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The Power of Translation: issues in the translation of premodern Japanese *waka*ⁱ

T. E. McAuley

Abstract

This article examines the translation of the premodern Japanese thirty-one syllable poetic form known as *waka*. Set against the context of current scholarly work in Translation Studies on the practices and processes involved in the translation of poetry, as well as constraints imposed by the current nature of many *waka* as literary works which have been subject to a centuries-long process of canonization, it analyses the challenges posed by the poems to the translator in the following areas: first, form and identification, covering differing solutions to the lineation of *waka* translations. Second, the use of poetic diction in multiple poems, and the consequences of different solutions to this issue, considering the identity of many *waka* as elements in longer poetic sequences. Third, use of poetic metalanguage such as *utamakura* and *makura kotoba*; and finally, intertextuality, both in the form of references to earlier poems (*honkadori*) and to other literary sources. The author's solutions to these issues in the course of his recent translation of *Ropyakuban uta'awase* ('The Poetry Contest in Six Hundred Rounds'; 1193-94) is compared with those adopted by other *waka* translators as a way of demonstrating the consequences which flow from the adoption of particular translation solutions to these issues.

Introduction

Translation matters. In one way or another, translation is the channel through which people who do not speak or read a nation's language gain access to, and understanding of, its culture, its knowledge, its society – the list is potentially endless. Translation enriches the culture of the nation into which it is released. It can confirm stereotypes, or challenge them. In some fields, such as medical or scientific translation, it can quite literally be a matter of life or death.

These last weighty concerns do not, of course, bear upon the translation of premodern Japanese *waka* 和歌 poetry: no one is going to die as a result of an error in the translation of a poem. Indeed, given the wide range of practices and solutions which have been adopted by translators of *waka* over the years, it may be difficult to identify 'errors' in practice as such. The purpose of this article, then, is to consider the particular challenges to the translator posed by *waka*, both in terms of the structure of, and literary techniques used in, their production, but also the wider historical and scholarly context in which *waka* exist now, centuries after they were originally written. In the course of this discussion, I will naturally touch upon the solutions to these challenges chosen by translators other than myself, not to criticise these choices, but to indicate the consequences that these choices have had. I will also lay out the rationale for the choices I have made in my own practice, not to suggest that these are superior to the strategies of others, but to demonstrate that they are based on a clear conception of the purpose I have wished to achieve through my translations. In this sense, this article will fit into the tradition of 'reports, usually by translators themselves, of how particular poems or collections were translated' which forms the larger part of 'most empirical research into poetry translation processes' (Jones 2006, 59).

The Translation of Poetry

It seems germane to start this discussion, however, with a consideration of other scholars' work on poetry translation, as a means of providing an academic context into which my own remarks here can be situated. Space considerations prevent me from providing a comprehensive review of prior work,ⁱⁱ so I shall restrict myself to mentioning a few key points which have been raised by others and appear to be most relevant to the later discussion of *waka* translation.

First, one key theme that emerges is that the translation of poetry is a prestige activity, not only in the culture into which works are translated, but also in the source culture, in that the fact that one of 'their' poets has been selected for translation provides a form of cultural validation (Jones 2011, 7). Another way of saying that poetry is a prestige literary product, however, is to say that its audience is not particularly large and thus it 'occupies a tenuous position in the process of commodification' (Venuti 2011a, 127) which impacts on the translation of other types of literature. This is not necessarily a disadvantage, as it means that 'poetry translators...do enjoy more working autonomy than translators in many other genres' (Jones 2011, 186) and are, therefore, freer to pursue translation solutions which fit their own preferences and vision for their work, without being constrained as strongly by commercial concerns from their publishers, although this is not to say that these do not exist.

The freedom granted to poetry translators has permitted the growth of radical forms of 'translation', in particular what Venuti (2011b) terms the 'version', a work that is so different from the original that it 'constitute[s] a wholesale revision that answers primarily to the poet-translator's literary interests' (Venuti 2011b, 230). Audiences' willingness to accept 'versions' have also, perhaps, encouraged the production of pseudotranslations where a poet presents their own work, and gains greater cachet for it, in the guise of translations from another language. In the context of Japanese poetry, the best known example of this is that of Kenneth Rexroth, who included a number of his own works in his anthology, *One Hundred More Poems from the Japanese* (Rexroth 1976), claiming them to be the translations of a female Japanese poet called 'Marichiko' (Apter 2005).

