



*a portrait of Bashō,
now in the Itsuo Museum,
Ikeda City, Osaka*

MATSUO BASHŌ

TWO HUNDRED SELECTED HAIKU

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[The word **NOTE** in the text indicates a particular crux of translation, which is discussed further. Click on **NOTE** to be taken to the relevant discussion, and then on **RETURN** to come back to the translation.

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INTRODUCTION

This new translation of two hundred haiku by Matsuo Bashō presents many of the finest poems he ever wrote, from a collection of nearly a thousand; and the translation builds upon the foundations established by the version of his travelogue *Oku no hosomichi* (*The Narrow Road to the Deep North*), which appeared on this site in 2004. The rendering of *Oku no hosomichi* into English confronted, quite deliberately, a fundamental question in literary translation: to what extent, if any, might it be possible to translate from a language of which one had little or no knowledge? Would it be simply impossible? Or would such a version have to rely upon so many extraneous aids (other translations, commentaries, dictionaries, grammars, thesauruses, native speakers, scholars) as to drown any vibrant individual voice in what would essentially be the translation of a grey collective? And if these supports were unavailable, or lacking, would such a text inevitably have to be loose paraphrase or imitation or re-composition because the richness and subtlety of the original had not been grasped?

It is for individual readers to judge the successes and failures of that avowedly experimental translation of *Oku no hosomichi* which appeared four years ago. But the experiment is now developed further in this new collection of Bashō's *haiku*, selected from the nearly three decades of his literary career. The term *haiku*, and its relationship to two closely associated terms, *hokku* and *haibun*, are clarified in a separate section; but here, the basic features of Bashō's poems in this mode are worth summarising briefly. They are very short, extraordinarily condensed and concentrated poems, almost always following a tripartite 5-7-5 syllabic pattern, and presenting a distilled moment of perception, very often of the natural world but also sometimes of domestic or personal life. They capture things in the unique moment of their happening or being, celebrating their unequivocal 'this-ness'. A frog leaps into a pond, a water jar cracks in a freezing night, waves of heat shimmer about a paper robe, a cricket chirps beneath a helmet, a night-heron cries in the darkness: these moments are held frozen, immune to both easy symbolisation and to the flow of time. The reality of their presentness is absolute.

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In translating such poems into what I hope is a vibrant and persuasive English, three features of Bashō's original are worth exploring in a little detail:

syllabic rhythm

as indicated above, Bashō's *haiku* almost always follow a 5-7-5 syllabic pattern; and there is often an assumption that this pattern can be easily translated into a similar syllabic count in English. Yet, as David Landis Barnhill has pointed out [see Further Reading], Japanese 'syllables' are both shorter and more uniform than in English, most of them comprising simply a consonant and a vowel. The acoustic world evoked by Bashō's *haiku*, as a result, has a simpler, more regular cadence because of the similarity between each sound. A 5-7-5 syllabic pattern, moreover, is not native to English poetry. The metrical units most common in English verse are either of two or of three syllables, with an overwhelming emphasis upon the two-syllabled iamb, a weak beat followed by a strong beat (^ -). It is not easy to see, at first sight, how such twos can be readily reconciled with the fives and sevens of the original.

Possibly because of these difficulties, few contemporary translators try to reproduce the exact 5-7-5 pattern in English. Some opt for 4-6-4 or 5-8-3 or 3-7-6, or any pattern where the second section is longer than the first and third. Some do not worry even about relative length, making all three sections the same, or the second actually shorter than the other two. Such variations, however, have an arbitrary air about them, as if the *form* in which Bashō is speaking is somehow marginal, rather than intrinsic, to what he is saying. It is for this reason that the translation here retains the 5-7-5 syllabic pattern of the original, except on the very rare occasions when Bashō himself varies the pattern, and the English follows his variation. I have tried to sustain, rather than erode, the natural rhythms of English in this syllabic fidelity; but only individual readers can determine with what success.

lineation

it is not always realised that, in Japanese script, Bashō's *haiku* are presented, not as three horizontal separate lines, but as one continuous vertical line, read from top to bottom. As a result, some translators have suggested, his *haiku* should not be set in multiple lines, because pre-

modern Japanese poets had no concept of lineation as a poetic device. And yet, as Makoto Ueda [see Further Reading] cogently argues,

to insist that a hokku should be a one-line poem in English because the original Japanese poet had no sense of lineation is tantamount to insisting that no English grammatical article, such as “a” or “the”, should be used in translating Japanese sentences because the Japanese language includes no concept of articles.

Moreover, even in the single continuous line, Japanese readers are aware of the tripartite structuring embedded in it. It is for these reasons that I have chosen to present the *haiku* in three distinct lines, but in an indented and overlapping visual pattern, rather than a clean and straightforward justification at a left-hand margin. The difference in impact between the linear, almost military precision of

Autumn passing now.
Through the slow drizzling of rain,
The shape of the moon.

and the more fluid connectedness of

autumn passing now ...
through the slow drizzling of rain
the shape of the moon

will be very apparent.

punctuation and capitalisation

in order to maintain the rhythmic flow and suggestiveness of Bashō's original, I have tried to punctuate as sparingly as possible, and then often with marks such as the dash (–) or ellipses (...), rather than the more widely used forms of comma, colon, semi-colon, full stop. All Bashō's *haiku* contain what is known as a *kireji*, or ‘cutting word’, which is often indicated in English versions by an exclamation mark. Although I have used this particular form of punctuation occasionally, it has generally seemed too rhetorical and melodramatic in visual and emotional impact for any broader application. The almost imperceptible pause of wonder that the *kireji* signals is better represented by – or

Similarly, the typographical device of capitalisation seems intrusive, directing response rather than allowing the resonance of the original to be

heard. Beginning a *haiku* with a capital letter and ending it with a full stop suggests that the perception is contained solely and authoritatively within the seventeen syllables of the poem. But in truth, Bashō's *haiku* begin long before the first syllable is uttered, just as they sound long after the seventeenth syllable has been heard.

The two hundred *haiku* in this collection are presented chronologically, from the earliest, composed in 1666, to the last *haiku* Bashō ever wrote, in the autumn of 1694. Each poem is presented in a similar format:

the number in the sequence
the period of composition
a Romanised version of the Japanese characters
a completely literal rendering that follows the original
ordering of the Japanese words exactly
the final translation into English.

A typical presentation therefore looks like this:

85

[Summer 1689]

shizukasa ya / iwa ni shimiuru / semi no koe
[stillness! / rock into penetrate / cicada's voice]

the utter silence ...
cutting through the very stone
a cicada's rasp

Where Bashō gives a title or other explanatory material for a *haiku*, this is presented after the period of composition. A **NOTE** against a line or word indicates further discussion of a particular issue in translation, which can be accessed by clicking on **NOTE**.

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Where the versions of *haiku* presented four years ago in my translation of *Oku no hosomichi* were lacking, I hope this new collection will have remedied any faults. Where the earlier versions were successful, I hope I have maintained their effectiveness here. Like any translator of Bashō, I owe thanks to all those many predecessors who have done so much to pave the way, a number of whom are listed in the Further Reading and Links section. But I am particularly indebted to Makoto Ueda and David Landis Barnhill for the word-for-word, literal renderings presented in their editions, and without which, my advance would have been so much more difficult.

