An English Translation and Cultural Interpretation of
the Poems of Five Representative Works of
Nihon Kakyoku (Japanese Song)

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Introduction

The main objective of this paper, which forms a sequel to 'An English Translation and Cultural Interpretation of the Poems of Four Representative Works of Nihon Kakyoku (Japanese Song)', which appeared in the Bulletin of Shimane Women’s College, No.41, February, 2003, pp.17-32, (島根女子短期大学紀要, 第 41 号, 2003 年 2 月, 17 ～ 3 頁), is to explain the process of translation of the poems of another five representative works of the early twentieth century genre of Nihon Kakyoku, or Japanese Song, and thereby to introduce the linguistic and cultural background to the poems. The original paper was inspired by A Recital of Japanese Song, London, March 2002, (in which the writer was privileged to participate, giving readings of her translations of the poems)\(^1\), and the present paper was further inspired by a new series of classes entitled ‘An Appreciation of the Lyrical Songs of Japan’ (日本抒情歌の鑑賞), jointly established in April 2003 by the Departments of Japanese Language and Literature and English Language and Literature at Shimane Women’s College, the team-teaching of which was shared by the writer. As in the original paper (hereafter referred to as Paper 1), the poems of the songs have been reproduced as they appear transcribed in the collection, Nihon Kakyoku Senshū \(^2\) — with the exception of Hatsu Koi, which is not included in this volume, and which is instead reproduced for reference from the volume entitled Nihon no Meika-shū.\(^3\) (In the case of Hatsu Koi, however, the writer has for present purposes in fact chosen to base the English translation on the original version of the poem.) Again as in Paper 1, all of the five songs in the present work are also still included in various publications of Ministry of Education-recognised music textbooks for use in Junior High Schools (Sō Shun Fu and Hana) and High Schools (Sō Shun Fu, Nara Yama, Hatsu Koi and Yoimachi-gusa).
As explained in Paper 1, the same fascinating challenges presented themselves in the process of translation into English of the poems in the present paper, in terms of attempting an interpretation of the ambiguous, the unstated or understated, which is so often the nature of the Japanese language, while at the same time endeavouring to retain as much as possible of the original mood and atmosphere of the poems. In the present paper, however, the writer has created for herself the even greater challenge of aiming, in the case of the first three poems, to make a further conscious effort to reproduce, or recall, as far as possible the rhythm and syllable count of the traditional structure of the Japanese, and, in the case again of the third poem, and also of the last two, of composing English versions to be sung to the melodies to which the original Japanese versions are set as songs. In this connection, a certain degree of analysis of the structure of the poems, not included in Paper 1, has also been felt necessary.

**Translation and Interpretation**

1. *(Nara Yama)* Mount Nara

Poem by 北見志保子 Kitami Shihoko (1885-1955)
Song by 平井康三郎 Hirai Kozaburō (1910-2002)

人*(t)*恋うは
前きものと
平城に
ともおり来つ
堪えがたかりき

いにしえも
夫に恋いつつ
超えとう
平城山の道に
涙おとしぬ

Hito *(t)*kou wa (5)
Kanashiki mono to (7)
Nara Yama ni (5)
Motoorkitsutsu (7)
Taegatakiki (7)

Inishie mo (5)
Tsuma ni koisutsu (7)
Koeshitou (5)
Nara Yama no michi ni (8)
Namida otoshinu (7)

*(t)*Longing for someone (5)
Bringing such profound *(t)*sorrow, (7)
Unto Mount Nara (5)
*(v)*Did I go, there to wander, (7)
*(v)*The pain the while so hard to bear. (8)

As in ancient times, (5)
*(v)*It is told, a lady too, (7)
Yearning for *(v)*her love, (5)
Thus trod the path o'er Mount Nara, (8)
*(v)*Where I let fall so many a tear. (9)
BACKGROUND

This poem was composed in 1935 (the tenth year of the Shōwa period), by the woman writer of Tanka poetry, Kitami Shihoko, and set to music in its exquisite song-form — with a melody based on the traditional pentatonic scale, and piano accompaniment imitating the sound of the koto — in the same year. Each of the two verses of the poem is in fact in the classical Tanka style, consisting of 5 lines of 5, 7, 5, 7 & 7 syllables (other than the fourth line of the second verse, which consists of 8 syllables — a permissible occasional phenomenon in the writing of Tanka or Haiku, known as ji amari, or a ‘hypermetre’). The poet later included the poem in her anthology of Tanka poetry, *Hana no Kage* (The Brilliance of Flowers 花の光) under the title of *Iwa-no-hime Kōgō Goryō* (The Tomb of the Empress Iwa-no-hime 石の媛皇后御陵), in the notation of the poem as it appears in this volume, it is written using the original forms of the Kanji and in the so-called old Kana style, and is at the same time printed from top to bottom of the page, with the traditional five lines linked together as one complete line with no punctuation, which became the practice at the beginning of the Meiji era ③. Reference to another group of eight poems contained in the same volume, the theme and title of which is *Nara Yama*, namely *Nara Yama no Kyōshū* (Reminiscences of Nara Yama 平城山の郷愁), and in which the poet similarly refers to several visits to Nara Yama and its imperial tombs (see note (i) below), and expresses longing for a ‘husband’, or ‘love’ (see note (vi) below), residing far away in France, reveals a suggestion to the personal background to the poem ④.

In the translation of the poem, I have undertaken as far as possible to retain the rhythm of the original, being as faithful as possible to the number of syllables in each line. However, whereas in the recitation of a traditional Japanese poem, each syllable of a word, and accordingly a line, is afforded approximately the equivalent amount of stress and length, so that each syllable in effect constitutes a ‘foot’, given the wide variation of stress and length of syllables in English, though the same number of syllables per line may be achieved in translation, the length will by no means necessarily be the same. Further, given the frequent necessity of the article before a noun in English, the syllable count is inevitably increased. Thus, as in verse 1, line 5, the necessity of the definite article before the word ‘pān’, unavoidably brings the syllable count to 8. The result is therefore a reproduction in translation of a ‘hypermetre’. In verse 2, line 4, I have kept the ‘hypermetre’ of the original, and in verse 2, line 5, I have purposely produced another ‘hypermetre’, as I felt the inclusion of the word ‘so’ in ‘so many a tear’, while not essential grammatically, to render greater emphasis to the meaning (see note (vii) below), and to read more naturally rhythm-wise, and as I wished to create a conscious link with the ‘so hard to bear’ of verse 1, line 5. The syllable count for each line of the original and of the translation, is given at the end of each line in parentheses.

In the composition of the English version of the poem, I have in addition attempted to produce an interwoven flow of alliteration and assonance throughout the lines, as with the ‘s’, ‘d’, and ‘w’ consonant sounds and the variant sounds of the ‘o’ vowel in verse 1, and with the ‘t’ and ‘l’ consonant sounds and the variant sounds of the ‘a’ vowel in verse 2.

NOTES

(i) The 平城山 Nara Yama of the title is a stretch of hill land of approximately 100 metres in height, reaching from east to west across the boundary of the areas of Nara and Kyoto, to the north of the present-day city of Nara. In ancient times, it served as a communication route between the two areas. It is the location of numerous burial mounds, including those of imperial and high-ranking families, among which is that of *Iwa-no-hime* (see background and note (vi)).

(ii) The expression 恋う kou of 人恋う hito kou, which I have chosen to interpret as ‘longing (for someone)’, and which could perhaps be said to be one of the most important expressions in the world of classical Japanese literature, has no direct equivalent in English, embracing the various nuances of ‘deep love’, ‘devotion’, ‘longing’, ‘yearning’ or ‘sense of deeply missing’ felt for a person — either absent or deceased — or for one’s home or birthplace. (See also line 2 of verse 2, where it
appears as part of the expression *koitsutsu*).

