my night is spent in pity —
a begging priest

The monk’s round gourd face
looks so sleepy before
he beats his iron bowl

The worthless monk
is beating his worthless
iron begging bowl
Yuugao no
sore wa dokuro ka
hachitataki

Is that a skull
or a bottle gourd being used
for a begging bowl?

Hana ni hyota
yuki ni kimi ari
hachitataki

Flowering bottle gourd
you are in the snow —
a wandering priest begging

Sainen wa
mou neta sato o
hachitataki

Sainen
the village was also sleeping
and you are ringing your bowl
Distant Bonfires

819*

Ohotaki ya
shimo utsukushiki
miyako no shi

Bonfires
so beautiful in the frost
Kyoto City

820

Ohotaki ya
inu mo nakanaka
sozoro kao

Bonfires —
the dog too has a very
surprised face

821*

Tabi haite
neru yo monouki
yumemi kana

Wearing tabi socks
asleep in the melancholic night —
dreaming

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822*

雪吹

宿

刀投出

すと

Yado kase to
katana nagidasu
fubuki kana

Shackled inside
outside it is throwing katanas
a blizzard

823

鼠

寺寒

かな

Tera samuku
shikimi wa mikobosu
nezumi kana

At the cold temple
in the shrine maiden’s grave branches
a gnawing rat

824

翁

杜

かな

Kakubutsu no
emono suknaki
okina kana

Bullheads —
a never ending game
for old men
Eight poems on poverty

825

雪の竹

窓を暗ず

愚に耐よと

Gu ni taeyo to
mado o kurauso
yuki no take

The window darkens
with enduring folly
bamboo in snow

826*

苦寒鳥

賢にして賤し

Kankodori wa
kan ni shite iyashi
kankudori

The cuckoo
its wisdom is so humble
suffering in the cold

827

そば湯哉

柴折くべる

Ware no mono
shika orikuberu
sobayu kana

Breaking and burning
my straw raincoat for firewood
to boil soba
あはれ也
折目正しく
紙ぶすま

Kamibusuma
orime tadashiku
aware nari

Being well mannered
using a paper sack for a futon
how pitiful

829

鼠かな
油うかがふ
水る燈の

Mizuru hi no
abura ukagau
nezumi kana

Spying out
the oil for floating lights —
a rat

830

並び居
ひさこ火桶に

Sumitori no
hisago hioke ni
namebe iru

Charcoal scuttles
for calabash braziers
sitting in a row
I'm so detestable
in the cold night my neighbor’s
pots are ringing

Using the water
from the writing brush to blacken
course teeth

Exhausting the remaining
arrows in the quiver’s partition —
falling pellets of snow
Tama arare
hyoubo ga nabe o
midare utsu

Hailstones
in Hyoubo strike the pot
with a gloomy disorder

Furuike ni
zouri shitzumite
mizore kana

Old pond —
sandals sinking
in sleet

Karazake ya
heru hodo herite
mizuru kana

The mountain spring water
is truly disappearing
water
Karazake ya
kin ni ono utsu
hibiki ari

Cutting dried salmon
my hatchet is a reverberating harp

Karazake ni
koshi suru ichi no
okina kana

Dried salmon
sitting on their butt in the market
old men

Karazake ya
tachihaki dono no
daidokoro

Dried salmon
in Minister Tachihaki’s kitchen
Wabizenji
karazake ni hakutou no
gin o iru

At Wabizenji Temple
the white heads of dried salmon
cchanting sutras

A picture drawn from life — plum blossoms coming out from a steel frame

Kanbai ya
hi no hotobashiro
magane yori

Winter plum blossoms
fire spurting out
from twisted steel

Kanbai o
teori hibiki ya
oi ga higi

Breaking the branches
of winter plums echoes —
an old elbow
A friendly feeling

843

天高し
門なき寺の

Kangetsu ya
mon naki tera no
ten takashi

The wintery moon —
a gateless temple
high in the heavens

844

あからさま
鋸岩の

Kangetsu ya
nokogiri iwa no
akara sama

The wintery moon —
Mt. Nokogiri’s
Buddha of Light

845

竹枯寒
三竿の

Kangetsu ya
karaki no naka no
take sankan

The wintery moon
within the withered trees
three bamboo poles
Kangetsu ya
shyuto no gengi no
sugite nochi

The wintery moon —
many priests have multiple opinions
before death

Kangetsu ya
furu uta utau
dare ga kozo

The wintery moon —
whose child is satirizing
the old songs?

Hosomichi ni
nari yuku koe ya
kannebutsu

Down the narrow lane
a voice passes crying
a midwinter prayer
Taking a short cut
to paradise —
a midwinter prayer

The time for cold water ablutions has arrived
in “the Emperor’s City”

During a temple visit
a cold water ablution
from a one handled bucket
852

Kojira urinichi ni katana onarashi keri

Selling whale meat at the market drumming with a katana

853*

Shitzushizutogotokusuekerikusurigui

Residing in the fifth virtue of silence — eating meat

854

Kusuriguitonaranoteishuhashijisan

Eating meat my neighbor’s husband has brought his own chopsticks
Kusurigui
hito ni kataruna
shishiketane
Eating meat
everybody is talking about
Deer Valley

Tsuma ya ko no
negao mo mietsu
kusurigui
My wife’s and children’s
faces look so sleepy —
eating meat

Kyakusou no
tanukine iri ya
kusurigui
The traveling priest
is playing possum
eating meat
Lotuses in the spring mud

858

Reiun mo
koyoi wa yuruse
toshi wasure

The lotus’s spirit
is also shaking this evening —
a new year’s drinking party

859

Nishikiki no
tachigiki mo naki
zakone kana

The once colorful trees
are eavesdropping on the dead
sleeping together

860

Otoru hya
koeda mo sutenu
toshigikori

Inferior
sprigs are not discarded —
new year wood cuttings
The bushwarbler is crying this January — Rashomon Gate

Copying sutras from the past — an old calendar

For one more year the snow has pilled up on the small village temple
In the departing year
going all around Seta —
the bill collector

All year the night guards
have been watching our valuables
the aged

Lord Seki
has returned four pounds of silver —
the year ends
The new year is guarded by long swords of dried fish — poles of cod

As the year ends wearing a bamboo hat with straw sandals is so easy

Already Basho’s departed before the year’s end
Footnotes

Spring

1: Hourai no yamamatsuri is a new year’s festival with decorations shaped like a mountain where legendary wizards lived. I have added the words “and I” within this poem to try and convey the feeling. Up to the Meiji Era (1868) it was the practice that everyone’s birthday was New Year’s Day, which is why there isn’t an actual birth date recorded for Buson, just the year. Therefore on the first day of spring (New Year’s Day) everyone grew a year older underlyng a cyclical image of as new life begins the living are getting older (a fleeting life or Ukiyo type of thought). Finally, in Edo Japan New Year’s Day was not January first, but would have occurred some time in February or March because Japan followed a lunar calendar. Keeping this in mind, throughout the rest of the book whenever Buson refers to a month I have added two on to Buson’s number so that it represents about the same month that Buson was referring to. Example: the first month would be March not January, the second month would be April not February, etc.

2: It was a custom in some villages on New Year’s eve to nail the heads of sardines on spears in front of the gate posts of houses to ward off evil spirits.

3: “Zouni kayuru”literally rice cakes with vegetables boiled in rice porridge. Also the idea of richness comes in through the fact that in Japanese history rice was considered a form of wealth — the more rice the Daimyos, or feudal lords, grew the wealthier they were.

4: The title of this poem, “Riraku” means scattered, and is a standard poem title in Chinese. Throughout this book the titles or poems were written by Buson and I have translated them directly. Uguisu is a Japanese bush warbler, warbler or nightingale.

5: Kure ni keri: literally to grow dark. However, other meanings include, sun set, seasonal end, or to end.

7: This poem is a type of “Ki kasanari,” that is a poem using two set poetry phrases or images, in this case nightingales and sparrows.

8: This poem refers to a poem in the Kokin Wakashu -- the first of a twenty book series conceived by Emperor Uda (887-897) and ordered by his son Emperor Daigo (897-930). The book was perhaps published around 920. Furthermore, the poem referred to was selected by Kino Tsurayuki, a poet and one of the compilers of the series.

14: I have translated here the literal meaning. “Wagakusa”(young grass) can also mean young people, or can even be a derogatory word for a monk, and “Ne o wasuretaru”(forgotten roots) means forgetting sense or mind. Furthermore, willow trees are said to attract ghosts. Two other possible translations could read: “The youth are forgetting their senses — a willow”, or “The damn monk is out of his mind — a willow”.

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16: The verb “Sasu” has many different meanings, which are easy to tell if a Kanji (Chinese character) is used. However, as the verb here is written in Hiragana (a phonetic alphabet) it could mean to shine, to stab, to point out or to select. I have chosen shine as the most logical, but as haiku delights in word play and in using different meanings all at the same time there could be various translations. Furthermore, “hima” could be free, at leisure or the time between events.

19: This poem is comparing plum blossoms with cherry blossoms. Plum flowers bloom separately or one by one, whereas cherry blossoms bloom all at the same time. Therefore after the long winter wait, the plum blossoms can be enjoyed longer.

21: Kourokan Palaces were built in Fukuoaka Kyushu, Osaka and Kyoto to meet foreign ambassadors and had many guest houses.

29: Plum blossoms are a symbol of purity, but in a floating world sense are short lived. Prostitutes are a common symbol or subject in floating word art, and here in this poem several things are taking place. The blossoms are short lived as is the woman’s profession, however the woman is investing in an obi, that is an expensive hand embroidered silk garment. Properly maintained an obi increases in value so the woman is investing her profits for when she can no longer work as a prostitute while at the same time the obi could also be used for attracting cliental.