This wide range of textual production as a result of the translation of poetry has inspired some to attempt to provide a means for classifying these works. Holmes (1988, 24) provides a useful taxonomy of different types of works which can be inspired by an original poem, ranging from a critical essay in the language of the poem, which is not a translation at all, through a prose translation, which is a translation but not a poem, all the way to a poem inspired by a poem, which is poetry, but not translation at all. This would be equivalent to the 'version' described by Venuti. For the translation of a poem which also functions as a poem in the target culture, Holmes introduces the term 'metapoem', characterising this as the 'nexus of a complex bundle of relationships' (Holmes 1988, 24) based on the poetic traditions of both source and target culture. While the boundaries between metapoems and 'freer' types of adaptations are inevitably fuzzy, the majority of translators of *waka* would seem to be at least attempting to produce the former, as we shall see later.

Leaving pseudotranslations aside, the fact that 'versions' are considered to be acceptable as translations of poems is an acknowledgement that translation is an act of 'interpretation because it is radically decontextualizing' (Venuti 2011b, 235): the original work is shorn from its socio-cultural context and networks of meaning and transplanted into an entirely different environment. As a result of this process, it can take on entirely different, and unintended, meanings from those associated with the original text. As an illustration of this, let us consider the lyrics of a contemporary song by the artist Wada Akiko 和田アキ子, *Ano kane o narasu no wa anata* あの鐘を鳴らすのはあなた (1972). The chorus of the song is as follows:

町は今 眠りの中
あの鐘を 鳴らすのはあなた
人はみな 悩みの中

Machi wa ima nemuri no naka
Ano kane o narasu no wa anata
Hito wa mina nayami no naka
Ano kane o narasu no wa anata

あの鐘を 鳴らすのはあなた

A close rendering of the sense of the Japanese lyrics is:

Machi wa ima nemuri no naka
Ano kane o narasu no wa anata
Hito wa mina nayami no naka
Ano kane o narasu no wa anata

The town is now All fast asleep
The one ringing the bell Is you
Everyone Is suffering
The one ringing the bell Is you

With its references to people being asleep and suffering, and being woken from this by ‘you’ who is ‘ringing the bell’, to a person brought up in a Christian-influenced environment like myself, the song gives a strong impression of having religious overtones, with ‘you’ being a reference to Jesus, or God. This impression is heightened by the fact that when performing the song Wada is often accompanied by a full choir of backing singers who clap and raise their hands skyward at the climax of the chorus (Wada 2016). When I have described this impression to Japanese friends, however, I have been met with bewildered amusement and assurances that this song is not at all religious.

What this, admittedly unscientific, experience demonstrates is that no matter how much care a translator takes in producing their version of a text, the impression it gives to its audience will always be initially filtered through the lens of their own cultural expectations – even where individual members of that audience may be well-versed in the norms and nature of the source culture. Where they are not, then there is an even greater likelihood of the audience’s overall attitudes influencing the reception and understanding of a translation, as I have discussed elsewhere in reference to the translations of *Genji monogatari* (‘The Tale of Genji’) (McAuley 2015).

The Translation of *Waka*

With this reference to Japan’s greatest example of premodern literary prose, it seems appropriate to move on to consider some of the more specific influences that bear on the translation of *waka*. Shirane (2003, 24) reminds us that this was originally considered ‘a low “private” form’ and was elevated to a position of respect through the efforts of Ki no Tsurayuki in associating it with Chinese poetry and poetics. This shows us that judgements about the aesthetic value of individual works often rely more upon the desires of elites to protect their cultural capital and perpetuate their status, as they do upon the intrinsic qualities of the works themselves. This poses an immediate challenge to the translator of *waka*: do they attempt to capture the ‘low “private” nature of the works when they were written, or represent them as they are viewed now, after centuries of aesthetic appreciation and canonization? A simple answer to this question is that the former approach is impossible given the difficulties of knowing what low and private meant in the elevated social circles where much *waka* composition took place, but it is also true that many *waka* translators will attempt to produce a ‘reconstruction of the source poet’s intent’ (Jones 2011, 176) in their work.