(iii) As with the expression *kou* in note (ii) above, the expression 悲しい *kanashii*, of 悲しきもの *kanashiki mono*, which I have translated as ‘(such profound) sorrow’, is an essential word in classical Japanese literature, and similarly, with no directly corresponding expressions in English, embraces the various nuances of ‘deep or painful sadness’ or ‘sorrow’, ‘longing’, ‘yearning’, ‘love’ and ‘regret’.

(iv) The verb もとる *motooru* of もとおり来つ *motoorikitsutsu* is used also in the poem, *Hamabe no Uta*, meaning to ‘roam/wander to and fro’, (see Paper 1). As the term appears in the eighth century chronicle, *Kojiki* (see note (vi) below), its use would seem to be particularly appropriate in this poem. The suffix つつ *tsutsu* of 来つ *kitsutsu* in the latter part of the expression, can be understood to denote either the idea of continuation, or of simultaneity. Thus here, 来 *ki*, meaning ‘come’, suggests ‘continue coming/to come’, or ‘while coming’ — or possibly ‘going’, ‘coming’ here being used in the sense of the poet imagining herself at the time of writing, in the place she is writing of. Although it is possible to infer that the poet visited Mount Nara on many occasions, (see the background to the poem above), whether she visited it many times, occasionally, or whether it is just one experience of which she is writing, is not, however, evident from the suffix *tsutsu* itself. The latter sense of simultaneity, connecting with the sense of the following line 5, would therefore seem to be more appropriate, with the idea of ‘while wandering, the pain was so hard to bear’ — ‘while / the while’ appearing in line 5. (This interpretation of the sense of ‘simultaneity’, could still be taken to apply to other occasions, if this be the case.) Similarly, the choice in translation of ‘Did I go, there to wander’ seemed to be appropriate, given its equal flexibility of meaning, in terms of the degree of frequency of the action (verb). The unstated subject, I have interpreted as the poet herself (see end of note (v) below), and thus rendered as ‘I’. (The suffix *tsutsu* appears also in the second line of the second verse, in 夫に恋いつつ *tsuma ni koitsutsu*, (see note (vi) below).

(v) The literal translation of 堪えがたちき *taegatakari* here is ‘(was) difficult to bear’, but as the unstated subject has to be specified in translation, I have interpreted this as the ‘pain’ of the profound sorrow brought about by the sense of longing for someone. The final *ki* conveys the nuance of personal experience, and thus the fact that the poet is indeed here speaking in the first person. Strictly speaking, it thus denotes the past tense, which I have chosen to convey alternatively in the previous line 4, in the ‘did’ of ‘did I go, there to wander’ (see note (iv) above), with which it is connected.

(vi) The literal translation of the word 夫 *tsuma* here is ‘husband’, (or, by association, ‘love’), and it is thought to refer to the early fifth century emperor, *Nintoku Tennō* (仁徳天皇), ‘husband’ of Iwa-no-hime (磐之媛 / 石之日売), subject of the original title of the poem (see background and note (i) above), who longed to receive his love, but which was instead bestowed upon his concubines, resulting in a feeling of deep jealousy on the part of Iwa-no-hime, (which, though she never ceased to long for the Emperor Nintoku, drove her to leave him and live for ever apart). The story appears in the eighth century chronicles, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki*, in the respective chapters on the Emperor Nintoku. The sentiment of the plight of Iwa-no-hime is further revealed in four Tanka poems composed by her, which subsequently came to be included in the second volume of the 8th century *Manyōshū* (万葉集), the earliest collection of Tanka poetry. Without knowledge of this background, however, which is not generally immediately familiar even to Japanese, and as the story conjures up the not-so-desirable association of jealousy, I felt it would be too complicated to introduce this reference in English. While, however, the subject (ie. the ‘wife’ of the ‘husband’ mentioned) is left to the imagination in the original, it is, of course, necessary in translation for it to be stated. By introducing the subject of ‘a lady’ to refer to Iwa-no-hime, while at the same time leaving the exact identity of the ‘lady’ open to various possibilities of interpretation, and by using the similarly non-specific expression ‘her love’ for the original *tsuma*, (so that the two can still be understood in specific terms, if the background does happen to be familiar), the result conveys the idea of the poet either identifying with, or possibly imagining, the plight of a lady of the past.
who similarly suffered the pain of longing in the absence of the person she loved. The suffix tsutsu of 夫に恋いつつ tsuma ni koitsu, conveys the idea of simultaneity (see note (iv) above), which I have translated as ‘yearning for her love’. In other words, ‘while yearning for her love, she trod the path o’er Mount Nara’.

(vii) The とう tou of 超えしとう koeshitou is an abbreviation of と言う to iu, meaning ‘it is said’. The koe of koeshitou means ‘surmount’, ‘cross (over)’, or go across/over (as of, for example, a hill/mountain), and the し shi denotes the past tense. Thus the entire line literally means something like ‘it is said crossed’, or ‘is said to have crossed’. Though neither a subject, nor an object is given, the meaning implied here would seem to be that of ‘crossing Mount Nara’, the subject of the crossing presumably being the ‘lady’ inferred in the previous line. This would seem to refer to Iwa-no-hime’s crossing Mount Nara on her painful journey away from the Emperor Nintoku, as mentioned in the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki (see note (vi)), where the name Nara Yama appears written with the variant characters of 那良 and 奈良 8). As it was necessary to include the extra syllables of the subject (‘a lady’) in verse 2, line 2, in terms of overall rhythm and syllable count, and the general flow and sense of the poem in English, I have preferred to change the order of lines 2 and 3 in translation, and to convey the idea of ‘cross’ in line 4, in the ‘trod . . . o’er’ of ‘thus trod the path o’er Mount Nara’, which in turn connects naturally with the last line 5. The unstated object of the ‘crossing’, (Mount Nara), necessary in translation, appears in line 4, with reference to the poet, in bringing the focus of the poem back to her. The use of the word ‘where’ in line 5 of the translation, enables it to be applied to both ‘the lady’ and the poet, and emphasizes the connection between the two. A literal translation of lines 4 and 5 would variously be ‘On/along the path/paths of Mount Nara, Dropped/let fall a tear/tears’. Despite the addition of extra syllables (see the background to the poem above), I chose to include the expression ‘so many a’ before ‘tear’, as this sense of ‘so many tears’ seemed to be implicitly contained in the mood of the original. The unstated subject here is similarly the poet, concluding with her own experience.

2. Hatsu Koi First Love

初恋

Poem by 石川啄木 Ishikawa Takuboku (1886 - 1912)
Song by 越谷達之助 Koshitani Tatsunosuke (1909 - 1985)

(A) 01 In the sand
  02 Of the sand dunes,
  03 I lie on my front.
  04 A day of distant memory,
  05 The pain of first love.