30: Genbachi is a bridge in Osaka, close to Sakura no Miya, a place famous for cherry blossoms.

32: This poem was written in argument by Ueda Akinar, 1734-1809, (also known as Ueda Shuusei) a contemporary author, scholar and wakka poet to Motoori Norinaga, 1730-1801, contemporaries of Buson as to the changing of the phonetic spelling. Ueda was a scholar in “kokugaku” or National Learning, and in philology. “Mume” is the old classic spelling of plums and “ume” was, and still is, the modern way of spelling plums. Ueda evidently wrote that “mu” should be pronounced “n” and Buson is showing how this is not always true as “mume” never would have been pronounced “n-me.”

34: Azuki beans are small, red beans used to make bean paste, a type of sweet desert. The poem also makes use of the image of plum buds which are small and red and about the same size of an azuki bean.

36: Naniwa is the old name for Osaka.

38: Yabuiiri, or Servants’ Day, took place March 16th, and was a holiday when servants could return home to their families.

39: Yosome, worrying about others or an outside perspective. The feeling here is that one servant is having to take care in how he/she takes their leave to the other servants.

40: Wasuregusa means day lilies; however, there is also the pun in this poem on the word wasure, to forget.
41: Kane: tooth blackening. Up until sometime during the Meiji period when Japan modernized, black teeth were considered fashionable. Sei Shonagon (966-1017) in “The Pillow Book” has a list of things she considered beautiful like “A melon in sunshine, perfectly black teeth...” Teeth were blackened to prevent tooth decay through a dye, the main ingredient of which was a smelly brown liquid made of acetic acid called kanemizu (tooth water) with iron dissolved in it. Gallnut and tannin powders were added in to turn the dye non-water soluble, however even then the dye had to be applied daily.

42: Nakayamadera Temple is one of the temples (number 24) in a 33 temple pilgrimage route. The 西國三十三所, Saigoku Sanjūsan-sho, is in Kansai and the principle images is that of the goddess Kanon. The temple has a statue of an eleven faced Kanon, the goddess of safe childbirths. This became famous when Toyotomi Hideyoshi the unifier of Japan, went to the temple to pray for a safe delivery of his son.

43: Man Day is an ancient Chinese holiday and is on the seventh day of the new year, March 7th. On this day people eat rice cooked with seven different vegetables. In Japan the rice is cooked with seven herbs.

A hakama was originally a male kimono or formal dress worn by men; however, today it is worn by both sexes.

46: Takai Kito (1741-12/9/1789) was a haiku poet and a student of Buson. Most of the poems in this collection were ordered by Kito, with some additions coming later.

50: There are two ways to translate the proem. “Listening to the Koto on a spring evening” or “Listening to ‘Spring Evening’ on a Koto. ‘Spring Evening’ is a title of a poem by Sohouku or Sushi (December 19, 1036 - August 24, 1101) a famous Chinese song writer. A koto is a classic Japanese musical instrument.

Soushu is the Japanese name for two Chinese rivers flowing into Lake Dongting, a large shallow lake in northeastern Hunan Province, noted for its mystical beauty.

52: Foxes are tricksters and shape-shifters in Japanese lore. The word baketari could mean ghostly, it could also mean that the fox has changed shape into the lord master.

53: So Touba (1036-1101) a Tang Dynasty poet, in Japanese his name is Sushi or Sohoku (see footnote 50). Another Chinese name for him is Su Dongo. His most famous prose-poem, the two-part Red Cliff Ode was also illustrated by both Chinese and Japanese artists. Su is generally shown riding a mule and wearing a large hat. Su was an influential theorist, stressing the importance of artistic personality in both poetry and painting. For Su, a successful painting had neither formal likeness nor technical skill, but conveyed the artist's spirit or mind. His ideas and paintings, usually of an old tree, bamboo, and rock.

Sei Shonagon (966-1017) was a Heian Court Lady who wrote the classic work “The Pillow Book.” The book is famous for her observations and lists, and gives a wonderful glimpse into Heian court life. See footnote 41.
55: This poem refers to a Chinese legend written in 2 BCE, “The Philosophers of Huainan” (Huai nan Tzu). Chang’e and her husband Houyi were immortals who were banished to the earth to live out their lives as mortals. Houyi hunts for an elixir to regain immortality and eventually brings one back home in the form of one pill, which if shared would make both of them immortal again. However while Houyi is out hunting Chang’e swallows the whole pill. This causes her to float up to the moon where she is still living to this day.

57: Sashinuki hakama are a type of traditional Japanese clothing. Hakama are a pleated, wide-legged pants that tie closed and have a distinctive bare triangle at the side of the hips. They are worn over full-length kimono, so this triangle cut out shows the kimono fabric and not skin or underclothing.

59: Shinansha, or South Pointing Chariot was a prototype of a compass but had no magnets and did not automatically detect which direction was south. The pointer, a small statue of a man with a single arm pointing out, was aimed southward by hand at the start of a journey, then, whenever the chariot turned, the mechanism rotated the pointer relative to the body of the chariot to counteract the turn and keep the pointer aiming in a constant direction, to the south.

Legend has it that the Yellow Emperor, the first emperor of China, invented the south pointing chariot. Chi You, a rival from a barbarian tribe, conjured up a mist to attack, but with the use of the chariot the Yellow Emperor was able to win.

62: Shijo and Gojo are major streets in both old and modern Kyoto that cross the Kamo River.

63: Weak legs was a reference to the legs of women and children.

65: A traditional way of fishing was to use roped cormorants to catch the fish in a river. The neck ring is tight enough so that the bird cannot swallow the fish. Once the fish is caught the cormorant is wound back to disgorge its catch.

71: Takiguchi was the place the guards for Seiryoden Castle stayed. It was located in the northeast of the castle grounds and also contained a waterfall. Northeast is the direction from which demons come and go. Therefore water is normally kept in the northeast to purify the direction.

72: Nunawa is the archaic word for Junsai or watershield, a plant that grows in ponds and whose leaves are considered a delicacy.

73: There are different ways to interpret this poem. The word aware could also be written as pity or pitiful. Furthermore, there is also a debate if the subject is Buson or the rain itself, in which case the poem would read: Such a pity / the spring rain / cannot write by itself.
75: There is some confusion as to the subject. It could be two people, one wearing a straw raincoat, the other carrying an umbrella. The one in the raincoat might be a man, the one with the umbrella, a woman. Or the subject might be Buson as a traveler, wearing a raincoat and carrying an umbrella...

76: Fushizuke has two meanings, a wooden fish trap or a method of capitol punishment where the victim was put in a wooden cage with weights that was then thrown into deep water.

77. Izayou is the night following the full moon or the sixteenth night’s moon. In a lunar calendar the full moon is on the fifteenth night.

78: Tsuna: the name of a Geisha that Buson particularly liked; or Minamoto no Tsuna, a famous warrior who cut a devil’s arms off with the Higekiri Katana on a bridge in Kyoto. This was the same place that Tsuna, the geisha, lived.

80. Since the entire camilla flower falls at once instead of petal by petal, it is said to nod like a head before falling.

81: Tamazuri is either a beautiful woman or a craftsman who polishes jewelry.

82: Katsuuma Festival is currently held on the second of February at Inari Shrines. Sode-datame is a method of folding kimonos when there isn’t enough room to formally fold the cloth.

92: Tagoto no tsuki means the moon reflected in every rice paddy. A famous woodblock print of this is by Utagawa Hiroshige titled Shinshu Tarashina Tagoto no Tsuki. The mountain in the print is where the elderly were once abandoned to die.

99: The poem takes place in Jyakkou-in, a temple in Ohara, where the head abbess is from the imperial family. The first abbess was Empress Dowager Kenrei.

102: Mt Kameyama is around Tenryu-zan in Saga, Kyoto where Kameyama mansion was constructed for the Gosaga and Kamayama emperors.

106: Shepherd’s purse is a flowering herb used to stop bleeding, menstrual bleeding and nosebleeds. It is also used to help contract the uterus after child birth.

107: “Biku yori otaru bikuni dera,” is a quote from the first essay in Kensho’s Essays in Idleness.”

111. The Housanshou was a three article legal code decreed by Emperor Kao Tsu of the Han Dynasty in China that fashioned a simple legal system. Fudanomoto is a place name, probably in Nagasaki or Mie Prefectures.
112: The Taira, or Heishi, Clan was a hereditary name given by the emperor to royal family members who become subjects. The clan is killed off during the Genpei War (1180-1185) and was written about in the story “The Tale of the Heike.”

114: The copper pheasant or mountain bird (yamadori) was first written about by the poet Hyakunin Isshu in the 8th century and lives throughout Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu.

134: Toba is the southern area of Kyoto.

136: There are two possible ways of translating this poem. The standard version is based on the post-Meiji interpretation that when the subject is not known, the subject is the author, and would read “Dreaming / of picking up a spirit — a butterfly.” However, mine is based upon the fact that Buson lived before the Meiji Era, and therefore the subject might not have been him. A reason for this interpretation is Buson liked Soushi, a Chinese philosopher, who wrote a story about dreaming of a butterfly and waking not knowing if he was human or a butterfly.

137: In the early spring grasses were burned to get rid of insects and to help the grasses grow on the banks and ridges between the rice fields. Suguro no is a phrase describing the blackened look of the fields after burning. The poem is describing the look of the old dead burned grass and the new green starting to grow.

141: Kosobe no Nyudo, also known as Fujiwara no Takinobu, was the chief of the emperor’s guards and was also known for his refinement. Noin Hoshi (Tahibana Nagayasu) was one of the famous 36 poets in the Heian Era. When they first met they had a poetry writing competition to see who was the most refined and afterwards they became friends.