Tim Chilcott
May 2008

CHRONOLOGY

- 1644 born in the town of Ueno, in Iga Province, some thirty miles south-east of Kyoto. His father, Matsuo Yozaemon, is probably a low-ranking samurai, but little is known about his mother.
- 1656 his father, who may have been in the service of a local aristocratic family, the Tōdō, dies. Probably by this time, Bashō is also in the service of the family. He develops a close friendship with Tōdō Yoshitada, a boy two years older than him who is already interested in poetry. The two receive their first training in poetic composition together.
- 1662 composes his earliest known *haiku*.
- 1666 Tōdō Yoshitada dies suddenly in his twenty-fifth year – an event that may have shocked Bashō so deeply that he resigned from the service and embarked on a life of wandering.
- 1666-71 no secure evidence about his whereabouts. He may have gone to live in Kyoto, or only visited it occasionally. He continues, however, to write: at least four poems in 1666, thirty-two in 1667, six in 1669, two in 1670, three in 1671.
- 1672 first goes to live in Edo (modern-day Tokyo), and in the next six years becomes more and more known in literary circles, writing *haiku* for anthologies, teaching, and judging poetry competitions. A school of Bashō gradually comes into being.
- 1677-81 seems to have worked for a local waterworks company, while continuing to gain recognition as a poet.
- 1681 his students build a small house for him in Edo, and plant a bashō tree (a variety of banana tree) close by. It grows so well that his house becomes known as ‘the Bashō hut’ and

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- he himself as ‘Master Bashō’, the pen name he adopts for the rest of his life.
- 1682-3 in the winter of 1682, the Bashō hut burns down in a fire that devastates large parts of Edo. Manages nevertheless to supervise the first full-scale anthology of his school, now comprising the work of over a hundred poets. His mother dies, but he remains too poor to be able to travel to her funeral. His students collect donations and provide him with new accommodation.
- 1684 embarks on a journey that results in the first of his travel narratives, *The Journal of a Weatherbeaten Skeleton*.
- 1686 composes what has since become the most famous of all *haiku*, about a frog leaping into a pond.
- 1687 in the winter of 1686-7, meets Sora, a neighbour who is later to become his companion in *Oku no Hosomichi*. Travels to the lake country some fifty miles northeast of Edo, which results in a short travel sketch, *Kashima mōde* (The pilgrimage to Kashima Shrine). Compiles *Atsume ku* (Collected verses), a collection of his work from the past three years. Sets out on another journey to western Japan, which results in *Oi no kobumi* (My knapsack notebook).
- 1688 continues to travel. Writes *Sarashina kikō* (The journal of travel to Sarashina).
- 1689 undertakes the long northern journey which is to result in *Oku no Hosomichi*. He leaves Edo in late spring and draws his journey to a close in Ōgaki five months later, as autumn begins to fall. He walks over twelve hundred miles. More than four years are spent composing, revising and polishing the final version.
- 1690-91 continues to travel and to participate in haikai gatherings, although he is plagued with ill health.
- 1692 another Bashō hut is built for him by his supporters, and he continues to participate in haikai gatherings.

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- 1693 heartbroken at the death of his nephew Tōin, whom he has cared for as a son since 1676. Closes the gate to his residence and refuses to see people altogether, although he later resumes normal social activities.
- 1694 begins planning another westward journey, although his health is failing and he feels his end is drawing near. But he sets out in early summer, carried on a litter. His illness becomes increasingly critical, and in late autumn, on 28 November, he dies. He is just fifty.

A NOTE ON HOKKU, HAIKU, AND HAIBUN

It is worth clarifying briefly the similarities and differences between three terms that readers will often meet in discussion of Bashō's work: *hokku*, *haiku*, and *haibun*.

hokku historically, *hokku* evolved out of a favourite form of fourteenth and fifteenth century Japanese poetry, known as *renga*. *Renga*, literally meaning 'linked poetry', was a sequence of short poems generally written by a team of poets, and following prescribed metrical rules. The *hokku*, literally meaning 'opening verse', was the first and most important part of the sequence, since it prepared the ground for everything that followed. Its syllabic pattern was 5-7-5. Gradually, though, the close link between *hokku* and *renga* became more tenuous, with *hokku* being increasingly regarded as semi-independent, even self-contained verse, no longer initiating a following sequence. This view gained increasing force during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries until the independence of *hokku* was established by the writer Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902).

haiku In order to distinguish it from earlier verse forms, Shiki gave the name *haiku* to this short, independent verse form that stood by itself, and that retained the earlier syllabic pattern of 5-7-5. The name *haiku* became increasingly prevalent during the twentieth century, and is now very widely used, even though (in the case of Bashō's work) it is anachronistically applied. In the interests of accessibility and intelligibility to a twenty-first century audience, however, I use the term *haiku* (rather than *hokku*) throughout the translation.

haibun *haibun* is a kind of poetic-prose, and normally refers to a relatively short piece of *prose*, punctuated by *hokku*. In his *Journal of Bleached Bones in a Field, Knapsack Notebook*,

Sarashina Journal, and *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, Bashō is revealed as the first great *haibun* writer, juxtaposing prose and poetry to persuasive imaginative effect.

1

[1666]

akikaze no / yarido no kuchi ya / togarigoe
[autumn wind's / sliding-door's opening! / piercing-voice] NOTE

the wind of autumn
through the opening of a door...
a cry piercing through

2

[1666-7]

At the home of someone whose child has died

shiroe fusu ya / yo wa sakasama / yuki no take NOTE
[withered bent! / world as-for upside down's / snow's bamboo]

withered and bent low
the whole world turned upside down...
bamboo under snow

3

[1667]

hana ni akanu / nageki ya kochi no / utabukuro NOTE
[blossoms at not-open / grieve! my / poem-bag]

blossoms all around –
I grieve I cannot open
now my poem bag

2

4

[1668-9]

nami no hana to / yuki mo ya mizu no / kaeribana
[wave's blossom as / snow also? water's / returning-flower] NOTE

the waves blossoming...
has snow returned to water,
flowered out of season?

5

[1672]

kumo to hadatsu / tomo ka ya kari no / ikiwakare NOTE
[cloud as separate / friend ! goose's / living-separation]

as clouds drift apart
a wild goose now separates
from his only friend

6

[1679]

sōkai no / nami sake kusashi / kyō no tsuki NOTE
[blue-sea's / wave rice-wine smell / today's moon]

on a sea of blue,
the waves fragrant with rice-wine,
this moon as wine-cup

3

7

[1680-1]

Feelings on a cold night in Fukagawa

ro no koe nami o utte / harawata kōru / yo ya namida NOTE
[oar's voice waves [acc.] hitting / bowels freeze / night! tears]

the squeak of the oars slapping on the waves,
a bowel-freezing night...
and then the crying

8

[1681]

kareeda ni / karasu no tomarikeri / aki no kure
[withered-branch on / crow's is-perched / autumn's evening]

on a withered branch
a crow perches and settles:
evening in autumn

9

[1681]

yūgao no / shiroku yoru no kōka ni / shisoku torite
[evening-face (nom.) / white night's outhouse on / candle hold]

the moonflowers are white
in the night by the outhouse,
candle in my hand

4

10

[1681]

Feelings in my grass-thatched hut

bashō nowaki shite / tarai ni ame o / kiku yo kana NOTE
[banana-plant windstorm doing / tub in rain (acc.) / hear night!]

banana tree in windstorm,
a night of listening to rain
dripping in a tub

11

[1681-3]

The bravery of the noonflower

nuki no waka wa / hirugao karenu / hikage kana
[snow's within as for / noon-face not wither / sunlight!]

even in the snow
the noonflower does not wither –
the light of the sun

12

[1683]

ganjitsu ya / omoeba sabishi / aki no kure
[year's first day! / when-think lonely / autumn's evening]

the new year's first day! ...
yet I pensive and lonely
like autumn's evening

5

13

[1683]

On a painting NOTE

uma bokuboku / ware o e ni miru / natsuno kana
 [horse clip-clop / me (acc.) painting in see / summer-moor!]

clip-clop of a horse –
 I see a painting of me
 on this summer moor

14

[1684-7]

kane kiete / hana no ka wa tsuku / yūbe kana
 [bell disappear / flower's scent as-for strike / evening!]

the bell fades away,
 the flowers' scent is ringing –
 early eventide

15

[1684-7]

musubu yori / haya ha ni hihiku / izumi kana
 [scoop from / quickly teeth in echo / spring!]

just as I scoop it
 at once it rings through my teeth –
 water from a spring

16

[1684-7]

koe sumite / hokuto ni hibiku / kinuta kana
 [voice is-clear / northern-stars to echo / fulling-block]

how clear its sound, an
 echo to the Northern Stars:
 block of wood pounds cloth

17

[1684-94]

chiru hana ya / tori mo odoroku / koto no chiri
 [fall blossoms! / bird also surprised / koto's dust]

blossoms are falling,
 the birds also are startled –
 dust moved by a harp NOTE

18

[1684-94]

harusame ya / mino fukikaesu / kawa yanagi
 [spring-rain / straw-raincoat blow-back / river willow]

spring's soft drizzling rain...
 like straw coats billowing out,
 the river willows

19

[1684-94]

waga yado wa /shikaku na kage o / mado no tsuki
[my hut as-for / square's light (acc.) / window's moon]

shining in my hut,
light in the shape of a square
from the window's moon

20

[1684-94]