(B) 01 Sunk in the softness of sand dunes, I face down.
  02 A day rememb’ring.
  03 Recalling from far away, the suffering of first love.
BACKGROUND

This poem was written in 1910, two years before the end of the Meiji era, by the lyrical poet, Ishikawa Takuboku, at the age of 25, only two years before the end of his very short life, and is the sixth of a series of 551 Tanka poems which appear in his first anthology of Tanka poems, entitled Ichi Aku no Suna (A Handful of Sand), inspired by the experiences and reminiscences of a brief period of residence in the coastal city of Hakodate, Hokkaido, two years earlier. The poem was set in its moving, lyrical song-form in 1938, twenty-six years after the poet's death, by the composer, Koshitani Tatsunosuke. It was, in fact, one of fifteen Tanka poems from Ichi Aku no Suna which Koshitani Tatsunosuke selected to set to music, compiled as a song cycle entitled Takuboku ni Yo sete Utaeru (Composed in Tribute to Takuboku). As with the poem Nara Yama, it is composed in the 31-syllable Tanka style, based on the traditional 5, 7, 5, 7, 7 syllable sequence, though, unlike Nara Yama, its one verse stands complete as a whole poem, as is the usual form of Tanka writing. However, unlike in the conventional style of Tanka poems, the first and second lines (5 + 7 syllables), and the fourth and fifth lines (7 + 7 syllables), are connected, each as one line, respectively. Further, in the notation of the poem as it originally appeared, it is written from top to bottom, with the use of Kanji instead of Hiragana for the expression harabai, and for the izuru of the expression omoizuru, and employing the so-called old Kana style (as above). In the song setting, the whole poem is repeated, and a certain degree of rearrangement and repetition of the lines/phrases is woven into the flow of the lyrically passionate melody, as follows (the underlined phrases representing the additional lines):

砂山の砂に
砂にはらばい
初恋のいたみを
遠くおもいいる日
初恋のいたみを
遠く遠く ああ
おもいいる日
砂山の砂に 砂にはらばい
初恋のいたみを
遠くおもいいる日

Sunayama no suna ni
Suna ni harabai
Hatsu koi no itami o
Toku omoizuru hi
Hatsu koi no itami o
Toku a
Omoizuru hi
Suna ni harabai
Hatsu koi no itami o
Toku omoizuru hi

For the present, however, I have chosen to make a translation of the poem in its original form, though I would at a later stage indeed like to attempt an English version of the song, to be sung. Immediately following the Japanese transcription of the original poem above, I give my first translation of the poem (A), composed without over-conscious concern for the syllable count of each line, but more with the aim of achieving a concise poem which both captures the essence of the original, and reads smoothly as a poem in English — though choosing to employ the five-line structure of the traditional Tanka. Below this, I have given my subsequent version (B), which makes a conscious attempt to produce as far as possible the equivalent number of syllables per line as the original, and which is based on the three-line structure of the original poem.

In terms of the tone of the content of the poem, and choice of the juxtaposition of imagery, the poem Hatsu Koi represents an example of a new approach to the writing of poetry in a traditional style. As a poet writing at the end of the Meiji era, Ishikawa Takuboku’s approach to the composition of Tanka poetry, both content-wise and structure-wise, reveals a new, innovative flexibility. In fact, in the poems of Ichi Aku no Suna, approximately four different arrangements of 5 and 7 syllable lines can be seen, resulting from the natural rhythm required by the meaning and flow of each poem. Indeed:
"[Ishikawa Takuboku’s] first anthology of Tanka poetry, Ichihachi Aku no Suna...signifies a new epoch-making phase in the history of Tanka poetry."\(^{11}\)

Again:

"...Composed from the standpoint of rejecting conventional methods of Tanka writing, not only was the language of Takuboku’s Tanka frequently colloquial in nature, even the use of metaphor was that of [new-style] poetry. Moreover, it is correct to say that, at the stage of compiling Ichihachi Aku no Suna (『一握の砂』A Handful of Sand), by means of arranging [his Tanka] in three lines, Takuboku created works which, in both technique and form, it would be more appropriate to call ‘short [new-style] poems’...Takuboku managed to bring Tanka remarkably close to [new-style] poems."\(^{12}\)

Further, in the poet’s own words:

"Until now we’ve chosen to use old language [in Tanka writing], but isn’t this now inconvenient? We should use language which is as near as possible to modern usage, and if the result is that it doesn’t fit into 31 syllables, we can use ji amari (a hypermetre). If then it’s still not possible to achieve [a good Tanka], it won’t be because the use of language or the form is old, but because our minds are old."\(^{13}\)

NOTES

(i) 砂山の砂に腹道ひ Sunayama no suna ni harabai
(A) In the sand
   Of the sand dunes,
   I lie on my front.
(B) Sunk in the softness of sand dunes, I lie face down.

The expression 腹道ひ harabai literally means ‘lie on one’s stomach’, a good example of the innovative, or ‘modern’, tone of language mentioned above. I felt, however, that the use of the English word ‘stomach’ would perhaps sound somewhat too down-to-earth for the pervading mood of the poem, and therefore attempted to substitute it in my first version (A), with the word ‘front’. In my version (B), I went a step further, and used the expression ‘face down’, as opposed to ‘face up’, to incorporate the idea of ‘on one’s stomach/front’. Typically, the subject of the ‘lying face down’ is omitted, but even without the background knowledge that the poem does represent personal reminiscences on the part of the poet, it would seem apparent here that it is written in the first person — hence the usage of ‘I’.

Whereas in my translation (A), for unusual aural effect, I purposely repeated the word ‘sand’ as it appears in the original, used on its own and combined with the word ‘dunes’, in my second version (B), I attempted instead an interpretation of the tactile feel of the sand dunes, in terms of ‘softness’. I also attempted an interpretation of the actual state of the expression 腹道ひ harabai, imagined in terms of the ‘sand’ on/in which the poet was lying, in other words, a state of ‘being sunk in it’. At the same time as producing a line composed of five and seven syllables, as in the original, this particular juxtaposition of words also creates alliteration throughout the line, with the six occurrences of the sibilant ‘s’/‘z’ sounds.

(ii) 初恋の Hatsu koi no いたみを遠くおもひ出る日 Itami o toku omoiizuru hi
(A) A day of distant memory,
   The pain of first love.
(B) A day remembr'ing,

Recalling from far away, the suffering of first love.

Grammatically, it is very difficult to maintain the order of the original second and third lines: literally, ‘First love’s Pain, distantly remembering day’. Though in version (A) I have changed the adverbial-verbal 遠くおもび出る to とくおもい出る とくおもいずる ‘distantly remembering’, to the adjective and noun phrase ‘distant memory’, which seemed to work better in English, this is perhaps still reasonably close to the original. In the second line of version (B), I have, for the sake of achieving a line of five syllables, chosen to use the apostrophized elided form of the word ‘remembering’. In the third line, I have repeated the idea of ‘remembering’ with the word ‘recall’, to convey, in combination with the expression of ‘from far away’ for ‘distant’, the sense of long and intense recollection. The structure of the expression おもび出る おもい出す おもいずる omoidasu, its literary tone creating an interesting juxtaposition with the term 腹違 garaiba in the first line.

I have chosen to use the word ‘suffering’ instead of ‘pain’ for いたみ itami, both from the point of view of syllable count, and in order to make a connection with the sibilant alliteration in the first line, creating further similar alliteration with the ‘s’ sound of ‘suffering’ and again with that of ‘first’ in ‘first love’. Further alliteration is also created with the ‘l’ sounds in ‘lie’, ‘recalling’, and ‘love’ (first and third lines), and assonance created with the long ‘a’ vowel sound of ‘face’, ‘day’, and ‘away’ (first, second, and third lines), and the ‘u’ vowel sound in ‘sunk’ and ‘suffering’ (first and third lines).