Yamamuki ya ide is a set phrase in poetry. Ide is a place in Kyoto prefecture and is a small dam used for irrigation.

143: In a Japanese funeral service after the body is cremated friends and relatives pick up the remaining bones with ceremonial chopsticks and place the remains in an urn.

145: Jizou is the guardian of travelers and dead children. It was believed that if a child died it was because of some sin that occurred in the child’s previous life, and that the soul returned to hell for further purification. Jizou is the Buddhist deity that is supposed to ease the suffering of the souls in hell. Here the statue has been burnt or blackened by the spring burn off.

148: Ureshino, is a place name near Kobe famous for its Azalea Park

150: Raiko, or Minamoto no Yorimitsu 948-8/29/1021 was one of the leaders of the Minamoto Clan and was renown for his military exploits. This poem is refering to a folk tale where Raiko suppresses a demon at Mt. Ohe.
151: There are two ways to translate this poem. The other translation would read: “Waiting for citrus flowers / there is the smell / of old people’s sleeves.”

Also the middle line, mukashi no hito no, is quoted from a poem in “The Tale of Ise.”

The Doll Festival takes place on March Third.

153: Tarachina no tsuma in ancient Japanese was a way for a wife to call her husband. In more modern Japanese it became a way to describe a lovely wife. Furthermore, there is the pun on a chick’s nose. In classic drawings both men and women were drawn with a small nose in a round face. The nose looked like the hiragana letter ku, "く". Female doll’s were made with this kind of nose. So this poem is punning on picking up the doll by the nose, and pinching a woman’s nose.

155: Hinamise was a market place set up before the Doll Festival that sold supplies for the festival.

160: Kachyuushyu are government officials during the Edo Period that would go around and inspect farms and houses. Here the farmers are getting ready for the visit by shaking out the straw mats for the officials to view the peach blossoms.

166: Kato Kyotai (1732-1792), a poet and friend of Buson, was born in Nagoya.

168: Zeni kaute is literally exchanging gold and silver coins into pennies. The reason would be so one could stop to rest at tea houses or temples while climbing the mountains.

169: Drooping Cherries is a caption or title of a painting.

170: The middle line, “Matsu ni fukarete” is taken from a part of one poem which was criticized as a “Junk Poem” in the collection titled “Kokin Wakashu.”

171: On a mountain cherry trees do not blossom all at the same time, so the colors of the mountain varies.

179: Naniwa, is the old name for Osaka. There are several different ways of writing Naniwa in Kanji (Chinese Characters). In this poem Buson is using the writing that includes the seasonal word flowers. Furthermore, Osaka is famed for being mercantile and uncultured.

180 Akokuso (My Shit Boy) was a pen name for Ki no Tsurayuki, who was one of the famous Heian poets who was one of the four poets to compile the Kokin Wakashuu.

Akokuso is also a way to call a dirty boy. Furthermore sashinuki is a type of formal hakama, a divided skirt.
181: Koyasan, is a name of group of mountains between Nara and Osaka and is the home of the temple complex and headquarters of the Buddhist sect Shingonshu, which was started by Kobo Daishi. Koyasan is also famous for its cemetery. Not only does Kobo Daishi have a tomb where he is sleeping, many important people have a cenotaph erected there.

Sanada Yukimura (1567 - June 3, 1615) a famous samurai who fought against the Tokugawa clan. He and his father lived anonymously at the foot of Mt. Koyasan after losing the battle for Osaka Castle.

Utai is a special type of Noh Song.

183 Touki or dong quai is an ancient Chinese/Korean/Japanese medicinal herb from the celery family that has purple stems and umbrella clusters of white flowers. It is used to treat cramps, infrequent periods, irregular menstrual cycles, PMS, and problems associated with menopause. It is known as the female ginseng.

186: Arayashiyama is a mountain and a town southwest of Kyoto. In the poem there is a pun on name, Arashiyama, which in English would be “Storm Mountain.”

187: Keisei originally meant a very beautiful woman. Later came to mean that of a courtesan. What is happening in this poem is that a courtesan’s works at night, whereas cherry blossom viewing is done during the day so she is risking her “pure spirit” or looks maybe by becoming tan.

188: The opening line of this poem is flowers dance, however the last line, shirabyoushi, is a woman dancer from the Heian period; therefore to avoid repeating the same word, I have used the word twirl instead. Shiraboushi is also a performance danced by both men and women.

190: Kiyamichi Road is a famous road in Kyoto noted for its cherry blossoms.

191: Suifuro is a round wooden bathtub in which the bather had to sit.

193: The poem is referring to a famous double blossom cherry tree at Ninnaji Temple in Kyoto.

194: The word genkyakusu to dwindle, to lesson, or to be reduced, is also used in the proam. I therefore tried to vary the meaning. The end line is stomach is reduced. Furthermore, bijin no, or beautiful woman’s, I have replaced with beauty’s because there could be two ways of reading this poem, one, the beauty is an actual woman, two, the woman represents spring.

195: Kenko Yoshida (1283-1350) was an author and Buddhist monk. His most famous work is “Tsurezuregusa” or “Essays in Idleness.” This poem relates to the following story:
On April 15th at midnight on a bright moonlit night Kenko visited Senbonji Temple. He went into the temple and saw a woman. Her figure and her perfume were uniquely beautiful. When Kenko got close to her, her fragrance was so strong it felt like it was caressing him, and he worried that when he left the temple that the scent would linger on him and that people would gossip because of the lateness of the hour.

196: The reason why the young noble man’s head is shaved is that he has entered the priesthood.

198: In early Edo a low pillow was used, but by Buson’s time a higher pillow was popular.

199: Heichyou, is the closing of an exhibition by a temple of a rare or valued statue.

204: The mountain referred to in the poem is Shiranezan in Yamanashi Prefecture. Furthermore, Mt. Shiranezan is the second highest mountain in the prefecture while the highest is Mt. Fuji.

212: Nangen means southern clan or group, and refers to South China. It was thought that the Northern Chinese were wealthy and that the Southern were poor. Also the opening word of the poem, ‘Rofusage,’ is a recessed fire-pit or fireplace in the floor that is used for heating water for the tea ceremony. In “Sado” (tea ceremony) usually a gathering was held in the late spring when the fire-pit was closed because of the sorrow of shutting it down.

213: Toko is usually written toko-no-ma and is an alcove in which items for artistic appreciation, such as calligraphy and/or pictorial scrolls along with flower arrangements are displayed. Furthermore, Yuima, refers to the Vimalakirti-nirde’sa Sutra.

218: Kuroyanagi Shoha (1727-1771) was a pupil influenced by Buson’s style of poetry. Shoha studied Chinese classics in a school founded by Ito Jinsai (1627-1705). Shoha came to learn haikai under Buson. His conversations with Buson influenced Buson’s preface to the Shundei Verse Anthology.

Also the end line of the poem is literally through the open spaces in the fence or through the gaps in the fence.

219: Zasu is the title for the head monk of Hiezan Temple, part of the Tendai School. Rengu or Renka is “linked verse.” In Renka one poet would compose a poem of 5/7/5 syllables and the next poet would compose an addition of 7/7 syllables, and then the next would compose 5/7/5 and so on.

220” Tsukubasan: the “purple mountain” is one of the major tourist attractions for mountain climbing and has an important Shinto Shrine built upon it. It has two peaks, one said
to be female, the other male. Unlike most of the Japanese mountains, Mt. Tsukuba is not volcanic but is in fact made of granite.

222: Imonokami or Housogami is the God of Bad Luck, Small Pox or Syphilis. Imo means pox. Also the Yokawa Pagoda is one of the three pagodas at Mt. Hieizan Temple complex. The idea within the poem is going to the temple to pray to Housogami to avoid or to be cured from small pox or syphilis.

223: Henka is the answering poem in a renga series. Also aonyoubou is an inexperienced court lady or a maid of honor.

224: Oumi is the old name for Shiga. It also means the center. Furthermore this poem is also based on a poem by Basho:

Regretting
spring’s departure —
Oumi’s residents
Summer

225: Koromogae, beginning in the Heian Period, The Seasonal Clothes Changing Day, currently June 1st, was when all commoners had to change from their silk winter clothes into their cotton summer clothes and was considered to be the beginning of summer. This holiday is currently repeated on October 1 where people change from their summer clothes to their winter clothes.

230: “Yukazu” was an early summer event, a contest of long-distance archery held at Sanjusangendo Temple in Higashiyama Kyoto.

232: Oteuchi: A death sentence carried out with a katana. During the Edo period the death penalty was imposed by the master of a samurai family for retainers who committed some indiscretion or violation of a family ban.

233: This poem plays on a poem from the Kokinshu:
   Waiting for May
   the fragrance of orange flowers
   is the same as
   an old lover’s

235: The Tomokirimaru, Friend Cutting Sword, is another name for the Higekiri Katana (see footnote 78).

Hototogisu (cuckoo) can be written in the following ways:

杜鵑, "woods cuckoo"
子規, "egg measurer" (referring to the bird's practice of laying eggs in the nest of other birds)
時鳥, "bird of time"
不如帰, "homelessness" (referring to the bird not building a nest of its own)
蜀魂, "spirit of Szechuan"
霍公鳥, "speedy cuckoo bird"
田鵑, "rice field cuckoo"
杳手鳥, "shoe hand bird"
杜字, "woods' roof"

240: Shirojirou, literally “The Whitening Sky” the original name of Jiro Kano, a member of the Kano school of painting, which was founded by his father, Masanobu Kano. The Kano School is one of the most famous schools of Japanese painting and was the dominant style of painting from the 15th century until the Meiji period. By the time Jiro Kano
became a member the school was already divided into many different stylistic branches. The poem is addressing a painting of a hototogisu by Kano, and at the same time was addressing an actual hototogisu.