A motto: don't speak of others' limitations; don't brag about your strengths

monoieba / kuchibiru samushi / aki no kaze
[something speak-when / lips are-cold / autumn's wind]

if you say something
the lips become quite frozen...
the wind of autumn

21

[1684]

matsukaze no / ochiba ka mizu no /oto suzushi
[pine-wind's / falling-leaves? water's / sound is-cool]

are needles falling
as the wind blows through the pines?
cool sound of water

22

[1684]

nozarashi no / kokoro ni kaze no / shimu mi kana
[bones-exposed-in-a-field (acc.) / heart into wind's / penetrate body]

I think of bleached bones
in a field; wind pierces my
body to the heart

23

[1684]

kumo kiri no / zanja hyakkei o / tsukushikeri
[cloud mist's / short-time hundred-scenes (acc.) / exhaust]

in the mists and cloud
for a moment a hundred scenes
brought to fulfilment

24

[1684]

uma ni nete / zanmu tsuki tōshi / cha no keburī
[horse on sleep / lingering-dream moon distant / tea's fire]

dozing on my horse,
dream lingering, distant moon,
smoke from a tea fire

25

[1684]

misoka tsuki nashi / chitose no sugi o / daku arashi NOTE
[last-night-of-month moon is-not / thousand-year's *sugi* (acc.) / hold
windstorm]

last night of the month, no moon...
a thousand-year old cedar
caught in a windstorm

26

[1684]

wuta yumi ya / biwa ni nagusamu / take no oku
[cotton bow! / lute by console / bamboo's interior]

cotton-beating bow,
as consoling as a lute
deep in the bamboos

27

[1684]

tsuyu tokutoku / kokorimi ni ukiyo / susugabaya
[dew drip drip / trial as floating-world / would-that-I-could wash]

dew dripping, dripping...
could I wash in it the dust
of the floating world

10

28

[1684-5]

yuki to yuki / koyoi sjiwasu no / meigetsu ka
[snow and snow / tonight twelfth-month's / bright moon?]

snow is upon snow...
can tonight be the twelfth month's
full and whitest moon?

29

[1684-5]

Spending a day at the seashore

umi kurete / kamo no koe / honoka ni shiroshi NOTE
[sea darken / duck's voice / faintly white]

the sea is darkening...
now a wild duck's call,
faint and indistinct and white

30

[1685]

On the road to Nara

haru nare ya / na mo naki yama no / usugasumi
[spring is! / name also is-not mountain's / thin-mist]

it's spring now, yes spring!
above the nameless mountains
a faint haze and mist

11

31

[1685]

Secluded in Second Month Hall

mizutori ya / kōri no sō no / kutsu no oto NOTE
[water-dripping! / ice's monk's / clog's sound]

water being drawn –
in the frozen night NOTE
clipping of monks' clogs

32

[1685]

Crossing the mountains on the road to Ōtsu

yamaji kite / naniyara yukashi / sumiregusa
[mountain-path come / somehow appealing / wild-violet]

on a mountain path
it was somehow so moving –
a wild violet

33

[1685]

At Minakuchi I met a friend I had not seen for twenty years

inochi futatsu no / naka ni ikitaru / sakura kana
[life two's / between in lived / cherry-blossom!]

the lives of us two –
between them has grown up this
blossoming cherry

34

[1685]

A field of sunlight

chō no tobu / bakari nonake no / hikage kana
[butterfly's fly / only mid-field's sunlight!]

only butterflies,
fluttering in the middle of
this field of sunlight

35

[1685]

*All through the night the sky kept shifting between clear and cloudy,
leaving us restless*

kumo oriori / hito o yasumeru / tsukimi kana
[clouds time-time / people (acc.) give-rest / moonviewing!]

from time to time the
clouds let people have some rest
as they view the moon

36

[1686]

furu hata ya / nazuna hana saku / kakine kana
[well if-look / shepherd's-purse flower bloom / hedge!]

if you look closely –
a shepherd's purse flowering
underneath the hedge

37

[1686]

Grieving for priest Tandō

chi ni taore / ne ni yori hana no / wakare kana
[land on fall / root to approach blossoms's / departure!]

falling to the ground,
returning home to its roots –
a flower's farewell

38

[1686]

furuike ya / kawazu tobikomu / mizo no oto
[old pond! / frog jump-in / water's sound]

ancient is the pond –
suddenly a frog leaps – now!
the water echoes

39

[1686]

higashi nishi / awaresa hitotsu / aki no kaze
[east west / pathos one / autumn's wind]

throughout east and west
the pathos is the same, come
the winds of autumn

14

40

[1686]

zatō ka to / hito ni mirarete / tsukimi kana
[blind man? / person to appear-as / moonviewing!]

he seems to be like
somebody whose eyes are blind,
gazing at the moon...

41

[1686]

mono hitotsu / waga yo wa karoki / hisago kana
[thing one / my house as-for light / gourd!]

just one possession –
and my house feels as weightless
as an empty gourd

42

[1686-7]

A cold night

kame waruru / yoru no kōri no / nezame kana
[water-jar crack / night's ice's / waking!]

a water jar cracks:
in the freezing of the night
I lie here awake

15

43

[Spring 1687]

haranaka ya / mono ni mo tsukazu / naku hibari
[field-within! / thing to even not-attach / cry skylark]

on the plain – up there! –
not attached to anything
a skylark's singing...

44

[Autumn 1687]

inazuma o / te ni toru yami no / skisoku kana
[lightning (acc.) / hand into take dark's / small-candle-light!]

a flash of lightning
grasped so tightly in the hand –
torchlight in the dark

45

[Autumn 1687]

shizu no ko ya / ine surikakete / tsukiomiru
[poor's child! / rice husking-leaving / moon (acc.) see]

a poor peasant boy
husking rice: he pauses now
to gaze at the moon

16

46

[Winter 1687-8]

go o taite / tenugui aburu / samusa kana
[dried-pine-needles (acc.) burn / hand-towel dry-over-a-fire/ coldness!]

burning pine needles
dry my hand towel by the fire –
how bitterly cold

47

[Winter 1687-8]

fuyu no hi ya / bashō ni kōru / kagebōshi
[winter's sun! / on-horseback on freeze / shadow]

a pale wintry sun –
as I ride now on my horse
my shadow freezes

48

[1688-94]

karite nen / kakashi no sode ya / yowa no shimo
[borrow sleep / scarecrow's sleeves! / midnight's frost]

I should like to sleep
borrowing the scarecrow's clothes –
the cold of midnight

17

49

[Spring 1688]

kareshiba ya / yaya kagerō / ichi ni-sun
[dead-grass! / slightly heat-wave's / one two-inch]

the dead withered grass –
and yet the faintest heat-waves
a few inches high

50

[Spring 1688]

At Hatsuse

haru no yo ya / komorido yukashi / dō no sumi
[spring's night! / secluded-person intriguing / temple's corner]

a night in springtime:
someone hides mysteriously
in a temple corner NOTE

51

[Spring 1688]

Hoso Pass (on the road from Tafu Peak to Ryūmon)

hibari yori / sora ni yasurau / tōge kana
[skylark more-than / sky in rest / mountain-pass!]

higher than the lark,
resting there far in the sky,
Hoso mountain pass

18

52

[Spring 1688]

Nijikō

horohoro to / yamabuki chiru ka / taki no oto NOTE
[flutteringly / mountain-rose falls! / rapid's sound]

petal on petal
mountain roses flutter down:
the rush of rapids

53

[Spring 1688]

hi wa hana ni / kurete sabishi ya / asunarō
[sun as-for flower on / darken lonely! / false-cypress]

sun falls on the flowers,
and yet it darkens, lonely,
like some false cypress NOTE

54

[Spring 1688]

Yoshino

hanazakari / yama wa higo no / asaborake
[flowers-in-full-bloom / mountain as-for everyday's / dawn]

flowers in full bloom,
and the mountains as always
at the day's dawning

19

55

[Summer 1688]

kusa no ha o/ otsuru yori tobu / hataru kana
[grass's leaf (acc.) / fall then fly / firefly!]

falling from a blade
of grass, and flying away,
there goes a firefly

56

[Summer 1688]