3. Yoimachi-gusa Evening Primrose

Poem by 竹久夢二 Takehisa Yumeji (1884 - 1934)
Song by 多忠俊 Ono Tadasuke (1895 - 1930)

(0)待てど おもひ出せど
(0)Kurase to kura to (7)
(0)Matedo kurasedo (7)
(0)Ko no hito o (5)

(0)来ぬ人を
(0)Yoimachi-gusa no (7)
(0)Yarusenasa (5)

(0)育待草の
(0)今宵は 月も
(0)出ぬさかな
(0)Koyoi wa tsuki mo (7)
(0)Denu sōna (5)

(0)Ever waiting with the dark, (7)
(0)For one who does not come. (6)
(0)As the Evening Primrose waits, (7)
(0)Wretched and forlorn. (5)
(0)Thus, once more, it seems this night, (7)
(0)There will shine no moon. (5)
BACKGROUND

This poem was composed by the poet, Takehisa Yumeji, who is equally renowned as a painter, particularly for his delicate female portraits. Indeed, his paintings were often inscribed with poems, and his poems were often accompanied by illustrations. With the commencement of the Taisho era, and the further seeking of new modes of thinking in art and life, the inspiring style of lyrical expression in both Takehisa Yumeji’s painting and his poetry, afforded extensive appeal, particularly amongst the young:

“The essence of the life of the ordinary people of the day expressed in Yumeji’s unique ‘genre pictures’ of beautiful women, his lyrical, fin-de-siècle works of aesthetism, cast a spell on the young men and women of the Taisho era.” [4]

The poem Yoimachi-gusa was first published in the journal Shōjo (Young Woman), in 1912, (two years after Ishikawa Takuboku’s Hatsu Koi), in its original form, arranged in eight-lines. It was then published again one year later in his first volume of illustrated poems entitled Dountaku (Zondag (Holiday)), pub. Itsugyō no Nihonsha (実業日本社), when it appeared rearranged in a four-line structure. [5] It was set to music in 1918, the cover of the manuscript bearing the illustration of a slender young woman in a simple kimono, standing, waiting under a tree, head sunk and eyes closed in disappointment and grief. The usual written arrangement of the poem of the song is as that presented above, in a six-line structure. As, unlike the song version of Hatsu Koi, no repetition of any of the lines or phrases is included, the deeply-moving lyrical song version of Yoimachi-gusa is in fact extremely short — yet exquisite and poignant in its brevity. Still loved today, it was extremely popular, and widely sung at the time of its composition. A year later, it appeared once more, this time arranged in a three-line form, in the anthology Yume no Furusato (『夢のふるさと』Place of Dreams), pub. Shinchō-sha. [6]

For my translation, I have chosen the six-line structure of the transcription of the poem of the song, as this seemed to fit the natural sense of the phrasing in English. Another reason for this, however, was that, in the process of translation, the English version of the poem very naturally began to ‘sing itself’, and flow with the melody of the song. The resulting English translation, therefore, is one that can also be sung.

Though not written in the Tanka style as such, Yoimachi-gusa is nevertheless based on the traditional 5/7 syllables per line structure, consisting of alternating lines of 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 5 syllables, respectively. This same syllable count has been achieved in the translation — other than in the second line, which consists of 6 syllables, where there has been created, as it were, a ‘hyper metre’. The language of the poem maintains a slightly classical, literary tone, which enhances its pervading lyrical atmosphere, and I have endeavoured to capture this mood in the language of the translation.

NOTES

(i) The 育待草 Yoimachi-gusa, or Evening Primrose, of the title, which bears the botanical name of Oenothera macrocarpa, is a delicate, yellow flower, originally native to the Kansas region of the northern United States, rather than an indigenous flower of Japan. It blooms in late May and early June, its flowers coming out in the evening. The flowers are known to last only one evening, the flower head, without shedding its petals, withering the following day on the stem. The correct name for the flower in Japanese is in fact 大育待草 Omatsuyoi-sō, popularly known as 待育草 Matsuyoi-sō, but as Takehisa Yumeji seemingly preferred the more poetic-sounding reverse order of the first two Kanji, he apparently renamed the flower in this way for his poem. The term 待育 Matsuyoi, (literally ‘waiting evening’ / ‘evening of waiting’), also refers to the night of August 14th according to the Lunar Calendar, the connotation being that this evening awaits the full moon of the following night, August 15th, the moon of the Mid-Autumn Festival, thought to be the most exquisite full moon of the year. [7] The flower
is also known as 月見草 Tsukimi-sō, or Moon-viewing Grass.

(ii) 待てど 暮らせど Matedo kurasedo

来ぬ人を Konu hito o

Ever waiting with the dark,
For one who does not come.

The suffix ど do of 待てど matedo, conveys the idea of ‘even though’, or ‘in spite of doing something’, so that the whole phrase would be something like ‘in spite of waiting’. The 暮らせ kurasu infinitive form of暮らせど kurasedo, conveys in its original, classical/literary sense, the idea of staying, or biding time, until dark, so that the whole phrase implies ‘in spite of waiting until dark’. In the translation, these two phrases are combined, to express the idea of waiting on and on into the dark, and creating alliteration with the ‘w’ sounds of ‘waiting’ and ‘with’, and the ‘one’ I have chosen to use in the following line. By association and extension of meaning, the verb暮らせ kurasu has come to mean ‘spend time’, ‘spend a day/days’, or, in the modern sense, ‘live’, as in ‘live in a certain place’. In fact, the collocation of the two expressions 待てど 暮らせど Matedo kurasedo, which can be traced back to the Edo era, and which is still used in conversation today, has taken on the sense of ‘waiting a very long time (for something which does not tend to happen), in other words with the sense of ‘however long one lives and waits’, or ‘although living in waiting’, without a definite awareness of the original sense of ‘waiting until dark’ contained in the expression暮らせ kurasu, and the sense of ‘dark’ contained in the Kanji it uses. Consequently, one possible interpretation of this first line of the poem could indeed be the idea of ‘no matter how long (I) live and wait’, or ‘though (I) wait and wait’. Given the sense of the following two verses, however, with the figurative image of the Evening Primrose waiting for the moon, I eventually chose the idea of ‘waiting and waiting, even after dark has come’. The o of来ぬ人を Konu hito o in the following line, is an accusative particle, suggesting the object of the waiting, a ‘person who does not come / people who do not come’ — or, ‘one who does not come’. The subject of the waiting is typically not identified, though a subject has intentionally not been offered in the translation either.

(iii) 育待草の Yoimachi-gusa no

やるせなさ Yarusenasā

As the Evening Primrose waits,
Wretched and forlorn.

The expressionやるせなさ yarusenasā is in fact a noun, meaning wretchedness, or downheartedness, the two lines育待草のやるせなさ Yoimachi-gusa no Yarusenasα, literally meaning ‘The wretchedness of the Evening Primrose’. I eventually felt that use of an adjective worked better here, and intentionally chose two similar ones, less from the point of view of the syllable count and musical phrasing, than for emphasis of the situation of the Evening Primrose (and the subject of the first verse). I have also chosen to express in the translation what I felt to be the implicit idea of ‘in the same way as’, as the unidentified young woman of the first verse likens herself to the Evening Primrose, who waits, longing for the moon to appear and greet her. Further alliteration has been achieved here with the repeat of the word ‘wait’, and with the word ‘wretched’.

(iv) 今宵は 月も Koyoi wa Tsuki mo

出ぬそうな Denu sona

Thus, once more, it seems this night,
There will shine no moon.

I have translated theも of月も Tsuki mo, meaning ‘also’, which in addition contains the nuance of emphasis, as ‘once more’, with the idea that both the young woman and the Evening Primrose share the same sad circumstances of perpetually waiting, for a moon and a person they yearn for, but who never appear. Though the出ぬ denu of the original in fact means
'does not come out', I have intentionally chosen the more beautiful 'shine', and have attempted to phrase it, together with the addition of the word 'Thus' in the preceding line, in a slightly more literary vein. Alliteration has been created here with the the 'th' sounds of 'thus', 'this' and 'there', with the 'm' sounds of 'more' and 'moon', and the final 'n' sounds of 'shine' and 'moon', and assonance, with the 'or' sounds of 'more' and the word 'forlorn' at the end of line four. Additional assonance has been achieved throughout the poem as a whole, with the varied 'o' sounds of 'come', 'forlorn', and 'moon' (end of lines two, four and six), and alliteration with the final 'n' sounds of 'forlorn' and 'moon' (end of lines four and six).