241: In this poem Iwakura refers to a place in Kyoto that was famous for its asylum.

242: Masanori Inaba and Masamichi Inaba were the Lords of Odawara Castle and were famous practitioners of the tea ceremony.

245: This poems refers to the Kamo Aoi Matusri in Kyoto, which has a large cart pulled by cows in a procession of 100 people. The Festival began as a formal procession to appease the gods after a series of heavy rains and winds destroyed the crops during Emperor Kinmei’s (509-May 24, 571 a.d.) reign.

247: Enma-O: The Judge of Hell in esoteric Buddhism. In Buddhist iconography Enma-O is pictured with an open, angry mouth. My translation is based on Tsutomu Ogata’s interpretation.

253: This poem was in “Goshahougu” a haiku book that featured old and then current poets and was edited by Kito.

254: Togan Koji, a layman disciple of Higashiyama Unkyoji Temple who had hair and wore common clothes. He preached performing on a drum worn around the neck, the Kakko, while dancing. The sound of the drum was considered similar to the song of the cuckoo, “Teppenkaketaka.”

255: Based on a poem from the “Goshahougu:”

The cuckoo
may also feel lonely
flying away - Otsuyu Nakagawa

There is also a pun within this poem on “Kankodori ga naku,” which is a slump in business, or when there are no customers. Bakurinji is the name of a hermitage and a reference to Otsuyu Nakagawa, a haiku poet who founded the Bakurinji school of poetry.

259: The idea here is that the cuckoo does not build its own nest but uses the nests of other birds and so is eyeing the hat to see if it is a good place to lay eggs.

260: This poem is punning on a Japanese proverb: “Hato ni sanshi no rei ari.” (Doves perching on the lower three branches of a tree respect good manners.)

263: Saito Betto Sanemori was a local commissioner who died in battle at Shinohara. Because he was 73 years old, he dyed his hair to go fight against an advancing enemy when the rest of the soldiers had fled. When he attacked he refused to answer the question, “Who are you?” He died when his horse rolled over on him. The enemy soldiers
cut his head off and took his head to their general. It turned out that Sanemori had saved the general’s life when the general was two years old.

266: This poem was written when an old friend, Unribou (1693-1761), visited and talked to Buson all through the night. Unribou was a poet in the middle of the Edo Period from what is currently Aichi Prefecture. He was a pupil of the Kagami Shikan School and was one of the 10 students of Basho. This is the same poet as referred to in poem 575.

The pine tree, Rokuri no Matsu, was a large tree at Amano Hashidate, the hermitage where Buson lived for several years.

269: A catchpole is someone of lesser rank than a sherif or constable and usually went after debtors. “Kawa chouzu,” means 1, water for washing the face and hands; 2, ritualistic cleansing of the hands and face before entering a temple or a shrine; 3, going to the toilet.

270: This poem could be referencing a large silver screen that Buson himself painted towards the end of his life. To see the image go to: http://bunka.nii.ac.jp/SearchDetail.do?heritageId=216110#

273: Okinamaro, the name of a guard dog in Sei Shounagon’s “Pillow Book.”

274: Sutekagari was a bonfire lit to lure thieves away instead of posting a guard.

277: “Hitotsu amarite” has three possible meanings, all of them played upon within this poem. 1, The last stage of the Tohoku Road, which was just before a traveler would reach Kyoto; a phrase called out in backgammon before playing the last tile; the name of a famous pine tree in Otsu, Shiga. Furthermore, the Tohoku road was the famous haiku walk that Basho wrote about.

278: Fushimi and Yodo are two towns within the outskirts of Kyoto that were on opposite side of a bay.

279: I’ve tried to capture both meanings for “unohana”: a shrub with small white flowers (deutzia) and tofu waste.

281: This poem refers to a poem by Saigyo (1118 – March 23, 1190), a late Heian and early Kamakura period noble who became a monk and a poet: Let me die in spring / under the flowering trees / around the full moon.

284: Suzumezushi (Sparrow Sushi) a type of sushi that originally used stripped mullet minnows; sea bream is now used. The minnows were cut open, gutted and then stuffed with sushi rice. Also during Buson’s lifetime bamboo leaves were normally used to serve this sushi, here it appears to be water pepper instead of bamboo. Water pepper is also served with trout sushi.
285: Miidera Temple, formally called Onjoji temple, was founded in 672 and is the head temple of Tendai Buddhism’s Jimon sect. It is also temple number 14 in the Saigoku Kannon Pilgrimage, a 33 temple pilgrimage in western Japan. Buson visited Miidera in September of 1779 after visiting Basho’s grave.

286: Banded or hanging onions were suspended from the eaves or the roof as a way of keeping the onions cool.

289: The way of writing Mt. Fuji here uses an alternate Kanji, Chinese character, compound and reads “Not Two.” The idea is that Mt. Fuji is a singularly unique mountain.

293: This is based on a Chinese story about Emperor Ryuu Hou, or Ling Bang (BCE 247-195), commonly known in Japan as Kouso who was an emperor in the Han period of China. When he confronted a big snake along a valley road, he cut it to continue on (extracted from the "Record of Grand Historian.")

296: Nenashigusa: rootless duckweed, or a way of describing rootless wanderers.

298: Sanbongi is a place located in Kyoto along the western bank of the Kamogawa River between Marutamachi and Kojinguchi.

301: Mosquito coils were first made in the Heian period and are mentioned in the “Man-yoshu” - the first collection of poetry. Also the coils were made from mugwort and contained sulfur.

302: Sangenya: three tea shops named Sun, Moon, Flower near Arashiyama, a city near Kyoto.

305: Hashimoto, a pleasure quarters in Osaka, southeast of Takatsuki City that was near Buson’s home town. Also the place had a bamboo forest.

“Ari ya nashi,” is part of a famous phrase from Ise Monogatari,”Is my love still in Kyoto or not”.

Finally this haiku is also illustrated by Buson with a painting of a house in a bamboo grove.

306: Otoshizashi, was to carry the katana in a vertical manner and was considered rude. In this poem the guide to the bamboo grove was carrying his sword vertically like the way bamboo grows.

309: Magakibushi, the title of a song that was popular in the early Edo period, 1655-1661, that was written by a prostitute named Magaki. There is also a painting by Utagawa Hiroshige (1797 – October 12, 1858) which appears to be about Magaki passing her pipe through a fence to a lover. And while this painting came after Buson, it could go a long way in explaining the action or story line of this poem: the poppies are passing through
the magaki (roughly woven fence or bamboo hedgerow) like the pipe that Magaki passed to her lover.

315: The first few lines of this poem are quoting a haiku by Basho that says that Kyoto’s soba and its haiku taste bad. Here Buson appears to be saying that while the soba is still not delicious, because his school, a revival of the Basho style of poetics, was in Kyoto that things were developing (growing wheat).

316: Foxfire is a will-o’-the-wisp or grave/ghost lights and is derived from the folk belief that foxes can breath fire from their mouths. Furthermore, Kawachi is a place near Buson’s birth village. Another possible translation could read:

Grave lights
are you leading me to Kawachi’s wheatfields

317: Nunobiki no Taki Waterfall is located on Mt. Nunobiki. Mt. Nunobiki was a place where Japanese asceticism and shamanism was practiced. It is one of the selected one hundred best waters of Japan. Also Mt. Nunobiki is referenced in Ise Monogatari / Eiga Monogatari, written in the Heian period.

318: Kaya village now located in Kyoto Prefecture is famous as a scenic destination and it was visited by many famous poets. Tamba is a mistake and should read Tango.

319-322: Narezushi is a type of sushi made by pressing salted fish in a large wooden bucket of rice for a few days up to over a year. This type of sushi was first made in the Yayoi period (300BC-300AD). Usually fresh water fish but sometimes boar or deer meat was used depending on the location.

Buson appeared to have loved his narezushi and wrote over 16 haiku about it.

322: This poems alludes to a Chinese poem taken from the book Gao Tang Rhapsody by Song Yu. The poem name is “Chouunbou”and it was written by a king, probably named Kaiou of Chu, about a dream he had where he made love to a goddess. Upon taking his leave, the goddess said, “To see you again I will become a cloud in the morning and rain in the evening.”

323: Tosoku was a poet from Kyoto who died in 1773. This poem is referring to his third year memorial, which is actually held on the second year. Depending on the school or sect, Buddhist memorial services are held on the cremation ceremony and then are held on the 7th day, the 14th day, the 21st day, the 28th day, the 35th day, the 42nd day, the 49th day, the 100th day, the 1st year, the 2nd year, the 6th year, the 12th year, the 16th year, the 22nd year, the 24th year, the 26th year, the 32nd year, the 36th year, and finally on the 49th year (to get the Buddhist names for these years, add one year).

Nori no tsue is a staff for visiting temples, or is a staff used for visiting funerals.

Foxfire: The Selected Poems of Yosa Buson
Translated by Allan Persinger
325: This poem references a poem by Touenmei (Tao Yuanming) a Chinese poet (Peach Blossom Spring) who lived from 365-427 A.D. “My hometown is becoming abandoned / so why do I remain here?” The poem is about Yuanming quitting his job as a government official to return home. In Buson’s poem however, the path home is strewn with thorns and is not so idyllic.

328: The Basho Hermitage was rebuilt through Buson’s effort and is located at Konpu-kuji Temple. The hermitage was built for use in the tea ceremony following Sen no Rikyu (1522-1591), one of the principle founders of the modern tea ceremony.