At Ōtsu

yo no natsu / korui ni ukamu / nami no ue
[world's summer / lake on float / wave's top]

summer in the world
floating now upon the lake
on the tops of waves

57

[Summer 1688]

Gathering on the fifth day of the sixth month, the first year of Genroku

hirugao no / mijikayo neburu / hiruma kana
[noon-face's / short-night sleep / daytime!]

here the noon-flowers,
sleeping through the shortest nights
till the daylight breaks

20

58

[Summer 1688]

Mount Inaba

tsukigane no / hibuku yō nari / semi no koe
[temple-bell also / reverberate like is / cicada's voice]

the temple bell too
seems as if it's echoing
a cicada's cry

59

[Autumn 1688]

In the rice fields at the treasury of the Dharma Temple

kari ato ya / wase katakata no / shigi no koe
[harvest after! / early-rice one-side's / snipe's voice]

after the reaping,
beside a field of early
rice, cry of a snipe

60

[Autumn 1688]

A view of Narumi

hatsuaki ya! / umi mo aota no / hitomidori
[early-autumn! / sea also green-rice-field / one-green]

early autumn now:
the ocean and the rice fields
turn a single green

21

61

[Autumn 1688]

First day of autumn

tabi ni akite / kyō iku ka yara / aki no kaze
[journey on tired / today which day? / autumn's wind]

tired of the journey,
what day is it now today?
the wind of autumn

62

[Autumn 1688]

Butterfly on a chrysanthemum blossom

aki o hete / chō mo nameru ya / kiku no tsuyu
[autumn (acc.) passing / butterfly also lick! / chrysanthemum's dew]

deep into autumn,
a butterfly sipping there
chrysanthemum dew

63

[Autumn 1688]

Yasui departing on a journey

miokuri no / ushiro ya sabishi / aki no kaze
[see-off's / back! lonely / autumn's wind]

seeing you go off,
only your back far away:
the wind of autumn

22

64

[Autumn 1688]

Mt. Obasute

omokage ya / oba hitori naku / tsuki no tomo
[face! / old-woman alone cry / moon's companion]

shadow of a face –
old woman crying alone,
the moon's companion NOTE

65

[Winter 1688-9]

Grieving over Rika's wife

kazuki fusu / futon ya samuki / yo ya sugoki
[put-on lie-down / futon! cold / night! terrible]

as I lie down, the
futon pulled up tight, how cold
the desolate night

66

[Winter 1688-9]

At the memorial service of a certain person

uzumibi mo / kiyu ya namida no / niyuru oto
[banked-fire even / make-disappear? tear's / boiling sound]

don't they extinguish
even the banks of charcoal –
these tears boiling over?

23

67

[Spring 1689]

ganjitsu wa / tagoto no hi koso / koishikere
[New-Year's Day as-for / each-field's sun! / longing]

first day of the year:
it's the sun on every field
that brings such longing

68

[Spring 1689]

omoshiro ya / kotoshi no haru mo / tabi no sora
[exciting! / this year's spring also / journey's sky]

how enticing now –
in the spring of this year too,
a traveller's sky

69

[Spring 1689]

asayosa o / taga matsu shima zo / katagokoro NOTE
[morning evening (acc.) / who wait island! / unrequited-love]

morning and evening
on pine island, someone waits:
love that's unfulfilled

24

70

[Spring 1689]

Second year of Genroku, Second Month, at Tōzan's lodging

kagerō no / waga kata ni tatsu / kamiko kana
[heat-waves / my shoulder on rise / paper-robe!]

the waves of heat NOTE
that shimmer from the shoulders
of my paper robe...

71

[Spring 1689]

On a painting of someone drinking sake

tsuki hana mo / nakute sake nomu / hitori kana
[moon flower also / is-not sake drink / alone!]

no moon, no blossoms,
just me now drinking sake,
totally alone

72

[Spring 1689]

yuku haru ya / tori naki uo no / me wa namida
[go spring! / bird crying fish's / eye as-for tear]

the spring is passing –
the birds all mourn and fishes'
eyes are wet with tears

25

73

[Spring 1689]

irikakaru / hi mo itoyū no / nagori kana
[about-to-enter / sun also heat-waves / departure!]

the sun is sinking
now, and the threading heat waves
also now depart

74

[Spring 1689]

kane tsukanu / sato wa nani o ka / haru no kure
[bell not-ring / village as-for what (acc.) ? / spring's evening]

a village where no
bells are rung – what kind is that
on spring evenings?

75

[Spring 1689]

Spending a lonely spring evening in a country cottage

iriai no / kane mo kikoezu / haru no kure
[sunset's / bell also not-hear / spring's evening]

the bell of sunset
also cannot now be heard
on spring evenings

26

76

[Summer 1689]

ara tōto / aoba wakaba no / hi no hikari
[oh solemn / green-leaf young-leaf's / sun's light]

how holy a place ...
green leaves, young leaves, and through them
the sunlight now bursts

77

[Summer 1689]

The Killing Stone

ishi no ka ya / natsugusa akaku / tsuyu atsushi
[rock's scent / summer-grass red / dew hot]

the stench round the stone –
red now the grass of summer,
the dew is scorching...

78

[Summer 1689]

nishi ka higashi ka / mazu sanae ni mo / kaze no oto
[west? east? / first rice-sprouts in also / wind's sound]

from the east, or west?
among the first rice-sprouts now
the sound of the wind

27

79

[Summer 1689]

shimajima ya / chiji ni kudakete / natsu no umi
[islands-islands! / a thousand-pieces broken / summer's sea]

islands on islands –
a thousand pieces broken
in the summer sea

80

[Summer 1689]

At Takadachi in Ōshū Province

natsugusa ya / tsuwamono-domo ga / yume no ato
[summer-grass! / noble-warrior's / dream's remains]

mounds of summer grass –
the place where noble soldiers
one time dreamed a dream

81

[Summer 1689]

samidare no / furi nokoshite ya / hikaridō
[fifth-month-rain's / falling leaving? / light-hall]

so the rains of spring
fall and fall, yet leave untouched
this bright Hall of Gold

28

82

[Summer 1689]

suzushisa o / waga yado ni shite / nemaru nari
[coolness (acc.) / my lodging into make / relax indeed]

the lovely coolness
of this lodging – I sit here
wholly at my ease

83

[Summer 1689]

haiide yo / kaiya ga shita no
[crawl-out! / silkworm's-nursery's / toad's voice]

come on, crawl out now!
beneath the silkworm nursery
croaking of a toad

84

[Summer 1689]

mayuhaki o / omokage ni shite / beni no hana
[eye-brow brush (acc.) / image into make / rouge-plant's flower]

so they bring to mind
a lady's small eyebrow brush –
these saffron blossoms

29

85

[Summer 1689]

shizukasa ya / iwa ni shimiiru / semi no koe
[stillness! / rock into penetrate / cicada's voice]

the utter silence ...
cutting through the very stone
a cicada's rasp

86

[Summer 1689]

samidare o / atsumete hayashi / mogamigawa
[summer-rains (acc.) / gathering swift / Mogami-River]

gathering the rains
of summer, how swift it is –
Mogami River

87

[Summer 1689]

suzushisa ya / hono mikazuki no / haguroyama
[coolness! / faint third-day's moon / Haguro-Mountain]

such lovely coolness ...
palely now the crescent moon
on Mount Haguro

30

88

[Summer 1689]

kumo no mine / ikutsu kuzurete / tsuki no yama
[cloud's peak / how-many crumbling / moon's mountain]

how many cloud peaks
have come tumbling down upon
the moon's own mountain

89

[Summer 1689]

atsuki hi o / umi ni iretari / mogamigawa
[hot sun (acc.) / sea into have-put / Mogami-River]

the blistering sun
is gathered in the sea by
Mogami River

90

[Summer 1689]

yūbare ya / sakura ni suzumu / nami no hana
[evening-clearing! / cherry-blossoms under to-cool / wave's flowers]

clearing at evening –
cool now under cherry trees,
blossoms on the waves

31

91

[Summer 1689]

shiogoshi ya / tsuru hagi nurete / umi suzushi
[shallows! / crane legs is-wet / sea cool]

crossing of the tides ...
a crane, its long legs splashing –
ah how cool the sea

92

[Autumn 1689]