4. "Sō Shun Fu Ode to Early Spring"

Poem by 吉丸一昌 Yoshimaru Kazumasa (1873 - 1916)
Song by 中田 章 Nakada Akira (1886 - 1931)

春は名のみの 風の寒さや
谷の鶯の歌は思えど
時にあらずと 声も立てず
時にあらずと 声も立てず

水解け去り 葦は角ぐむ
さてはときぞと 思うあやにく
今日もきのうも 雪の空
今日もきのうも 雪の空

春と聞かねば 知らでありしを
聞けば急かる 胸の思いを
いかにせよとの この頃か
いかにせよとの この頃か

Haru wa na nomi no kaze no samusa ya
Tani no uguisu no uta wa omoedo
Toki ni arazu to koe mo tatezu
Toki ni arazu to koe mo tatezu

Kōri tokesari ashi wa tsunogumu
Satewa toki zo to omou ayaniku
Kyō mo kino mo yuki no sora
Kyō mo kino mo yuki no sora

Haru to kikaneba shirade arishi o
Kikeba sekaruru mune no omoi o
Ikani seyo to kono koro ka
Ikani seyo to kono koro ka

(a) The spring is but a name in the chill of the wind,
(b) The bush warbler in the valley,
(c) though longing to sing,
(d) Finds still it is too soon to trill his song,
(e) Finds still it is too soon to trill his song.

(f) The pond ice thaws, and (g) reeds begin to sprout,
(h) "Oh, spring has come at last," I rejoice, yet, alas!
Today, as yesterday, (i) the sky is filled with snow,
Today, as yesterday, the sky is filled with snow.

(j) If I had not heard 'twas spring, I would not know,
(k) Yet now I've heard, my heart impatiently takes flight!
(l) Oh, how should I bide this wondrous time?
(m) Oh, how should I bide this wondrous time?
BACKGROUND

As with the song *Kōjō no Tsuki* (see Paper 1), both the above poem and its song setting were commissioned by the Ministry of Education of the time, as a so-called Gakkō Shōka, or ‘School Song’ — though composed twelve years after *Kōjō no Tsuki*, in the second year of the Taishō era, 1913. It was in fact originally contained in the third volume of a ten-volume work, *Shinsaku Shōka* (『新作唱歌』New School Songs), the editing of which the poet, while teaching at the Tokyo School of Music (later to become the present-day Tokyo University of Arts and Music), was responsible, and 75 songs included in which, he himself contributed. As is also the case with *Kōjō no Tsuki*, the song *Sōshun Fu* is still today contained in school music textbooks, in particular in those for use at Junior High School and High School level. Similarly, it remains a well-loved representative example of the genre of *Nihon Kakyoku*.

Bearing in mind the fact that the poet, Yoshimaru Kazumasa, was a scholar of Japanese literature, it is interesting to note that the *Fu* (赋) of the title refers to a traditional literary genre, originally Chinese. Unlike other traditional forms of Chinese poetry, however, the *Fu* is not restricted or determined by its actual linguistic structure, the term rather referring more freely to a literary piece of writing, usually quite short in length, constituting ‘prose poetry,’ or ‘poetic prose’, in which a certain use of rhyme might, though not necessarily, be employed, but among the possible themes of which are featured concise, lyrical descriptions of natural scenery, or expressive depictions of circumstances or events. It would seem that this definition of the *Fu* applies very well to the content and mood of *Sōshun Fu*. Thus, the most appropriate English translation of the *Fu* of the title I concluded to be ‘Ode’. Language-wise too, the poem is suitably written in a classical mode.

As far as the structure of the poem is concerned, each of the four lines of each verse consists of a combination of the frequently employed 5 and 7 syllable metre pattern of traditional Japanese poetry — specifically, 7/7, 7/7, 7/5, 7/5, lines three and four of verse one consisting of 7/6, 7/6 syllables, being an example of *ji amari*, or a hypermetre.

Though I initially approached my translation as a translation of the poem itself, employing the English poetical devices of alliteration and assonance, from the point of view of recitation, so much is the poem of *Sōshun Fu* a part of the lilting, 6/8 rhythm dance-like melody of the song which it has become, that it is in a way difficult to consider the poem on its own. Thus, bearing in mind the accent of the melody and the natural accent of the words in English, I attempted to take my translation a step further, rearranging my original choice of wording where necessary, so that the English translation might indeed be sung.

NOTES

(i) The 春 *sō shun* of the title, I have translated literally as ‘early spring’. This refers to the time of the traditional arrival of spring, with *Risshun*, or ‘the first day of spring’ according to the Lunar Calendar, which falls each year on approximately February 4th. Season-wise, however, this time of year is still really winter, a sense of the true start of spring not coming until around the time of *Shunbun*, or *O-higan*, the Vernal Equinox, though even at this time (approximately March 21st), it can still be slightly cold. This is particularly so of the mountainous Northern Alps region of Nagano prefecture in Central Japan, which, as a result of the poet having been commissioned to write another school song for a school in the area and his thus having briefly resided there, is said to be the inspiration and setting of the poem.

(ii) The suffix や of 春は名のみの 風の寒さや *Haru wa na nomi no kaze no samusa ya* (‘The spring is but a name in the chill of the wind’), conveys emphasis, and the nuance of strongly expressing the emotion of the speaker, and appealing to the empathetic feelings of the listener. As with the majority of the wealth of subtle particles in Japanese, it is nigh impossible to translate this effectively in English. I have translated the possessive particle の *no* here, which literally means ‘of’, as ‘in’ — the idea of the whole phrase literally suggesting something like ‘the cold/chill of the wind which is part of the fact that the spring is only a name’. 
(iii) 谷の鶯 Tani no uguisu ‘The bush warbler in the valley’. The literal translation of tani no is ‘of a/the valley/s’, suggesting ‘belonging to a/the valley/s’ (see note (ii) above). It is well known that the 鶯 uguisu seeks the seclusion of valley areas for its habitat during the cold winter months, returning to the higher hills or mountains during the rest of the year. The poetical collocation of tani and uguisu is in fact a very natural one to Japanese, the term tani no uguisu being a recognized semantically related set phrase (or 練語 engo), which appears in numerous examples of classical literature. As, in the context of the poem, spring has not yet truly arrived, I have interpreted the expression in terms of the uguisu still actually being ‘in’ the valley. As always, the question of the singular or plural presents itself here. As it is also known that the uguisu tends to live alone, rather than with others of its kind, I have chosen the singular. The singular uguisu can, though, at the same time be taken to be representative of the general circumstances of all uguisu(s). Theoretically, of course, the question of singular or plural applies also to the word 谷 tani here, in terms of whether it is actually an uguisu/uguisu(s) in one ‘valley’ which is being spoken of, or uguisu in the plural in various ‘valleys’ in general. Again, the singular here seemed most appropriate.

As is so often the case with plants and animals native to a particular country, the exact variety of which is possibly not existent elsewhere, the greatest difficulty here is the translation of the name of the bird uguisu itself. In certain English dictionaries, it can be found translated as a ‘Japanese nightingale’, presumably due to the association of the beauty of the song of the two birds. Though the British nightingale immediately comes to mind as being an inspiration of poetry, as in John Keats’ Ode to a Nightingale — (interestingly enough, also an ‘Ode’ (Fu)) — and thus, from a poetical point of view, would seem very appropriate, the uguisu and the nightingale are in fact two quite different birds. Not only is the actual song of the two birds different, but, unlike the nightingale, the uguisu does not sing at night. Further, the nightingale tends to be associated more with early summer than with the coming of spring. Another, more frequently found English translation of uguisu is ‘Japanese Bush Warbler’, as it is apparently similar to other species of bush warblers native to North America, and equally distinguished from other types of ‘warblers’ by the fact that it can mainly be found in small bushes or thickets close to the ground (rather than tall trees), where it searches for insects for food. As the term ‘warbler’ denotes the idea of the bird having a beautiful song, and as ‘bush’ conveys the idea that it is to be found in a bush/bushes, I have ultimately chosen to use this translation. The addition of the word ‘Japanese’, however, seemed to be too cumbersome, and, in poetical terms, unnecessary.