“Ears, eyes, lungs and bowels,” is a phrase from Sima Guang (1019-1080), a Chinese historian. The quote the poem is referencing is:

Wandering about here and there, I only let my mind dwell on pleasant things. The full moon arrives in its own time. The cool breeze comes of itself. My strolling is not due to any need. I do not stop from any necessity. My eyes, ears, lungs and bowels are all my own personal possessions — I utterly follow my will, am utterly unbound in scope! I had not known what is meant to be an inhabitant between Sky and Earth. What pleasures are greater than this? Therefore, I named the whole concept, “The Garden for Pleasure in Solitude” (Taken from Ascetic Culture: Renunciation and Worldly Engagement edited by Karigouder Ishwaran, Boston, Brill Academic Publishers. June 1, 1999. p51).

329: This is referring to a story about Seishi, one of the four most beautiful of historical Chinese women. When she was suffering from an illness in the chest, Seishi contracted her eye brows and looked very beautiful doing so. Some ugly women saw her and immediately contracted their eyebrows together, unfortunately for them they looked even uglier. This became a proverb: think before you imitate.

334: Chimaki is a type of steamed dumplings usually cooked within bamboo leaves and is normally eaten on Children’s Day in modern Japan, which takes place on May 5th, also on that day Koi kites are normally flown so the day has the association of being windy.

335: Wakasabito: within this poem are merchants selling medications, or food for the emperor, that come form Wakasa, a city north of Kyoto, and are in this poem traveling to Kyoto to sell their fish, produce, or medicines. Wakasa was also at this time one of the ports open to foreigners.

336: Shii, is the chinquapin oak, yellow oak, or rock oak. It has a very distinct fragrance. Also this poem is quoting from a haiku by Basho:

The oak tree
does not appreciate
cherry blossoms
339: Saijun: a laborer’s song used when harvesting lotus roots or water shield; a set of Chinese songs using poems in the old style with one short line followed by a long line.

340: Warekara does not have an English equivalent and is a type of insect that lives in seaweed.

343: Otomo no Oemaru was a haiku poet also from Osaka who lived from 1722-1805, and would have been 6 years younger than Buson. Otomo no Oemaru’s name puns on “Kataware,” which means a fragment or broken piece.

345: The opening kanji refers to Emperor Kore (290-215BC). Legend has it that in the fifth year of his reign the land in Omi was split and formed the lake that now reflects Mt. Fuji.

346: This poem is usually compared to a poem by Basho:

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Early summer rains
gather quickly —
the Mogami River
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348: This poem was written when Buson was traveling to Hakone, one of the stops of the Tokaido Road, and is located in what is now Kanagawa Prefecture.

349: The Oi River was a place where people crossed when the bridges were washed out.

350: Tagoto no yami (terraced rice fields), a pun on “Tagato no Tsuki,” refers to a place in Nagano where old people were carried up into the mountains to be abandoned.

351: Seinhan Hoshi, another name for Unribou, see footnote #266. Also during the Edo Period there was no refrigeration so fruit and vegetables were placed in cool or cold water.

354: Oi is a portable bookcase used by a itinerant priest.

356: Hagakure is a ninja term which means hiding in the leaves.

360: There is a delightful painting of a student gazing blankly that Buson made for this poem. Also this poem is quoting or referring to the Mougyuu (the Japanese for Mengquiji 蒙求集 "Helpful collection for first education", also called Meng-qui 蒙求. This a short encyclopedia written in the Tang Dynasty by writer Li Han (618-907). The special topic of this encyclopedia are examples in history of good and evil behavior. The 596 entries are arranged in rhymed double-pairs of short sentences, composed to make them easy to memorize. (Taken from China Knowledge). The poem then is imitating one
of the moral lessons from the Mougyuu, a type of intellectual that doesn’t really learn but only talks virtually out his ass. Furthermore, nukeru is to emit or exit.

364: Yukinobu Kano (1643-1682) a female painter from the Kano school.

366: A water rail is a type of bird that hides in reeds and makes a squealing pig type of noise. The verb within the poem is cry but I changed it to squeal to imitate the sound of the bird.

369: Shouha Kuroyanagi (1727-1772) a poet and student of Buson. Buson evidently met him after returning from Kagawa Prefecture (named Sanuki during Buson’s time) at a haiku gathering near To-i Temple at Yamabuki Street. This poem appears to have been written during one of their haiku gatherings.

372: Ukawa can refer to a river for cormorant fishing, or can be the actual name of a river that is between Nagoya and Kyoto. In this haiku it is most likely the first definition.

373: Tomoshi was a way of hunting deer with torches at night.

374: A type of discipline where monks would stay inside for 100 days chanting and practicing Zen meditation. Kokoro means heart/spirit/mind. The idea within the poem is that writing calligraphy for 100 days has made the mind or spirit great.

376: Keishi Tennogiya (Tomijuro Nakamura) 1719-1786, a famous kabuki actor who portrayed women. Also the opening line of the poem is quoting from the Manyoshu.

377: Ogawa could also be pronounced Ogogawa. The meaning here is difficult. The poem could be referring to the Kamogawa River in Kyoto in which case Ogawa is a no longer used nickname for the river, or it could be the name of a river in Nara. Ogawa could also just mean a small river, or could be the name of a stream.

380: Fijitsuna Aoto was another name for Zaemon Aoto. A famous story written in “Taihei Ki volume 35 (Taihei Ki was a 40 volume collection first published in 1371 and was translated by Dr. Helen Craig McCullough), was about Zaemon Aoto, who made somebody buy a 500 yen torch to search for 100 yen dropped in a river.

Zenigame, spotted turtle. The spotted turtle’s shell looks like the half-yen coin that was in circulation during the Edo Era.

382: Shimizu: spring water from mountains.

384: Hirugao: this could be translated either as morning glory or bind weed. Also one ri is about four kilometers or two miles.

389: Fukigara: Shredded tobacco, flaked tobacco, cigarette butts.
391: Kouhone: a species of waterlily, Japanese spatterdock or candock. Divided in two it was used as a medicine and as a dye.

395: Shubin was a monk who competed with Kukai (774-835), also known as Kobo Daishi, the monk who founded the Shingonshu Buddhist sect, in a prayer for rain and was defeated.

396: Yomizu toru: drawing water into the rice paddies at night.

399: Kawataro was another name for the Kappa, a mythical half-turtle, half-human trickster figure who had a bowl of water on his head and loved eating cucumbers.

402: Adabana: non fruit bearing flowers, meaningless flowers, vanity

403: Hosoi obi: Basho’s Narrow Belt. Matsuo Basho wore the Hosoi Obi belt after his travels of “The Narrow Road to the Deep North,” which became the name of his travelogue published in 1702.

405: Amazake: sweet sake drank in summer to forget the heat.

407: Matsugaoka: a town in Kamakura noted for Tokei-ji Temple. Tokei-ji was a temple that functioned as a refuge for women who were seeking release from marriage. Also the poem puns on the word “ama,” which sounds like the word for sweet and for nun in Japanese.

408: This poem is based upon a poem in Santaishi by Li She or Risho (773-831). “Idly spending my days, I found spring was ending. Climbing a mountain I met a monk and talked joyously.” This poem was also referenced by Basho.

Hackberry Tree, a tree with widely spread leaves that was prized for its shade.

409: The Daibutsu was about a 60 foot metal statue at Hoko-ji Temple, a prince resident temple, in the Higashiyama Ward of Kyoto, and was commissioned by Hideyoshi Toyotomi, a famous general who started as a pheasant and worked his way up the ranks. Later in life Toyotomi became a famous patron of arts.

This poem also refers to the following haiku by Basho:

Stillness
pierces the rocks —
the cicada’s voice

410: Uma no koku, the hour of the horse, was from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. The traditional Chinese way of measuring time divided the day into 12 hours, each one named after a zodiac sign.
412: Kakegou: a sachet of incense that was normally placed in a pocket. However, in this poem it appears to have been hung on a pillar.

Semigoromo: A feather like thin summer kimono.

414: Sodedatami: a way of folding a kimono in an informal or casual way.

415: Ganto Sunaoka, a painter from Yuki city in Ibaraki Prefecture, a precursor poet of Buson.

“Ari to Miete” is a reference to a poem in the Shin Kokin Wakashu by Sakanoue Korenori (a poet from the early to middle Heian Period) and is about the legendary “hahakigi” tree, which can be seen from far away but not up close.

417: Euchiwa: a fan painted with a picture. In this poem the fan is painted with a picture from the Tale of Onatsu and Seijuuro. In the story, Onatsu was the daughter of an Edo innkeeper and Seijuuro was a servant. Because of the difference in their social status they were not allowed to get married, so they eloped and got caught. Seijuruo was killed and Onatsu went insane. Within this poem, the couple are both on the fan, which both reveals their sad story and at the same time unites them, which was my way of dealing with the phrase, “sore mo” or “here too.”

420: Goine: Festival during the month of July of the Goin-sha, Goin carts, which is one of the former names for Yasaka-jingu Shrine. The book, Kakemeguru Omoi (Yosa Buson: On the Wings of Art) contains reproductions of some of the artwork that Buson painted for festival carts.

Makuzahahara: a terrace at the foot of Mt. Higashiyama in Kyoto’s Pillow Ward.

421: Kaji was the name of the female owner of the teahouse that artists and writers visited because of its elegant name that was located south of the gateway of Gion-jinja Shrine during the middle of the Edo Era.

422: Jyouzan Ishikawa: a composer of Chinese poems from Mikawa (currently the eastern part of Aichi Prefecture) who retired at Shisando in Ichijouji Village, Kyoto. Jouzan composed a poem that swore that he would never enter Kyoto by crossing over Semi River, which flows into Kamogawa River and is located south of Shimogamo Shrine.