Looking towards Sado Island

araumi ya / sado ni yokotau / amanogawa
[rough-sea! / Sado over stretch-out / heaven's river]

billow-crested seas!
flowing towards Sado Isle
heaven's Milky Way

93

[Autumn 1689]

akaaka to / hi wa tsurenaku mo / aki no kaze
[red-red –ly / sun as-for heartless yet / autumn's wind]

the red, blazing red,
of the pitiless sun – yet
autumn in the wind

32

94

[Autumn 1689]

At a place called Little Pines

shiorashiki / na ya komatsu fuku / hagi susuki
[lovely / name! small-pine blows / bush-clover pampas]

what a lovely name!
the wind wafts through young pines, bush
clover, pampas grass

95

[Autumn 1689]

muzan ya na / kabuto no shita no / kirigirisu
[pitiful!! / helmet's underside's / cricket]

the pity of it ...
trapped underneath a helmet
a cricket chirping

96

[Autumn 1689]

yu no nagori / koyoi wa hada no / samukaran
[hot-spring's departure / tonight as-for skin's / cold]

leaving the hot springs:
tonight my skin will feel so
very cool, so cool

33

97

[Autumn 1689]

yu no nagori / iku tabi miru ya / kiri no moto
[hot-spring's departure / how-many times see! / mist's under]

leaving the hot springs:
looking back how many times,
searching through the mist

98

[Autumn 1689]

Visiting the Kannon temple at Nata

ishiyama no / ishi yori shiroshi / aki no kaze
[Stone-Mountain's / stones more-than is-white / autumn's wind]

whiter far than all
the stones Stone Mountain has –
the autumnal wind

99

[Autumn 1689]

Tamae

tsukimi seyo / tamae no ashi o / karanu saki
[moonview / Jewel-Bay's reeds (acc.) / not-cut before]

the moon's beams falling
on the reeds of Jewel Bay
before they are cut

34

100

[Autumn 1689]

On the fifteenth night, just as the innkeeper had said it might, it rained

meigetsu ya / hokkoku biyori / sadamenaki
[bright-moon! / north-country weather / certainty nonexistent]

night of the full moon...
the weather in the north land
so often changes

101

[Autumn 1689]

sabishisa ya / suma ni kachitaru / hama no aki
[loneliness! / Suma than triumph / beach's autumn]

oh what loneliness ...
more desolate than Suma
this beach in autumn

102

[Autumn 1689]

nami no ma ya / kogai ni majiru / hagi no chiri
[wave's interval! / small sea-shells in mix / bush-clover's dust]

between each wave-break ...
mixed with small shells, the debris
of bush-clover flowers

35

103

[Autumn 1689]

hamaguri no / futami ni wakare / yuku aki zo
[clam-shell's / Futami for separating / departing autumn!]

so, to Futami,
like a clam ripped from its shell ...
autumn's deepening now

104

[Autumn 1689]

At a place called Nakamura in Ise Province

aki no kaze / ise no hakahara / nao sugoshi
[autumn's wind / Ise's graveyard / still-more lonely]

the winds of autumn ...
now a graveyard in Ise
is even more bleak

105

[Winter 1689-90]

fuyuniwa ya / tsuki mo ito naru / mushi no gin
[winter garden! / moon also thread become / insect's song]

a winter garden ...
thinning to a thread, the moon
and an insect's song

106

[Winter 1689-90]

byōbu ni wa / yama o egaitte / fuyugomori
[folding-screen on as-for / mountain (acc.) paint / winter seclusion]

on a folding screen
a mountain has been painted:
winter seclusion

107

[Spring 1690]

kagerō ya / saiko no ito no / usugumori
[heat-waves! / saiko's thread's / thin-cloud]

such waves of heat now ...
the saiko's leaves so threadlike
in the thinnest haze

108

[Spring 1690]

chō no ha no / ikutabi koyuru / hei no yane
[butterfly's wing (nom.) / how-many-times cross-over / wall's roof]

a butterfly's wings,
fluttering how many times
on top of the wall?

109

[Spring 1690]

hitori ama / waraya sugenashi / shirotsutsuji
[alone nun / straw-hut aloof / white azalea]

a nun all alone,
aloof there in her straw hut:
white azalea

110

[Summer 1690]

*Staying over at Seta, I worshipped at Ishiyama temple at dawn
and saw the Genji room there.*

akebono wa / mada murasaki ni / hototogisu
[dawn as-for / still lavender in / cuckoo]

the break of day is
lavender which lingers still
as a cuckoo calls

111

[Summer 1690]

hi no michi ya / aoi katamuku / satsukiame
[sun's path / hollyhock lean / summer-rains]

the path of the sun ...
the hollyhocks turn with it
in the summer rains

112

[Summer 1690]

The Evening Cool at Riverside, Fourth Avenue

kawakaze ya / usugaki kitaru / yūsuzumi
[river-wind! / pale-persimmon-robos wear / evening-cool]

breeze from the river ...
wearing pale persimmon robes
the cool of evening

113

[Summer 1690]

The transience of life

yagate shinu / keshiki wa miezu / semi no koe
[soon die / appearance as-for not-show / cicada's voice]

it will die so soon –
yet showing no sign of it,
a cicada's cry

114

[Autumn 1690]

On Tanabata

nebu no ki no / hagoshi mo itoe / hoshi no kage
[silk's tree's / through-leaves even dislike / star's light]

do not even peer
through the leaves of the silk tree:
light falls from the stars

115

[Autumn 1690]

tonbō ya / toritsuki kaneshi / kusa no ue
 [dragonfly! / cling-to not-able / grass's upside]

dragonfly ... **NOTE**
 trying vainly to hold on
 to the blade of grass

116

[Autumn 1690]

Unchiku, a monk in Kyoto, had painted what seemed to be a self-portrait. It was the picture of a monk with his face turned away. He asked me to write a verse on it, so I wrote: 'You are over sixty years old, and I am nearing fifty. Together in a dream, we present the form of dreams. Here I add the words of one asleep:

kochira muke / ware mo sabishiki / aki no kure
 [this-way turn / I also lonely / autumn's evening]

turn around to me ...
 I too feel a loneliness
 this autumn's evening

117

[Autumn 1690]

At Katada

byōgan no / yosamu ni ochite / tabine kana
 [wild duck (nom.) / night-cold from falling / journey-sleep!]

a wild duck is sick,
 and falls in the cold of night:
 sleep on a journey

118

[Winter 1690-1]

On the road to my home town

shigururu ya / ta no arakabu no / kuromo hodo
 [rain! / fields's new-stubble's / darken extent]

early winter showers
 enough to blacken fresh-cut
 stubble in the fields

119

[Winter 1690-1]

kirigirisu / wasurene ni naku / kotatsu kana
 [cricket / forget-sound with cry / brazier!]

no cricket's sound now
 as if it forgets to cry:
 the brazier burning

120

[Winter 1690-1]

Recalling days of old

shimo no nochi / nadeshiko sakeru / hioke kana
[frost's after / pink bloom / wooden-brazier!]

after the frost comes
a pink blossom remains on
the wooden brazier

121

[Winter 1690-1]

kogarashi ya / hohobare itamu / hito no kao
[winter-wind! / cheek-swollen hurt / person's face]

the wind of winter ...
cheeks all swollen now in pain
on somebody's face

122

[Winter 1690-1]

On a journey

hatsuyuki ya / hijiri kozō no / oi no iro
[first-snow! / ascetic Koya-missionary's / knapsack's colour]

first snow has fallen ...
the colour of a knapsack
on a wand'ring priest

42

123

[Winter 1690-1]

chidori tachi / fukeyuku shoya no / hiei oroshi
[plover rising / grow-late first-watch's / Hiei wind-that-blows-down-a-
mountain]

the plovers rising
as early evening deepens:
winds storm Mount Hiei

124

[Winter 1690-1]

ishiyama no / ishi ni tabashiru / arare kana
[stone-mountain's / stones on shower-down / hail!]

showering down now
on the stones of Stone Mountain
a storm of hailstones!