The uguisu is a traditional symbol of spring, the first instance of its song heralding the arrival of spring, as with the Cuckoo in English tradition. (As in William Wordsworth’s To The Cuckoo, and the piece for small orchestra, On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring, by the composer Frederick Delius.) Indeed, given this association, ‘cuckoo’ might consequently have been another possibility of translation, just as ‘nightingale’, with its association of beautiful song, might have been — though, as explained above, both ‘nightingale’ and ‘cuckoo’ are in fact very different birds. The song of the uguisu, has an appealing, very Japanese, ring to it, sounding to the human ear something in the nature of ‘Ho-ko-ke-kyo’, with the first ‘Ho’ syllable elongated, and the main stress on the second ‘ko’ syllable. These repeated notes bear a great similarity to the chanting of a Buddhist Sutra, as delightfully described by Lafcadio Hearn in his Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan.18

(iv) The ど do of 歌 is 思えど uta wa omoedo, ‘though longing to sing’, renders the idea of ‘even though’, or ‘in spite of’ (see note (ii) of Yoimachi-gusa above). The infinitive 思う omo of 思えど omoedo which literally means ‘think’, embodies the nuance of ‘think longingly of’, or, by extension, ‘miss’. The word 歌 uta here is in fact the noun, ‘song’, so that the uguisu ‘thinks longingly of its song’.

(v) 時に出らずと 声も立てず Toki ni arazu to koe mo tatezu ‘Finds still it is too soon to trill his song’. The literal translation of this line is ‘As it is not the time, (it) will not raise/sound (its) voice’, the nuance of the emphatic particle も of 声も立てず koe mo tatezu, being difficult to translate. As it is the male uguisu which sings to attract the female, I have
preferred to use the personal pronoun ‘his’, which would seem to arouse more of a sense of empathy on the part of the singer/listener, rather than ‘it’.

(vi) 水解け去り Kori tokesari The literal translation of this phrase is ‘(the) ice thaws’ or ‘(the) ice thaws away’. It is very possible, of course, that the poet was not thinking in particular, concrete terms of any specific location for the ice, but rather as ‘ice in general’, almost as an alternative for ‘snow’ — as the word ‘snow’ appears in lines 3 and 4 of the same verse — with the idea of it lying everywhere on the land. Though it might be poetically permissible to keep the image of ‘ice’ as such, and thus leave the nature and location of the ‘ice’ to the imagination of the reader (listener), as this is the first time for any mention of ice to be made, and as ice, unlike snow, does not by its nature cover everything, it does feel necessary in English to provide a little more information, and indicate where the ice might be. As so often happens, this immediately presents the translator with the responsibility of making a decision based on his/her own judgement. Bearing in mind the fact that the next phrase refers to ‘reeds’, which necessarily grow in or at the edge of water, the ice could, for example, be thought to be on a lake, on a river, or covering a marsh area. Rather than attempting to specify any particular lake or river, however, and though at first being tempted to use the slightly more poetic-sounding ‘marsh’, I finally chose to interpret the ice as ‘pond ice’, which, particularly as a result of using ‘pond’ adjectively, rather than giving ‘ice on the pond’, could refer both to a small pond, and similarly by association to any small area of ‘ice’ in an abstract sense, thus avoiding the risk of being too specific.

(vii) The phrase 角ぐむ tsunogumu of 草は角ぐむ ashi wa tsunogumu, ‘reeds begin to sprout’, describes the state of the new shoots (of reeds) pushing out little pointed heads, which it was difficult to convey poetically in translation.

(viii) In the translation of the phrase さてはときぞ Satowa toki zo to, ‘Oh, spring has come at last, I rejoice’, I have included the verb ‘rejoice’, which is not included as such as a verb in the original, to render the nuance of the final emphatic particle よ zō, and the idea conveyed by the particle と to which immediately follows it, that the happy realization that spring has come at last, is being ‘exclaimed’. The main problem here is the subject of the rejoicing, and whether it should be rendered in the singular or plural, as ‘I’ or ‘we’. This choice should inevitably continue consistently until the end of the poem. I eventually made the choice of ‘I’, in terms of speaking from the personal position of the speaker/singer appealing to the listener.

It is indeed also possible to interpret the subject here, and throughout the poem, as continuing to be the uguisu, observing the scene and sensing the atmosphere, waiting for the true arrival of spring and the right moment for it to begin to sing. Such, where no definite subject is given, is the degree of possibility of interpretation in Japanese poetry. I have, however, interpreted the subject of the second and third verses as the speaker/singer, (albeit possibly identifying with the feeling of the uguisu), as waiting to hear the song of the uguisu, as heralding the arrival of spring, observing the natural scenery and elements, and longing for the true coming of this joyous season (and possibly, in terms of the end of the song, its connotation with the kindling of thoughts of love — see note (x) below).

(ix) The expression 雪の空 yuki no sora, which I have translated as ‘the sky is filled with snow’, literally means ‘a sky of snow’. It is the equivalent of the expression 雪空 yukizora, which implies a state of the sky appearing as if at any moment snow will begin to fall from it.

(x) 聞けば急かる胸の思いを Kikeba sekaruru mune no omoi o ‘Yet now I’ve heard, my heart impatiently takes flight’ The suffix るるuru of 急かる sekaruru denotes a sense of natural occurrence, and is often used with verbs connected with feeling, (see the poem Hamabe no Uta, in Paper 1). Here, it conveys the idea that on hearing/hearing heard mention of spring, (one) automatically feels/cannot help feeling in a hurry/impatient. Though I have translated 胸の思い mune no omoi, literally ‘the thoughts/feelings in (my) heart’, only as ‘heart’, I have tried to express the idea of emotional excitement with the image of the heart of the speaker/singer ‘taking flight’. The particular emotion implied can, of course, be interpreted both as simple,
pure joy for the coming of spring, or, by connotation, the kindling of love. Here, again, I have used the personal pronoun ‘I’ and the possessive pronoun ‘my’, in the same vein as in verse two. The final to of 胸の思いを mune no omoi o, is an exclamatory suffix (as is the to at the end of the preceding line), the nuance of which I have tried to convey with the use of the exclamatory ‘Oh’ at the beginning of the following repeated, final lines (see note (xi) below), denoting the pervading ‘urgent’ mood of the verse (and poem) as a whole.

(xi) いかにせよとこの頃か Ikan seyo to kono koro ka ‘Oh, how should I bide this wondrous time?’ This phrase literally means ‘What can I/we do at this time (of year)’. I have inserted the exclamatory ‘Oh’ at the beginning of the line, to capture the nuance of the exclamatory to of 胸の思いを mune no omoi o at the end of the two previous lines (see note (x) above). The adjective ‘wondrous’, which does not actually appear in the original, I have inserted, as I feel this sense is implied in the mood of the whole phrase. Once more, the subject naturally reappears is ‘I’.