425: The word tayori here is a little confusing. Tayori can mean 1, a letter; 2, dependance, help, support; 3, tie, relationship, link. Here, instead of letter I used invitation, a type of letter, to try to tie the poem back to its introduction.

Kawayuka: a balcony constructed in summer over a river, so that the cool of the river can act as a natural air-conditioner.
429: Yoburi: to catch river fish while waving a torch in a summer night.

430: Mizu kamuri: Literally spraying water. Here I translated it as splash more for the effect of the net hitting the water.

431: Kikorai to iu: a quote from a poem titled “Returning Home” by Tao Yuanming. The phrase also means to quit one’s job and return to one’s hometown.

433: Kedowaki Dono: was another name for Taira no Norimori. Because Norimori lived by the side of the great Rokuhara Gate (located east of the Kamogawa River in Kyoto between Gojou and Shichijou) where the Taira family resided, he was called Kadowaki Dono. In “The Tale of Heike” Kedowaki asks his older brother, Kiyomori, to save his son-in-law, Naritsune Fujiwara, by letting him stay at his house.

435: Hara ashiki sou: a monk who has a temper that has a short, hot temper, who is irritable, or grumpy. This is also a reference from Kenko Houshi’s “Essays on Idleness” (Tsure zure gusa) essay number 45.

Semai: was a national holiday that took place in August, where rice was given to poor monks.

436: Misunoko: parched barely flour. This was believed to have good health affects because people’s stomachs were thought to have been weakened by the summer heat.

439: Youshuu: the Japanese spelling of the Chinese city Yangzhan in Jiangsu Providence. Yangzhan was the capital of southern China around 581 BC, and was a wealthy merchant city famous for its poetry and arts. Also Marco Polo claimed to be an official administering salt under the Mongol emperor Kubilai Khan around 1282-1287.

440: Ame to naru koi: A quote from the 19th legend of “Monzen” A 60 volume set of books compiled around 530 A.D. of Chinese prose and poetry that also was influential on Japanese literature. The volumes contain about 100 writers and span around a 1000 year time period from the Zhou to the Northern and Southern Dynasties.

441: Shitaku: the Japanese spelling for the Chinese poet’s name, Tao Yuan, and a reference to a poem by him about how when the ground is full of water in spring, in summer there are many strangely shaped clouds.

443: Hageyama: a bald mountain or a denuded mountain. This could also be a place name, Mt. Hageyama, which is located either in Aichi or Hogo prefectures.

446: Soukan Yamazaki (1465-1553) was the pen named of Norishige Shina, a famous poet who was an early writer of haiku. For several years he travelled never staying more than one night at any place. Finally he settled down for the last 25 years of his life at Kanonji Temple in what is now Kagawa Prefecture. His hermitage is known as “Ichiya An” or “The One Night Hermitage.”
Kuzumizu was a summer drink made from cooled arrowroot gruel.

449: Houkoji: The Japanese name for Layman Pang (740-808) together with his wife and daughter was a famous lay practitioner of Zen Buddhism. Him and his daughter, Lingzhao (762-808), often went on pilgrimages together and often debated each other about Buddhist scriptures. Lingzhao usually won these debates. Layman Pang visited many temples and made a bamboo pillow to sit on, and eventually had his daughter sell the pillow.

Chikufujin: a folded bamboo pillow held so one can cool off in the summer night.

451: Tokoroten: agar, a gelatin substance derived from seaweed, noodles, also known as gelidium jelly. This poem is also referencing a poem by Li Po, “The Cataract in View.”

452: Masaoka Shiki, the famous haiku poet from the Meiji Era, wrote that this poem revealed Buson’s keen eye. Itsukushima Shrine is located on Miyajima Island.

453: Natsukagura: Natsu is summer and kagura is the name of ancient sacred music and dance.

454: Misogi, summer purification, is a washing ritual that now takes place on June 30th. Negide: a Shinto priest, usually, of the second rank.

457; The line Aki Kaze Soyogu references a poem by Fujiwara no Ietaka (1158-May 5, 1237) a Kamakura waka poet whose poems are in the Shinchokusen Wakashu. He also was related by marriage to Jakuren.
Autumn

463: The image within this poem is that of lifting up a lantern as if looking out for a caller — here most likely the dead friends. Dew here represents the idea of a fleeting life, or the shortness of life...

466: This poem is a description of the early autumn festival, the Festival of the Weaver (Sirius) also known as Tanabata. Two stars named Princess Orihime (Vega) and Prince Hikoboshi (Altar) can only meet on Tanabata over the Milky Way. Girls offer 5 colored threads during this festival to improve their art skills. So the image within this poem is that of the two stars meeting and young women offering colorful strings to them.

467: This poem is referring to a ceremony that was held on September 6th, where people went into other people’s houses to see women and sacred tools. One place famous for this ceremony was Ujiyamada area in Ise.

468: The actual word “ajikina” was means without flavor. Furthermore, the mosquito net would have been used for covering the dead. This poem is also punning on the word “Adikina,” which was a ceremony honoring the ancestors and was originally held on New Year’s Day but was changed to September 15th (the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month) in the Kanto area by Buson’s time.

469: Tamadana or spirit shelf is a small room shrine for ancestors that sits on a shelf.

470: Daimonji is a festival in Kyoto that currently takes place on August 16 where the letter “大” is set on fire on the side of a mountain.

473: This poem was commissioned for Buson to write a poem commemorating the paintings of Hanabusa Ichou, an Edo era painter, calligrapher and poet.

476: There are a couple of meanings within this poem. First Hachijou is a measurement of about 20 yards. The island Hashijou took its name from the bolts of silk that it produces measuring 20 yards long. In the poem the lightening could be suspended for 20 yards in the sky, or it could be the yellow silk that is suspended in the sky to dry and looking like bolts of lightening.

480: Shunya was a pseudonym for Buson’s student, Kito.

488: Ominaeshi translates as “Golden Lace” a type of flower, however a literal translation would read “The Prostitute Flower.” Some older meanings of the word are a high ranking noble woman, or the name of a tragic women figure, who killed herself when she thought that she was going to be abandoned. After her suicide she turned into the “golden lace” flower. When her former husband came to her grave, he went to pick one of the flowers to remember her by. But in the wind the flowers kept bending away from him. He took this as a sign that even in death she was trying to avoid him, and he killed himself too.
500: Benkei Mushashibou (1155–1189): A famous warrior-monk known for his loyalty and honor who served under Minamoto no Yoshitsune. There are many stories about his exploits, including the Noh play Ataka, and a kabuki adaption of the same play.

506: Kataru here is written in hiragana so it could have two possible meanings: to call/chant/or invoke; or to swindle

521: This poem is referring to a line from Sei Shonagon’s Pillow Book, “The bagworm is crying please come here.” However, the bagworm does not make any sound and it is thought that Sei Shonagon (966 - 1017) was actually referring to a type of cricket.

530: Tadanori: Taira no Tadanori, the brother of the clan head Taira no Kiyomori, and one of the generals in the Genpei War fought against the Minamoto clan. A poem by him was found in his quiver after his death: “Were I still traveling as night falls, making a sheltering tree an inn, would my host tonight be the blossoms themselves?”

532: Like the man in the moon, the Japanese say there is a rabbit making mochi (rice cakes) in the moon.

540: Gyokuzan: the name of an ancient emperor known for his elegance.

541: A flower guard is a talesman for guarding against thieves.

543: While Ganji is a name, the word before it is “Tandai” which could mean a high monk, a monk who judges the validity of both koan questions and answers, a general, or an army headquarters.

551: Shinshi is a pen name for Kikaku Takara (1661-1707) who was one of Basho’s 12 students.

556: Sarumaru Daifu is a legendary poet from the early Heian Era whose poems appear in the Kokin Wakashu. There are doubts as to whether Sarumaru no Daifu existed and some consider him to be Prince Yamashiro no Oe.

562: The idea here is that because the autumn wind has kept the book dry it has not gotten damp from humidity and so it hasn’t been worm eaten.

565: Tagawa Ichiku (1710-1760) a poet from the school of Kensho Matsushiki which revived a the style of poetry made by Basho. Mukai Kyorai was a poet who worked with Nozawa Buncho to edit Basho’s school anthology “Monkey’s Raincoat” in 1689. This poem also contains two puns in that the first character or letter of Kyorai (去, to go) is used as the verb and the first character of Ishiku (移 to pass) is also used as the verb.
572: The pun in this poem is over the character “子” which means child or children, it is also the last character in scarecrow which would literally translate as “Frightening Mountain Child.”

577: One of the meanings of buckwheat flowers is “sake for bees” meaning that bees like the flowers as much as people like drinking sake.

578: This poem is a type of “Ki kasanari,” that is a poem using two set poetry phrases. Miyagi no no hagi is one and Sarashina no soba is another. Miyagi is near Sendai and Sarashina is in Nagano, both of these places are on the Tohoku road and were visited by Basho.

581: Usually I have not been translating proper nouns, but in order to understand the puns in poem the name “Kurodani” (Black Valley) “Shirokawa” (White River) need to be translated. Kurodani is a place in Kyoto.

582: Natsukashii can mean nostalgic, affectionate longing, or longing and can also be used to express the feeling of having/seeing/doing something after a long time. Furthermore, the idea here is that asters grew out of, or came from, wild chamomiles (literally in Japanese, wild chrysanthemums).

585: Mt. Kaigane, a place name, also a set phrase in a “Uta Makura” that is a common word or theme used in waka, haiku and tanka. The literal meaning of the first two characters is heroic.

590: Chikukei (1706-1758) a pen name for a painter (Kien Yamagisawa) who was one of the pioneers of Japanese literati painting. Tango was a providence and is now part of Kyoto Prefecture.