125

[Winter 1690-1]

At Ōtsu

sanshaku no / yama mo arashi no / ko no ha kana
[three-foot's / mountain too windstorm's / tree's leaves!]

on the low hills too
a mountain windstorm swirling
the leaves from a tree

43

126

[Winter 1690-1]

shibaraku wa / hana no ue naru / tsukiyo kana
[short-time as-for / blossom's top is / moon-night!]

lingering a while
it hangs above the blossoms:
moon in the night sky

127

[Winter 1690-1]

yami no yo ya / su o madowashite / naku chidori
[dark's night / nest (acc.) lose / cry plovers]

a night of darkness –
it must have lost its nest, a
plover crying out

128

[Summer 1691]

hototogisu / ōtakeyabu o / moru tsukiyo
[cuckoo / large-bamboo grove (acc.) / seep moonlight]

a cuckoo sings now:
and through the vast bamboo grove
the moonlight seeping

129

[Summer 1691]

uki ware o / sabishigarase yo / kankodori
[sorrowful me (acc.) / lonely cause-to-feel / mountain-cuckoo]

so sunk in sorrow,
make me feel more loneliness,
oh mountain cuckoo

130

[Summer 1691]

te o uteba / kodama ni akuru / natsu no tsuki
[hand (acc.) when-clap / echo in to-dawn / summer's moon]

as I clap my hands
the dawn begins to echo:
the moon of summer

131

[Summer 1691]

shibaraku wa / hana no ue naru / tsukiyo kana
[short-time as-for / flower's above is / moon-night!]

lingering a while
it hangs above the blossoms:
moon in the night sky

132

[Summer 1691]

otoroa ya / ha ni kuiateshi / nori no suna
[becoming-weak! / tooth in bite-hit / seaweed's-sand]

old, with ebbing strength –
my teeth find a grain of sand
in the dried seaweed

133

[Summer 1691]

yami no yo ya / su o madowashite / naku chidori
[dark's night! / nest (acc.) lose /cry plovers]

a night of darkness –
it has lost its nest, and now
a plover cries out

134

[Summer 1691]

hototogisu / ōtakeyabu o / moru tsukiyo
[cuckoo / large-bamboo-grove (acc.) / seep moonlit-night]

a cuckoo sings out:
and through the vast bamboo grove,
the moonlight seeping...

135

[Summer 1691]

uki ware o / sabishigarase yo / kankodori
[sorrowful me (acc.) / lonely cause-to-feel! / mountain-cuckoo]

deep in sorrow now,
make me feel more loneliness –
you mountain cuckoo

136

[Summer 1691]

te o uteba / kodama ni akuru / natsu no tsuki
[hand (acc.) when-hit / echo in to-dawn / summer's moon]

I clap my hands – now!
the echoes sound at dawnlight
and the summer's moon

137

[Summer 1691]

mugi no ho ya / namida ni somete / naku hibari
[barley's ear! / tears with dye / cry skylark]

these ears of barley ...
that redden now in the tears
of crying skylarks

138

[Autumn 1691]

akikase no / fukedomo aoshi / kuri no iga
[autumn-wind's / blow although green / chestnut's burr]

the winds of autumn
blow, and yet how green still
are the chestnut burrs

139

[Autumn 1691]

ushibeya ni / ka no koe kuraki / zansho kana
[cowshed in / mosquito's voices dark / lingering-heat!]

inside a cowshed
a mosquito's dusky buzz ...
a lingering heat

140

[Autumn 1691]

yasuyasu to / idete izayou / tsuki no kumo
[easy-easy -ly / emerge 16th-night-moon / moon's clouds] NOTE

look how easily
the harvest moon emerges
from behind the clouds

48

141

[Autumn 1691]

taka no me mo / ima ya kurenu to / naku uzura
[hawk's eye also / now! darken / cry quail]

the hawk's eye has now
begun to darken – and the
quail begins to cry

142

[Autumn 1691]

kusa no to ya / higurete kureshi / kiku no sake
[grass's door! / day-darkening given / chrysanthemum's wine]

in this grass-thatched hut –
as day darkens I'm given
chrysanthemum wine

143

[Autumn 1691]

hashigeta no / shinobu wa tsuki no / nagori kana
[bridge-girder's / endure as-for moon's / departure]

along the bridge beam
the fern of longing survives NOTE
as the moon departs

49

144

[Autumn 1691]

kokono tabi / okite mo tsuki no / nanatsu kana
[nine time / awake although moon's / four-o'clock!]

awakened nine times –
and yet the moon is still here
before the day breaks

145

[Autumn 1691]

akikaze ya / kiri ni ugokite / tsuta no shimo
[autumn-wind! / paulownia by moving / ivy's frost]

autumn's wind blowing
on a paulownia tree –
soon frost on ivy

146

[Winter 1691-2]

tōtogaru / namida ya somete / chiru momiji
[valuable / tears? dye / fall autumn-leaves]

so very precious –
and do they tint my tears? – the
fall of autumn leaves

50

147

[Winter 1691-2]

nebuka shiroku / araiagetaru / samusa kana
[leek white / washing-has-completed / cold!]

these leeks, deep-rooted,
washed so spotlessly, pure white,
and how very cold ...

148

[Winter 1691-2]

suisen ya / shiroki shōji no / tomoutsuri
[narcissus! / white paper-screen's / along-with-reflection]

narcissus, and white
paper-screens, reflecting now
each other's colour

149

[Winter 1691-2]

At Kōgetsu's house

yuki o matsu / jōgo no kao ya / inabikari
[snow (acc.) wait / wine-drinker's face! / lightning]

waiting for the snow,
the faces of wine lovers –
a flash of lightning

51

150

[Winter 1691-2]

kogarashi ni / iwa fukitogaru / sugima kana
[winter-wind by / rock blow-sharpen / cedar-space!]

the wind of winter,
sharpening the rocks as it blows
among the cedars

151

[Winter 1691-2]

With no settled place in this world, for the last six or seven years I've spent my nights on the road, suffering many illnesses. Not being able to forget my friends and disciples of many years, I finally made my way back to Edo again. Day after day, they have come to visit me at this grassy hut, and so I offer this verse in response:

tomokakumo / narade ya yuki no / kareobana
[somehow / not-becoming! snow's / dead-pampas grass]

somehow, in some way,
it has yet survived ... pampas
grass amid the snow

152

[Winter 1691-2]

rusu no ma ni / aretaru kami no / ochiba kana
[absent's period in / wild god's / fallen-leaves!]

all the gods have gone:
everything is desolate
among the dead leaves

153

[Winter 1691-2]

kuzu no ha no / omote misekeri / kesa no shimo
[arrowroot's leaf's / face showing / morning's frost]

leaves of arrowroot
with their faces now exposed:
the frost of morning

154

[Winter 1691-2]

uo tori no / kokoro wa skirazu / toshiwasure
[fish bird's / heart as-for not-know / year-end-party]

how fish and birds feel
in their hearts, I cannot know –
the old year passes

155

[Spring 1692]

hito mo minu / haru ya kagami no / ura no ume
[person even not-see / spring! mirror's / behind's plum]

a spring that is not
noticed – plum blossoms on the
back of a mirror

156

[Spring 1692]

urayamashi / ukiyo no kita no / yamazakura
[envious / floating-world's north's / mountain-cherry]

how enviable:
far north of the floating world,
mountain cherries flower

157

[Spring 1692]

A parting gift for one heading east

kono kokoro / suiseyo hana ni / goki ichigu
[this heart / infer blossom with / begging-bowl one-set]

you may know my heart
from a flowering blossom
and a begging bowl

54

158

[Summer 1692]

kara hafu no / irihi ya usuki / yūsuzumi
[China gable's / setting-sun! pale / evening-cool]

on Chinese gables
the setting sun ... growing faint:
the cool of evening

159

[Autumn 1692]

On the subject of wildflowers of the fields

nadeshiko no / atsusa wasururu / nokiku kana
[wild-pink's / heat forget / wildflower!]

they make me forget
the heat of the summer pinks:
wildflowers of the fields

160

[Autumn 1692]

mikazuki ni / chi wa oboro nari / soba no hana
[third-day-moon under / earth as-for vague is / buckwheat's flowers]

under the crescent
moon, the earth looms hazily:
the flowers of buckwheat

55

161

[Autumn 1692]

meigetsu ya / mon ni sashikuru / shiogashira
[harvest-moon! / gate to rising-come / tide-head]

the moon of harvest –
rising now up to my gate
the tide in its flood

162

[Autumn 1692]