5. Hana Blossom

花 (1900)

Poem by 武島羽衣 Takeshima Hagoromo (1872 - 1967)

Song by 滝 廉太郎 Taki Rentarō (1879 - 1903)

春のうらら (春の) urara no (春の) Sumidagawa

(1)のぼりくだの (のぼりくだの) Noborikudari no funabito ga

(3)のしすくも (のしすくも) Kai no shizuku mo hana to chiru

(4)ながめを何に (ながめを何に) Nagame o nani ni tatoubeki

(5)見ずやあけぼの (見ずやあけぼの) Mizu ya akebono (見ずやあけぼの) tsuyu abite

(6)見ずやあけぼの (見ずやあけぼの) Ware ni mono iu (見ずやあけぼの) sakuragi o

(7)見ずやあけぼの (見ずやあけぼの) Mizu ya yugure (見ずやあけぼの) te o nobete

(8)見ずやあけぼの (見ずやあけぼの) Ware sashimaneku (見ずやあけぼの) aoyagi

(9)緑ねとる (緑ねとる) Nishiki orinasu chōtei ni

(10)むすれのぼる (むすれのぼる) Kurureba noboru oborozuki

(11)おぼる月 (おぼる月) Senkin no

(12)ながめを何に (ながめを何に) Nagame o nani ni tatoubeki

In the (1)glorious, bright spring light, flows the (2)River Sumida,
Up and down its course, there row cheerful (3)boatmen.

(4)Gentle drops of water fall like blossom from their oars.
How could there be a greater sight than this springtide scene?

(5)How could I not delight in the (6)cherry trees,
(7)Glist'ning in the fresh dawn dew, how they (8)call to me !
How could I not delight in the (9)green willow trees,
(10)Graceful in the evening light, (11)motioning to me !
Along the river bank, \(^{(1)}\) is wov’n a beautiful brocade,
In the night sky slowly climbs, a misty full moon.
\(^{(2)}\) Truly ev’ry moment is more precious than gold.
How could there be a greater sight than this springtide scene?

BACKGROUND

Although the song \textit{Hana} is often thought of as a Gakkō Shoka (School Song), it was not in fact officially written as such. The song was composed in 1900, by Taki Rentaro, the composer of \textit{Kōjō no Tsuki} (‘Moon Over the Ruined Castle’ — see Paper 1), a year before \textit{Kōjō no Tsuki}. It was not, however, commissioned by the Ministry of Education, but was originally composed as part of a four-part suite entitled \textit{Shiki} (The Seasons), in which it represented ‘spring’. It was written for two-part choir, the other three parts, representing summer, autumn and winter, being arranged for solo voice, unaccompanied four-part choir, and four-part choir with organ and piano accompaniment, respectively. Each of the poems was composed by a different poet, the poem representing autumn being written by Taki Rentaro himself. As, though, the song \textit{Hana}, appears in school music textbooks on its own, independent of the other three parts of the suite, and as, with its graceful yet joyous melody, it has consequently become one of the most loved examples of Japanese Song, it is invariably performed on its own. It is, however, noted for being “one of the compositions of the first Art Song Suite to appear in Japan”.\(^{(19)}\)

The poem was written at the request of Taki Rentaro, for the purpose of setting it to music, by a fellow teacher at the Tokyo School of Music, Takeshima Hagoromo, a scholar of classical Japanese literature, noted for his composition of poetry in the classical style, in form and content. The poem \textit{Hana} is (as in the previous poem \textit{Sō Shun Fu}), composed using a form of the traditional 5 and 7 syllable pattern, in this case each of the lines being composed of two phrases of 7 and 5 syllables. As with \textit{Sō Shun Fu}, I have tried in the language of the translation, to capture the classical tone of the original. Again as with \textit{Sō Shun Fu}, the process of translation of the poem very naturally led on from the initial objective of a rendering in English to be read out loud, to the desire to try to create an English version of the song. The poem describes, in enchanting figurative language, the spectacular sight of the River Sumida of the Meiji era (see note (ii) below) in springtime, at different times of day, from early morning to sunset.

The \textit{Hana} of the title, literally ‘flowers’, is here a synonym for ‘cherry blossom’, or \textit{sakura}, cherry blossom being the representative Japanese flower, and symbol of spring. However, rather than translate it as ‘cherry blossom’, which would have caused confusion with \textit{Sakura Sakura}, the traditional song of the same name, I have chosen the English title of ‘Blossom’.

NOTES

(i) The expression うちらの \textit{urara no} is a variation of 雛らかな, some possibilities of translation being ‘bright’ (and clear), ‘beautiful’, ‘fine’, or ‘glorious’, and here refers to the River Sumida in spring. I have chosen to use a combination of these adjectives, not simply from the point of view of the number of syllables required to fit the melody, but because they seemed together to express most suitably the atmosphere of the scene.

(ii) 隅田川 Sumidagawa, the River Sumida, refers to the lower reaches of the River Arakawa, which has its source at the foot of Mount Kobushidake (甲武信岳, situated on the border of Saitama, Yamanashi and Nagano prefectures), and flows through the centre of Tokyo, the area which constituted the original city of Edo, out into Tokyo Bay. Particularly from Edo times it was an important transportation route, and was an essential part of the culture and life of the period. In the Meiji era, before the outward signs of industrialization had become too apparent, it was still renowned for its natural beauty, and especially for the cherry trees lining its banks in springtime.\(^{(20)}\)
(iii) It is difficult to know here whether the 船人 funabito, ‘boatman/boatmen’, of the phrase のぼりくだりの船人 noborikudari no funabito should in fact be in the singular or plural. Though the writer’s first impression of the atmosphere of the poem was indeed one of a solitary boatman going slowly up and down (noborikudari) the calm river in the glorious spring light, on further reflection, and bearing in mind the practical function of the River Sumida in the time of the composition of the poem/song, as a transportation route, this image ultimately changed to one of a lively, bustling waterway, with numerous ‘boatmen’ coming and going up and down its course. Again, in accord with this atmosphere, I have inserted the adjective ‘cheerful’ to portray further the lively atmosphere which I concluded to be the mood of the work. Though the expression noborikudari does literally mean ‘go up and down’, I have interpreted the fact that the boatmen were in fact ‘rowing’, from the word 檔 kai ‘oar/oars’ which appears in the next line.

(iv) The phrase 樹のしずくも Kai no shizuku mo 花と散る hana to chiru literally means ‘(the) drops (of water) of (from) the oar(s) fall with the flowers (blossom)’, likening the drops of water falling from the boatmen’s oars, presumably glistening in the sunlight, to the blossom falling from the cherry trees. I have chosen to enhance this image with the addition of the adjective ‘gentle’ to qualify ‘drops of water’.

(v) The expression 見ずや Mizu ya, with the particle や ya after the negative, denotes a rhetorical question, and bears the nuance of the speaker attracting the attention of the listener, so that the first person (singular) subject would seem to be appropriate. Thus: ‘How could I not look at...?!’. As an extension of the meaning, I have preferred to translate the idea of ‘look at’ as ‘delight in’. The expression 露浴びて tsuyu abite, of the phrase あけぼの 露浴びて akebono tsuyu abite, which describes the ‘cherry tree’ s, the object of ‘delight in’ here, literally means ‘bathed in ((the) dawn dew)’. I have preferred to translate this in terms of the vivid imagery thereby conveyed, of ‘glistening in the fresh dawn dew’, which also goes more naturally with the musical phrasing.

(vi) 桜木 sakuragi The question as to singular or plural, ‘cherry tree’ or ‘cherry trees’, inevitably arose here. I was initially inclined to choose the singular, in terms of the poet referring to one particular tree upon which he was fixing his attention, and which seemed to be ‘calling to me’ (him) (われにもの言う), which could equally be representative of any other cherry trees present. Bearing in mind, however, the tradition in Japan to plant cherry trees all along the banks of a river, so that their blossom appears as an exquisite stretch of pink, to be admired at ‘cherry blossom viewing time’, and as the whole scene is being looked upon almost as in a picture, it would seem that the image of cherry trees lined along the bank of the river is more appropriate.