599: Jizou: Buddhist guardian of travelers and dead children, here the statue has an oily shine because it has been anointed by a worshiper.

600: Nara, the capital before Kyoto, is famous for its stone lamps.

601: The word monk does not appear in the original. I have added the word based on an interpretation by Dr. Harukiko Kindaichi.

603: Maruyama Okyo (1733-1795) one of the most influential painters of the Edo Era in Kyoto of the Shijo school. Maruyama was not only well versed in Japanese painting but also in Chinese and Western techniques.

604: Kouga is an old name of a town located in modern Shiga Prefecture that is famous for its school of Ninjas.
Kinuta — a mallet used for pounding or fulling cloth to bring out its luster. Also the name of a classical song for koto and samisen by Sayama Kenshou (died 1694) which imitates the rhythm of the pounding.

There are several layers of meaning within this poem. The word uki could be cold or sad. Then uta means song if one Kanji is used or hit or slap if a different Kanji is used. Also the mallet is used to hit cloth, and the samisen is played with a large pick, which sort of “slaps” the strings.

The horn letter “֯” that is the letter that means horn is thought to be similar in shape to a cow’s horn. It was written about in the book “Tsurezuregusa” or “Essays in Idleness” by Yoshida Kenko (1283-1350).

The Cow Festival takes place in Western Kyoto and is currently held on October 12th.

The person or legend this poem refers to is Huai Su (Soukaiso in Japanese) a Tang Dynasty monk and calligrapher (737-799) who planted banana trees in the courtyard of the temple he lived and used the laves to practice on because he couldn’t afford paper to write on, and thus could write as much as he liked. Basho, Matsuo: a poet whose last name means banana because he planted a banana tree by his hut. The last line of the haiku could therefore be either a reference to Matsuo Basho or to banana plants themselves. This poem also pairs Basho with Huai Su.

Nochi no tsuki, literally the “after moon,” is the first full moon after the harvest moon, which is also called the hunter’s moon.

The thirteen nights here is referring to the hunter’s moon just before it is full.

To do Moon Viewing (viewing the harvest moon) the right way in Japan, one had to also set offerings to, and then admire the moon approximately one month later. This time it was not the full moon of the 15th night which received special attention, but the moon of the 13th night (Jusanya 十三夜), which is very large, but not quite full. This imperfect moon, appealed more strongly to Japanese (as opposed to Chinese) aesthetic sensibilities. This practice started in the Heian Period.

Fushimi: one of the seven wards of Kyoto. The meaning of the place name is “Hidden water,” or “underground water.” The idea of the poem is that the chrysanthemums have been able to bloom during the drought because of the underground water. Also “marau” is a verb which means to receive a gift.

This poem refers to a Noh play, "Makurajido" and is about a Chinese emperor’s retainer, who accidentally steps on the emperor’s pillow. Because of this the retainer is exiled to Mt. Rekken with the pillow he stepped on. On the pillow were written words, which the retainer writes on the leaves of the numerous chrysanthemums on the mountain. When the dew and rain would wash away the words, he saved the water and drank...
it. Drinking the magic chrysanthemum water, revives his youth and keeps him alive for 700 years. He eventually gives the water to Emperor Wei as a sign of atonement.

Yamaga is a place in Kyoto.

Furthermore there is the legend, "The life of the writing brush is determined by the sun, the life of ink by the moon, and the life of the ink stone by the passing of ages. An ink stone is a rectangular stone dish with a sloping interior for an ink-stick to be rubbed against the slope in water to produce the ink (sumi) used in calligraphy. Finally, in this poem there are two symbols of longevity, the chrysanthemum dew and the ink stone, which is what Buson is wishing for his old master.

629: Touko mairan is a competition in which two people throw or drop flowers into a vase.

632: Chrysanthemums are both the crest of the imperial family, and a flower that is difficult to grow. The idea of the poem is that though the village is poor they take the time to grow chrysanthemums, thus showing how they are loyal to the emperor.

634: Yakko is a word meaning servant, valet, footman, clown, guy and is usually used in a derogatory manner. Also I changed the first chrysanthemums into the word flowers to avoid repetition.

635: Momiji can mean maple leaves, autumn leaves or autumnal foliage.

639: Aitzu is now part of Western Fukushima Prefecture.

641: Komachi means beautiful woman. The word itself comes from a legendary Heian court poet, Ono no Komachi who was famous for romantic poetry.

640: As the poem here is referring to Suma Temple, I have added the word temple into the translation. The temple is part of the Shingon Sect and houses a famous flute — the Aoba Flute. There are also monuments to Basho, Matsuoka and Buson at the temple.

643: Mogami River is in Yamagata Prefecture and is famous for its river cruises where the boatman sings traditional songs.

646: Saru can mean monkey, mimic, or sly one. I have combined the meanings into sly monkey for this poem because it would indicate that the rabbit is sly like a monkey.

650: Kita Makura, north pillow or head to the north, means that the servant is dead and has been laid out in Buddhist custom.

651: Renga or Renka is linked verse usually done by a group of poets. One poet will write three lines of 5/7/5 and the next will write two lines of 7/7 and then the next will
write 5/7/5, and so on until the group decides to stop. Also the broken edge of the moon could be translated as crescent moon.

653: Yowa could be translated as midnight or the dead of night. Furthermore, “Chichi” is the word for father, it is also the sound of the young mice crying.

660: Umemodoki — Japanese Winterberry, a plant used in bonsai which sprouts many bright red berries in autumn.

662: A foot high tree decorated with 5 colors. In Aomori and Iwate this was a courtship custom — a man placed a decorated tree by the gate of a woman’s house that the man wanted to marry as a proposal.

665: Shouro - a type of edible mushroom which would translate as “pine dew.” The red-fungus is a type of soil bacteria which evidently prevents the pine-dew mushroom from growing.

666: Mukago are small bulbs on wild yam vines. The line “Mi ni amaritaru” is originally from a poem in the “Kokin Wakashu”. In the original the line reads “an undeserved honor” but in this poem Buson has replaced the word honor “mi” with the word winnowing fork “mi”.

668: Eshin — Eshin-in Temple, which used to be called Ryusen-ji. It is said to have been reestablished in the middle of the Heian period by the Buddhist priest Genshin, the writer of “Oujoyoshu.” Genshin later takes the name of Eshin, the temple he stayed at. Mida is a version of Amida Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Light.

672: Kakari Udo has two meanings; one, a guest who has been asked to stay; two, a guest who sponges off the host. Furthermore, yoki means good quality and which I have loosely translated as expensive.

673: Master could be Buson’s original teacher, Soua, or it could be a reference to Basho who did many walking poetry tours of north Japan.

674: Rakutou, the Basho Hermitage, is in Kampukuji Temple complex located east of the Kamo-gawa river in Eastern Kyoto. The idea is that the rain clouds are starting from Rakutou and are moving westward over Kyoto.
Winter Haiku

676: Eboshi: a type of hat worn by Shinto Priests — originally worn to indicate a man who had passed his coming of age ceremony. It was usually lacquered and very rarely worn outside of rituals.


680: Buson in a letter to Kito explains that “Basa” is the sound made by wind and failing rain hitting something thin.

681: This poem refers to the following poem by Iio or Ino Sogi (1421-1502), a Zen monk who was a leader in writing Renka, or linked verse:

At my hermitage
the world falls —
more early winter rain

The word world within this poem could also be translated as society, or ancient/old society. Furthermore, Buson’s poem also refers to the following poem by Matsuo Basho who was quoting Sogi’s poem:

The world is still falling —
more early winter rain
at Sogi’s Hermitage

Finally Buson is also referring to a poem by Kondo Joko (died 1708), Basho’s first pupil, a samurai who became a monk, and who welcomed Basho back after Basho’s journey in Tohoku.

The ancient people’s
night was also like this —
windy and cold

The above poem is from Joko’s book, “Nochi no tabi” or “Later Travels.”

683: Takaosan Mountain located in Hachiouji is closely associated with Tengu, a minor God, and the God Daitensu Naisuha — a Buddhist temple, Takaosan Yakuin Yukiji, is on the mountain. In Shinto it is believed that during the 10th lunar month (December) that all of the Gods leave their shrines and visit the Izumo shrine, located in Taisha on the northwest coast facing Korea. This shrine is believed to be the oldest in Japan. Finally this time is known as “The Godless Month.”

The 10th Night: In Joudoshu Temple people would stay up praying from the 5th night of the 10th lunar month (December) to the morning of the 15th.

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Translated by Allan Persinger
Ransetsu Hattori was a haiku poet, 1654 — November 6th 1707, and one of the ten major students under Matsuo Basho. A famous haiku by him is:

A leaf falls —
damn the people are scattered
in the wind.

The last line is butterbur flowers or bog rhubarb flowers, but since the word bloom occurs earlier I have omitted the word flower.

Gozanshu refers to “The Five Mountain System” or more specifically to a group of Zen temples built from 1127-1279 and to the the monks of these five most important mountains. The term mountain here refers to temple or monastery because many monasteries were built on isolated mountains. Also I have changed the term “the populace of Gozan” to the monks to refer back to the idea of it being a temple.

The end image here is literally the plovers walk in a flat horizontal line, with the twist being that they are walking through the waves unmoved or disturbed.

A kotatsu is a low heated table, usually with a blanket that fits between the frame and the table top, used in winter to keep the legs warm.

Yowa no fuyu literary translated as the dead of or middle of night in winter or the midnight of winter.

Hikyaku is a courier, a postal carrier, or messenger, so the poem could also read ‘In withered grasses / a courier fox / passes by.’

Ikidue is a palanquin bearer’s resting staff. Also the characters “礫” (stone) and “火” (fire) when directly combined together can mean flint or a flash or spark of fire.