*Near the end of the Fukagawa river, the moon shines into a boat at
a place called 'Five Pines'.*

kawakami to / kono kawashimo ya / tsuki no tomo
[upriver and / this downriver! / moon's companion]

up the river now
and then, down the river now –
moon's companion

163

[Winter 1692-3]

uzumibi ya / kabe ni wa kyaku no / kagebōshi
[banked-charcoal! / wall on as-for guest's / shadow]

a banked charcoal fire –
over there, against the wall,
shadow of the guest

164

[Winter 1692-3]

tsuki hana no / gu ni hari taten / kan no iri
[moon flower's / foolishness on needle will prick / cold's entrance]

a needle will prick
the fool entranced by moon flowers:
start of deep winter

165

[Spring 1693]

haru mo yaya / keshiki totonou / tsuki to ume
[spring also gradually / appearance be-arranged / moon and plum]

slowly now the spring
is beginning to appear:
moon and plum blossoms

166

[Summer 1693]

hototogisu / koe yokotau ya / mizu no ue
[cuckoo / voice lie! / water's top]

sound of a cuckoo
whose cry now is stretching out
across the water

167

[Summer 1693]

fūgetsu no / zai mo hanare yo / fukamigusa
[wind-moon's / riches also separate! / peony]

they surpass even
the wealth of the wind and moon –
these peony flowers

168

[Autumn 1693]

takamizu no / hoshi mo tabine ya / iwa no ue
[high-water in / star also journey-sleep! / rock's on]

in flooding waters
the stars too sleep upon their
journey – on a rock

169

[Autumn 1693]

shiratsuyu mo / kobosanu hagi no / uneri kana
[white-dew even / not-drop bush-clover's / swaying!]

without once letting
fall to earth its bright white dew,
a bush clover sways

170

[Autumn 1693]

izayoi wa / wazuka ni yami no / hajime kana
[16th -night-moon as-for / little -ly darkness's / beginning!]

the sixteenth night moon –
slightly, ever so slightly,
the darkening begins

171

[Autumn 1693]

Lamenting the death of Matsukura Ranran

akikaze ni / orate kanashiki / kuwa no tsue
[autumn-wind in / broken sad / mulberry's staff]

in the autumn wind
it lies now, sadly broken –
a mulberry stick

172

[Autumn 1693]

Mourning Tōjun

iru tsuki no / ato wa tsukue no / yosumi kana
[enter moon's / after as-for desk's / four corners!]

the moon has set now;
all that remains are the four
corners of his desk

173

[Winter 1693-4]

kinbyō no / matsu no furusa yo / fuyugomori
[gold-screen's / pine's oldness! / winter-seclusion]

on the golden screen
a pine appears of great age –
locked in for winter

174

[Winter 1693-4]

kiku no ka ya / niwa ni kiretaru / kutsu no soko
[chrysanthemum's scent! / garden in broken / sandal's bottom]

chrysanthemum's scent –
in the garden, a worn-out
sandal upside down

175

[Spring 1694]

ume ga ka ni / notto hi no deru / yamaji kana
[plum's scent in / suddenly sun's rise / mountain-path!]

the smell of plums, and
suddenly the sun appears –
on this mountain path

176

[Spring 1694]

ume ga ka ni / mukashi no ichiji / aware nari
[plum's scent in / past's one-character / pathos is]

the smell of plums, and
how the single phrase 'the past'
seems so full of tears

177

[Spring 1694]

hakuken / sora de ame furu / yanagi kana
[eight-nine ken / sky in rain falls / willow!] **NOTE**

forty, fifty feet
up in the air, the rain falls
through the willow tree

178

[Spring 1694]

harusame ya / hachi no su tsutau / yane no mori
[spring-rain! / wasp's nest go-along / roof's leak]

spring rain – dripping down
along a wasp's nest, water
leaking through the roof

179

[Spring 1694]

aoyagi no doro ni shidaruru / shiohi kana
[green-willow's / mud in hang-down / low-tide!]

green willow branches
drooping down into the mud:
it is low tide now

180

[Summer 1694]

unohana ya / kuraki yanagi no / oyobigoshi
[deutzia! / dark willow's / bending-back]

a deutzia bush –
and over it, dark, a willow
that is bending back

181

[Summer 1694]

uguisu ya / take no koyabu ni / oi o naku
[bush-warbler! / bamboo's young grove in / age (acc.) cry]

an old bush warbler –
in a grove of bamboo shoots
singing of its age

182

[Summer 1694]

At Nagoya in Owari

yo o tabi ni / shiro kaku oda no / yukimodori
[world through journey on / field plough small-field's / go-return]

travelling the world, **NOTE**
tilling a small field of rice
back and forth and back ...

183

[Summer 1694]

rokugatsu ya / mine ni kumo oku / arashiyama
[sixth-month! / peak on clouds lay / windstorm-mountain]

the sixth month is here! –
clouds cover now its summit,
the Windstorm Mountain

184

[Summer 1694]

kiyotaki ya / nami ni chirikomu / aomatsuba
[clear-waterfall! / waves in fall-go-in / green-pine-needles]

clear cascading stream –
falling in the water now
needles from green pines

185

[Summer 1694]

At Kyokusui's house

natsu no yo ya / kuzurete akeshi / hiyashimono
[summer's night! / broken dawn / chilled-food]

night in summertime –
at dawn, scattered leftovers
of cold food, so cold

186

[Summer 1694]

sarabachi mo / honoka ni yami no / yoisuzumi
[plate-bowl also / dim -ly dark's / evening-cool]

the plates and bowls too
begin to dim in twilight:
the cool of evening

187

[Autumn 1694]

On the back wall of a Nō stage in Honma Shume's house is a picture of skeletons playing music and performing. Is human life any different from this? Zhuangzi used to have a skull for his pillow, and said he could not distinguish reality from dream. This truly evokes the insubstantiality of our lives.

inazuma ya / kao no tokoro ga / susuki no ho
[lightning! / face's place (nom.) / miscanthus's plume]

a flash of lightning –
where once there were faces, now
plumes of pampas grass

188

[Autumn 1694]

michi hososhi / sumotorigusa no / hana no tsuyu
[road narrow / wire-grass's / flower's dew]

a narrow pathway
where the wire grass blossoms now
overflow with dew

189

[Autumn 1694]

inazuma ya / yami no kata yuku / goi no koe
[lightning! / darkness's direction go / night-heron's voice]

a flash of lightning –
echoing into darkness
a night-heron's cry

190

[Autumn 1694]

kazairo ya / shidoro ni ueshi / niwa no aki
[wind-colour! / confused –ly plant / garden's autumn]

the colour of the wind –
planted all confusedly,
an autumn garden

191

[Autumn 1694]

meigetsu ni / fumoto no kiri ya / ta no kumori
[bright-moon under / foothill's mist! / field's cloudiness]

beneath the harvest
moon, mist upon the foothills,
haze upon the fields

192

[Autumn 1694]

bii to naku / shirigoe kanashi / yoru no shika
[‘beee’ cry / trailing-voice is-sad / night's deer]

they make a cry ‘beeeee’ ...
a lingering sound so sad:
the deer of the night

193

[Autumn 1694]

At Dark Pass

kiku no ka ni / kuragari noboru / sekku kana
[chrysanthemum's scent in / dark climb / festival!]

chrysanthemum's scent
all round, climbing through the dark
at festival time

194

[Autumn 1694]

At Kiryū's house

aki mo haya / baratsuku ame ni / tsuki no nari
[autumn already / sprinkle rain in / moon's form]

autumn passing now ...
through the slow drizzling of rain
the shape of the moon

195

[Autumn 1694]

My thoughts

kono michi ya / yuku hito nashi ni / aki no kure
[this road! / travelling person not with / autumn's evening]

and the road ahead –
no-one else is travelling it;
an autumn twilight

196

[Autumn 1694]

matsukaze ya / noki o megutte / aki kurenu
[pine-wind! / eaves (acc.) go-around / autumn end]

the wind in the pines –
swirling now around the eaves
as the autumn ends

197

[Autumn 1694]

A wanderer's thoughts

kono aki wa / nande toshiyoru / kumo ni tori
[this autumn as-for / why grow-old / cloud in bird]

the autumn passes:
why now do I feel so old?
into the clouds, a bird

68

198

[Autumn 1694]

shiragiku no / me ni tatete miru / chiri mo nashi
[white-chrysanthemum (nom.) / eye in rises see / dust even is-not]

white chrysanthemum:
the eye looks at it closely –
not one speck of dust

199

[Autumn 1694]

*Written at Keishi's house, on the topic 'Accompanying a lovely boy
in the moonlight'*

tsuki sumu ya / kitsune kowagaru / chigo no tomo
[moon is-clear! / fox fear / boy-lover's companion]

the moon is clear, and
I am with my lovely boy
frightened by a fox

200

[Autumn 1694]

During illness

tabi ni yande / yume wa kareno o / kakemeguru
[journey on be-sick / dreams as-for withered-field (acc.) / run-around]

ill and journeying –
my dreams keep roaming over
fields now withered all ...