(vii) The expression 手をのべて te o nobete literally means ‘stretching out an arm/arms (a hand/s)’, thus personifying the willow/s with their branches perhaps swaying gracefully in a gentle breeze. Somehow, in English, however, the expression ‘arms’ here did not seem sufficiently poetic, while, at the same time, simply translating 手 te as ‘branches’ would seem to be ignoring the poet’s specific wish to use a metaphor here. Consequently, I have chosen to avoid the use of both ‘arms’ and ‘branch/es’, and translated the phrase われさしまぬ ware sashimanu, literally ‘beckoning to me’, as the slightly more poetic ‘motioning to me’, which, with the addition of the adjective ‘graceful’ before ‘in the evening light’ (夕くれ yūgure, literally ‘evening twilight’) from the previous line of the original, I feel implicitly portrays the image of the graceful willow branches.

(viii) The term 青柳 aoyagi literally means ‘green willow’. It is used to refer to the appearance of a willow tree (柳 yanagi) with its new lush, green leaves in spring. The question as to singular or plural also inevitably arose here, as with ‘cherry tree/s’ in the same verse (see note (vi)). I was initially inclined to choose the singular, in terms of the poet referring to one particular tree which he felt beckoning/motioning to him, which could equally represent any others present, but it subsequently seemed here too that the image of the green willow trees lined along the bank of the river was more appropriate.
(ix) The expression 錦おりなす nishiki orina su means ‘a brocade weaves/is woven’. The term 錦 nishiki (literally, ‘brocade’), has the classical literary association of the beauty of colour and pattern, and, though a typical collocation is the red maple leaves of autumn, it is mentioned in a Tanka poem included in the tenth century collection Kokinwakashū (古今和歌集), to describe the beauty of the pattern made by interwoven clusters of cherry blossom and young willow leaves in spring. In the poem Hana, this image would seem to be rendered all the more exquisite, combined, in the twilight, with the gentle, hazy light of the ‘misty (full) moon’, a further traditional symbol of the beauty of spring.

(x) The line げに一刻も 千金の Geni ikkoku mo senkin no is an allusion to a Chinese classical poem by the Song Dynasty poet, Sū Shí (蘇軾 1036-1101), entitled 「春夜詩」, Chūn Yè Shī, which includes the line 「春宵一刻值千金」Chūn xiāo yī kè zhí qiān jīn (One moment of a spring evening is worth a thousand pieces of gold), expressing regret that precious or enjoyable times can pass all too easily. The four-character phrase, 「一刻千金」Ikko senkin, exists in both Chinese and Japanese as a proverb, meaning “Every moment is precious”.

The Translations in Song-form

The following is a rendering of the translation of the last three poems in song-form, to illustrate how they might actually be sung. Although I have endeavoured to set the English version of each poem as exactly and faithfully as possible to the tunes of the songs, regretfully, in one or two places, the addition of an extra note inevitably proved necessary to accommodate the natural stress of the English wording. In such instance, I have given this notation above the original.

Evening Primrose

Allegretto

Ever waiting with the dark, For

one who does not come.

As the Evening Primrose waits, Wretched and forlorn.

Adagio

Thus, once more, it seems this night,

There will shine no moon.
Ode to Early Spring

1. The spring is but a name in the chill of the pond
   where the ice thaws, and reeds begin to grow,
   I had not heard twas spring, I would not know.

   The bush warbler in the valley, though long
   ing to sprout,
   "Oh, spring has come at last," I rejoice, yet a

   Finds still it is too soon to trill his last
   To-day, as yesterday, the sky is filled with flight!
   Oh, how should I bide this won

   Finds still it is too soon to trill his song
   To-day, as yesterday, the sky is filled with time?
   Oh, how should I bide this won

2. 2. The
   3. 3.

   The
   If

   The
   If

   The
   If

   The
   If

   The
   If

   The
   If

   The
   If
Blossom

In the glorious bright spring light, flows the River Sumida,
Up and down its course, there row cheerful boatmen.
Gentle drops of water fall like blossoms from their oars.
How could there be a greater sight than this spring tide scene?

Not de-light in the cherry trees,
Glist'ning in the fresh dawn dew,
How they call to me!
How could I not delight in the green willow

trees,
Graceful in the evening light, motioning to me.

Along the river bank, is woven a
beautiful brocade,
In the night sky slowly climbs, a misty full

moon. Truly every moment is more precious than gold, How could there be a

greater sight than this spring-tide scene?
Conclusion

As described in the Conclusion of Paper 1, it is my hope that the above translations — in the form of readings, or, in the case of the last three translations in this paper, also as songs — might contribute a little towards making the genre of Nihon Kakyoku better known outside the Japanese-speaking world, and that they will perhaps serve to provide a new insight into the spirit of the Japanese people. At the same time, I trust that the explanation of the translation process will help to elucidate the cultural background which lies behind, and which is so intrinsically connected with, the language, the subject-matter, and the sentiment of the works.

Footnotes


7) 『万葉集』第二巻、「磐之姫皇后、天皇を思ひて作りよせる御歌四首」 Manyōshu, Volume 2, Four Poems dedicated to the Emperor, by Empress Iwa-no-hime.


11) 「第一歌集『一握の砂』…は、短歌史上画期的新風として意味をもつ。」 Takemori, Tenyū. Meiji Bungaku no Myakudō — Ōgai · Sōseki wo Chushin ni (The Pulse of Literature of the Meiji Period — Focusing on Ōgai and Sōseki), p.34.

12) 「…啄木が在来の短歌を拒絶する姿勢で書いた短歌は、しばしば口語的な発想によるものであっただけでなく、その呼応はむしろ詩におけるものであった。しかも、『一握の砂』を編集する段階で三行分から書きにしたことによって、技法、詩形ともに、短詩といったほうがふさわしいような作品を創造したといってよい。…啄木は短歌を著しく詩に近接させた。」 Kōno, Hitoko. Ishikawa Takuboku: Kodoku no Ai, p.142-143.

13) 「自分が今盗勝手に古い言葉を使って来てみて、今になって不便だもないじゃないか。成るべく現代の言葉に近い言葉をお使って、それで三十一字に繰りかねたら字あまりにするさ。それで出来なければ言葉や形が古いんでなくて頭が古いんだ。」 Oketani, Hideaki. Takuboku no Uta no Shirabe (The Melody of Takuboku’s Poetry), (槌谷秀昭『啄木の歌の調べ』), in Ōoka Makoto et al. eds. Gunzō Nihon no Sakka 7, Ishikawa Takuboku, p.175.


15) Manda, Tsutomu et al. Takehisa Yumeji Bungaku-kan, Bekkan, Shiryö hen (An Anthology of the Literary Works of

17) From Music Notes to *Yoimachi-gusa* in Samejima, Yamiko. *Nihon no Uta* (Songs of Japan) CD.


19) 「これは日本最初の芸術歌曲集の作品として世に出されたものであったというのが正しい。」 “It is correct to say that this was one of the compositions of the first Art Song Suite to appear in Japan.” Yokoyama, Taro. *Dōyō e no Osasoi* (An Invitation to Dōyō (Poems and Songs for Children)), p.81.

20) Ishimoto, Ryūichi ed. *Nihon Bungeo Kanshō Jiten* (Dictionary of Japanese Literary Appreciation)

21) 古今和歌集 56：「みわたせば柳桜をこきまして都で春の錦なりける」，素情法師． ‘If (one) gazed far across the capital, the green willows blended with the cherry blossom appeared as a spring brocade.’ By the Buddhist priest, Sosei (c. 859-923).

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