Konpukuji Temple. The main temple where Basho’s grave is associated is Henko-zan Ganjoji Temple, not Konpukuji, however in temple complexes each temple building has its own name.

The use of the phrase ‘western wind’ refers to autumn winds whereas the phrase ‘eastern wind’ refers to spring winds. So in this poem the fallen leaves are being blown towards spring.

Hakama is a traditional clothing originally only worn by men. It is tied at the waist and falls to the ankles. There are two types of Hakama, divided and undivided.

Suribachi are earthenware mortars that are glazed on the outside. The inside of the bowl has a ridged pattern to facilitate grinding.
774 The Kamo Clan is from Northwestern Kyoto and traces its roots to the Yayoi period (300 BC to 300 AD).

774: A furoshiki is a square of cotton or silk cloth used for carrying obento boxes (square lacquered boxes that stack upon each other used for lunch boxes).
775: Yoshino is a town near Nara famous for cherry trees; it is also the name for the cherry tree from the town.

777: Natto is a food made of fermented or corrupted soya beans. The beans become brown with a viscous white coating of slime and have a slight musky aroma. It is a common staple eaten with rice at breakfast.

779: the last line is the rope of the well-bucket.

781: Naniwa is the ancient or classical name for Osaka.

789: This poem refers to a legend of an old woman throwing away paper clothes.

790: Ukiyoe is a type of art which translates as fleeting or floating world and refers to the transitory nature of life. Usually the subjects were prostitutes, geisha and kabuki actors as this lifestyle was thought of being separated from the responsibilities of the everyday. Usually these were woodblock prints and were becoming very popular around Buson’s lifetime and they were able to be mass produced, and therefore affordable.

792: Hasedera is a temple of the Jodo sect, famous for its statue of Kannon Buddha.

793: Kaomise is for a couple in an arranged marriage to meet for the first time.

796: Soga Jasoku was a painter of the Soga school who lived around 1424.

805: Ekisui, one of the three major rivers in China, is also the first word in the title of an anonymous novel, *Ekisui Rembeiroku*, about Yoshinaka (whose name can also be pronounced Yoshihisa) Kira. The novel is about one of the most famous historical samurai vendettas known as *The Forty Seven Ronin*. During a visit of the emperor to Edo Castle Kira’s student Asano Naganori pulled his sword and tried to kill Kira. When this failed Asano was ordered to commit seppuku. Later Asano’s 47 retainers break into Kira’s residence and killed him. In most novels Kira is the villian and Asano is the hero.

812: an ono can either be translated as an axe or a hatchet.

813: Hachitataki refers to a begging priest who goes about beating an iron bowl.

815: Ki no hashi refers to a worthless person, the second line of this poem is parallel to the opening. A stricter translation would read:
A worthless person
and a worthless monk
begging by beating his bowl

818: Sainen was a popular name given to a low ranking priest.

819: Ohotaki is a festival where bonfires are lit at shrines in Kyoto during the 11th lunar month.

821: This poem is referring to a proverb: If you wear tabi socks while sleeping you cannot be with your parents when they die. A tabi sock is like a mitten with one sleeve for the big, or parent, toe and the other sleeve for the smaller, or child, toes. The tabi is divided to wear with the traditional wooden sandal, the getta.

822: a katana is the samurai sword. In this poem the speaker is shackled inside the house, I’ve added the word outside for clarification.

826: Kankudori is a set haiku phrase which means birds suffering in the cold. There is also a pun here on kankodori, an alternate for hototogisu which means cuckoo.

828: Kami busuma is a paper sack stuffed with straw and used as a futon.

831: The ringing of the pots is referring back to begging by beating the iron bowl. The idea within the poem then is that the narrator is detestable for not answering his neighbor's begging for food.

850: Kami no machi, which translates as the Emperor’s City, is a name for Kyoto. However, it can also refer to Chogen — a famous red-light area in Kyoto’s Chogon district.

853: The Five Virtues are part of Confucian philosophy and are: Ren-charity and humanity; Yi-honesty and uprightness; Zhi-knowledge; Xin-faithfulness and integrity; and Li-correct behavior. Kusurigui means eating meat for winter nourishment or eating meat for medical reasons. Part of Li, correct behavior, would be eating the correct foods.

857: Tanukine is to pretend or feign sleep, however a tanuki is a type of raccoon, so the idea here is similar to playing possum.

861: Shiwazu is the 12th lunar month, either January or February in the Edo calendar. Also Rashomon Gate, built in 786, was the grand gate for southern Kyoto. It was 106 feet wide by 26 feet high, with a 75-foot stone wall and topped by a ridge-pole. By the 12th century it had fallen into disrepair and had become an unsavory place, with a reputation as a hideout for thieves.
People would abandon corpses and unwanted babies at the gate. Nothing of the gate remains today.

864: Seta is a small town in Shiga Prefecture. It was also customary in Japan for loans to come due on new year’s day. So the Kanebikyaku, or money courier (what I’ve translated as bill collector) is making the rounds for everybody to pay their debt.

868: The introduction to the poem is referring to a haiku by Matsuo Basho.
Education

Ph.D. English-Creative Writing Ph.D. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Areas of Study: Literature of Travel and Isolation
The American Voice: Poetry from Walt Whitman to Sherman Alexie
Japanese Literature in Translation

Teaching Certificate in English as a Foreign Language, English Language Services
10/1995-12/1995

MA, English-Creative Writing, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
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Work Experience

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Graduate Teaching Assistant-Department of English

Milwaukee Area Technical College
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Adjunct English Lecturer-Department of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Matsuyama University
English Lecturer-Department of Economics

Shigoku Gakuin University
English Lecturer-Department of English

Booz Allen Hamilton
King Faisal Naval Academy
English Lecturer

Presentations

• Presentation titled "Over the Snickering Cat Sills" Consequentiality: Global Political and Social Order Expanding Human Consciousness Conference, Prague, Czech Republic, 2006
• Presentation titled "The Poets of Milwaukee"-A one hour TV documentary on me as a Milwaukee poet, sponsored by The Shepherd and Milwaukee Area Technical College and aired on the Milwaukee Cable Access Channel, 1987

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Awards

- The Association of Writers and Writing Programs Award Selection for the poem "Purpose (Matsuyama Japan)." AWP, 2011
- War Poetry Contest Honorable Mention for the poem "The Patriotic Farmer." Winning Writers Inc., 2008
- War Poetry Contest Third Place for the poem "The Sacrifice." Winning Writers Inc., 2005
- First Place Hachimori Photo Contest (Hachimori, Akita, Japan) for the photograph titled "Shrine and Seagulls," 1991
- The Cole Younger Poet's Award for the poem "Oliver Wendell Holmes' Singing Barn." University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1989
- The American Poet's Award for the poem "Joe Mathius." The Academy of American Poets, 1989

Translations

- Yosa Buson: Five Haiku in Ken *Again, 2010
- Yosa Buson: "In Temple Lodgings and "Fox-fire" in Cicada, 1994
- Raymond Queneau: "The Pig" and "The Mollusk" in Jazz Street, 1985

Poetry, Fiction and Academic Publications

- "The Cherry Blossom" in Poetry Everywhere, 2010-poetry
- "Omega," "The Patriotic Farmer" Award Winning Writers, 2008-poetry
- "Leavings of the Previously Departed," "Guilt" Ken* Again, 2007-poetry
- "Why Mr. Nice is Always So" Poetry Express, 2007-poetry
- "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" Studies in Language and Literature, 2006-essay
- "The Parental Argument," "The Broken Ones, " "There is something Desperate about a Warm November Day" Quill and Ink, 2006-poetry
- "The Rats of Hell" Omega 6, 2006-poetry
- "our little lives float on the winds of Improbability" Dispatch, 2006-poetry
- "The Theater is Closed" English Journal Matsuyama University, 2006-poetry
- "In the mornings of despair" In Our Own Words Vol.6 Anthology, 2005-poetry
- Blake’s ‘London" Studies in Language and Literature, 2004-essay
- "Drifting through Eternity" Facets, 2004-poetry
- "Peeling off Years" Anon, 2003-poetry
- "Blame," "Oliver Wendell Holmes' Singing Barn" Ken*Again, 2003-poetry
- "Portrait of a Somali Woman," "Cerunnum's May Dance," "Blackholes," and "I’ve come to say Good-bye" Moongate, 2002-poetry
- "Post Meditations Three and Five" The Free Verse Journal, 2001-poetry
- "Murasaki's Maid" Proze-Ax, 2000-poetry
- "Impaled" and "In unsuspected silver rooms 3" Underworld, 2000-poetry
- "Cat Paws" and "The Epic" Ken*Again, 2000-poetry
- "Expectations" The Adirondack Review, 2000-poetry
- "Tedium" and "The eater of dreams" Widethinker.com, 2000-poetry
- "Scenes of Bangkok" Asian Trails, 2000-travel article

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• "In the gutter" The Fairfield Review, 2000-poetry
• "Matsue" Asian Trails, 1999-travel article
• "The Book of Samuel, Book 4" Zimmer-zine, 1999-poetry
• "Post Meditation 6" The American Vendatist, 1999-poetry
• "Frank Temptation" Eternity, 1999-fiction

Editorial Work

Shumei America, Pasadena, CA
- Helped edit forthcoming translation of Mokichi Okada's philosophy titled: The Essential Teachings of Meishusama
- Helped edit forthcoming translation of the Miho Institute of Aesthetics brochure describing its April 2012 opening, the philosophy the school is based on, school policies, and addresses from the institute's president and principal
- Reader/Grammar Editor for Dr. Nnamdi Elleh's manuscript "The Role of Traditional Architecture in Contemporary Buildings: Readings from Africa and Asia," 1994