69

NOTES

- 1 There is a play on words here. *Yari* can mean both ‘sliding door’ and ‘spear’; and *kuchi* means both ‘opening’ and ‘mouth’. I try to evoke all four meanings in ‘through the *opening* of a *door* ... / a *cry* *piercing* through’. RETURN
- 2 *Yo* means a ‘joint [here, of bamboo]’ as well as ‘world’. *Yo wa sakasama* is a common expression meaning ‘the world is upside-down’ or ‘the world is topsy-turvy’. RETURN
- 3 *Akanu* means both ‘not open’ and also ‘not be tired of’. A ‘poem bag’ was used to carry manuscripts of verse. RETURN
- 4 The phrase *nami no hana* refers to the caps of waves that look like white blossoms. *Kaeribana* literally means ‘returning flower’, and here refers to a flower that blooms out of season. RETURN
- 5 The term *kari* can indicate both ‘wild goose’ and ‘temporary’, a dual meaning explained by the fact that wild geese are migrant birds, leaving Japan in spring and returning in autumn. The first phrase *kumo to hedatsu* has also been read as ‘separated by clouds’ or ‘beyond the clouds’. RETURN
- 6 *Tsuki* can mean ‘wine cup’ as well as ‘moon’, hence the apposition of ‘this moon as wine-cup’. RETURN
- 7 A markedly irregular haiku, not only in its metre (the first line has 10 syllables rather than 5, the second 6 rather than 7), but also in its unusual placing of the ‘cutting word’ *ya* in the last line. The phrase *ro no koe*, too, may refer either to the sound the oar makes in the oarlocks, or to the sound it makes as it dips into the water. The version here follows the unusual syllabic pattern exactly, as well as evoking both the sounds that the oar makes (‘the *squeak* of the oars *slapping* on the waves’). RETURN

NOTES

- 10 The first line of this haiku has, unusually, seven syllables, which are duplicated in the translation. There are differing views about whether the tub was outside (to wash in, to catch rainwater) or inside (to stop a leak inundating the hut). RETURN
- 13 Bashō’s preface to this haiku provides the context of its creation: ‘That monk who’s wearing a hat and riding a horse, where has he come from, and why is he wandering?’ ‘That,’ replied the painter, ‘is a portrait of you on a journey.’ If that is the case, bumbling horseman who roams the wide world, ‘take care you don’t fall from the horse’. RETURN
- 17 A *koto* was a classical stringed instrument which, like music in general, was said to have the power to make dust move. RETURN
- 25 The first line of this haiku has seven, rather than five, syllables. This expansion is followed in the translation. RETURN
- 29 Bashō’s original text varies the syllabic count from 5/7/5 to 5/5/7. This variation is copied in the translation. RETURN
- 31 Bashō’s original text presents a 5/5/5 syllabic pattern, rather than 5/7/5. This variation is followed in the translation. The adjective ‘frozen’ could also be applied to the monks, as well as to the implied ‘night’. RETURN
- 50 A rare deviation from the attempt to preserve Bashō’s syllabic count, with six syllables in the last line. RETURN
- 52 As Ueda [see Further Reading section] points out, ‘the word *horohoro* is descriptive of thin and delicate things fluttering down one after another, but it can also be used as onomatopoeia for a pheasant’s cry.’ RETURN
- 53 As Barnhill [see Further Reading section] argues, ‘the *asunarō* or false cypress...looks like a hinoki cypress, a tree whose wood is highly prized, while that of the false cypress is not. Literally, *asunarō* means “tomorrow I will become”, and the context implies “tomorrow I will become a cypress”. The *asunarō* seems to be what it is not; it appears to fall short of what one might expect it to achieve.’ RETURN

- 64** The phrase *tsuki no tomo* has been interpreted as the moon being the woman's companion, but also as the woman's image being Bashō's companion as he looks at the moon. [RETURN](#)
- 68** The term *matsu* means both 'a pine' and 'to wait *or* look forward to'; and Matsushima is a cluster of pine-clad islands famous for their beauty. Both meanings of the word are contained in the line 'on pine island someone waits'. [RETURN](#)
- 70** Following the original *kagerō no*, the translated line contains four syllables only. [RETURN](#)
- 115** The three syllables of the first line here follow the original *tonbō ya*. [RETURN](#)
- 140** The 'sixteenth-night moon' occurs on 8 September (the sixteenth night of the Eighth Month), a day after the harvest moon. [RETURN](#)
- 143** *Shinobu* means both 'to remember' and 'to long for something'; and *shinobugusa* is the hare's foot fern, the fern of longing. [RETURN](#)
- 177** A *ken* is a measure of length, of about six feet. There is a continuing debate about whether the rain is continuing to fall, or has stopped, leaving the drops glistening in the tree. I incline to the former interpretation, not least because raindrops on leaves would scarcely be discernible at a height of forty to fifty feet. [RETURN](#)
- 182** The term *yo* can mean 'life' as well as 'world', and so the first line could be equally well rendered as 'journeying through life'. *Kaku* means to plough a field of rice in preparation for transplanting. But as Barnhill [see Further Reading] points out, the term also has two homonyms, meaning 'to write' and 'to paint', which connect agricultural work with artistic. [RETURN](#)

FURTHER READING AND LINKS

Translations

There are countless translations of Bashō's haiku into English, from numerous versions of individual haiku or small selections of them, to larger and more comprehensive texts. Among the more widely ranging editions are:

- Barnhill, David Landis, *Bashō's Haiku: Selected Poems by Matsuo Bashō*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004.
- Blyth, R.H., trans. *Haiku*. 4 vols. Tokyo: Hokuseidō, 1949-52.
- *A History of Haiku*. 2 vols. Tokyo: Hokuseidō, 1963-4.
- Carter, Steven, trans. *Traditional Japanese Poetry: an Anthology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.
- Hamill, Sam, trans. *The Essential Bashō*. Boston: Shambhala, 1999.
- Hass, Robert, ed. *The Essential Haiku: Versions of Bashō, Buson, and Issa*. Hopewell, NJ: Ecco Press, 1994.
- Oseko, Toshiharu, trans. *Bashō's Haiku*. 2 vols. Tokyo: Maruzen, 1990.
- Shirane, Haruo, ed. *Early Modern Japanese Literature: an Anthology, 1600-1900*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.
- Stryk, Lucien, trans. *On Love and Barley: Haiku of Bashō*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985.

FURTHER READING AND LINKS

Ueda, Makoto, trans. *Bashō and his Interpreters: Selected Hokku with Commentary*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

Critical studies concerned with translation

Several of the editions above present introductory comments about the problems to be faced in any translation of Bashō's haiku. By far the most detailed and valuable exploration of those difficulties, though, is Mark Jewel, 'The Beat of Different Drummers: English Translations of Hokku from Matsuo Bashō's Oku no hosomichi', *World Haiku Review*, July 2002 [see also under Links section below]. Also of great interest is Mark McGuinness, 'Reading Bashō in the original', in www.wishfulthinking.co.uk/poetry/2006/04/28. This article explores the different stages of translation presented in Toshiharu Oseko's *Bashō's Haiku* [see above]. Despite extensive searching, however, Oseko's edition remains unavailable.

Links

Internet sites concerned with Bashō's life and work, and especially with haiku in general, are very numerous indeed. Searching simply for 'Matsuo Bashō' in Google, for example, currently (2007) yields over 150,000 references. For general studies and surveys of haiku, which often point to further material, the following are particularly useful:

<http://www.bopsecrets.org>

<http://www.gardendigest.com/poetry/index.htm>

<http://my.execpc.com/~ohaus/haiklink.htm>

<http://www.worldhaikuclub.org>

<http://www.worldhaikureview.org>

<http://www.f.waseda.jp/mjewel/jlit/>