A further point of note is that ‘canonized texts are the object of extensive commentary and exegesis...while non-canonical texts...are not’ (Shirane 2003, 33-4). Carter (2019) provides ample evidence of this in drawing upon the tradition of Japanese commentary on *waka* in order to demonstrate how to interpret individual works. In practice, however, this means that the translator of works like these is simultaneously helped and hindered. They have the assistance of centuries of scholarship to aid their understanding of the text, but may also have their solutions influenced by orthodox interpretations and be criticized if they diverge from them: if, for example, they translate a famous work into a tone or style which does not match the accepted orthodoxy, they can be accused of inaccuracy, or disrespect. Venuti (1998, 31-2) suggests that such criticisms are ‘fuelled by a sense of self preservation...[that] value[s]...whatever interpretation currently prevails among academic

specialists' rather than the text itself, but it is difficult for a translator to stand opposed to centuries of critical practice.

What of the actual translation process for (*waka*) poetry? Bassnett (1998, 66) makes the important point that the translator is 'a reader who becomes a writer', and it is through the process of close reading of the original that they arrive at their interpretation of it. Thus, 'the translation of poetry requires skill in reading every bit as much as skill in writing' (Bassnett 1998, 69), while Jones (2006, 61) emphasises that problems posed by poetry translation are 'radically different' from those of other genres, as a result of the fact that in poetry 'content and form are inseparable' (Bassnett 1998, 69). This has led some to question the possibility of translating poetry at all (Landers 2000, 97), given Nida's well-known remark that 'anything that can be said in one language can be said in another, unless the form is an essential element of the message' (Nida and Taber 1969, 4). Nevertheless, the translation of poetry obviously does happen. Jones (2011) provides a detailed model of the process encompassing both the translator's work on the text itself, as well as their involvement with other actors such as editors, reviewers and readers, as well as dealing with other influences, such as the translator's motivation for beginning and completing the work. This model can be encapsulated by the statement that:

translators appear...to prioritize reliable representation, or communicative loyalty to source poet and target reader. They consistently strive to recreate, as far as possible, their reading of the source poem in a target version that effectively functions as a receptor-language poem. (Jones 2011, 179)

While I cannot speak for anyone other than myself, this accurately reflects my own concerns as a translator of *waka*.

Challenges to the Translation of Waka

In this next section I will move on to discuss some of the practical challenges to the translation of *waka*, as well as the solutions which I apply to these in my own practice. I make no claim that these are the best options, only that I have found them effective for achieving the aims I have had in mind for my translations. Broadly speaking, I wish to provide comments on the following four issues: the identification of a *waka* in translation as a poetic text; the use of poetic diction; the use of poetic metalanguage; and the use of intertextuality. These are, of course, not issues which only confront the translator of *waka*, but they ones which must be confronted if the translation of texts of this type is to be attempted, and so are in need of comment and consideration.

Form and Identification

As poetic forms, *waka* are defined by their length and internal organization. They are texts of thirty-one syllables, divided into units of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables in that order. Composing poems to fit this pattern was part of the discipline that *waka* imposed upon poets, and diverging from it would mean that one's work would not be considered poetry at all.ⁱⁱⁱ Added to this issue is the question of how the translation should be represented on the page. In Japanese, *waka* were, and are, usually written as a single unbroken line of text, although this could be varied if the poem was being presented in an aesthetic context, such as accompanying an image, or being inscribed on an object. Sato (1987, 356) argues strongly that both the premodern *waka* and modern *tanka* 短歌 are 'mono-linear form[s]' of poetry and accuses translators of not being willing to take this 'view, held by the majority in Japan' seriously, and thus producing five-line English translations.

Among the decisions a translator of *waka* must take before commencing work, therefore, is, given this close association between form and genre, whether to retain the 5-7-5-7-7 syllable pattern in translation, when the language into which the poem is being

translated may have a very different phonological and rhythmical structure from that of Japanese; they must also decide how to represent their translations on the physical page.

As can be seen from Sato's (1987) remarks, the majority of English language translators of *waka* have chosen to represent the five syllabic units of the original poems as separate lines, although there are exceptions. It is also true that the majority of translators have chosen not to retain the syllabic patterns of the source texts in English translation, although they vary in the degree to which they diverge from them. An impression of this variety can be gained through a brief examination of multiple English translations of the same *waka*, Ariwara no Narihira's 在原業平 famous poem on the moon (*Kokinshū* XV: 747).^{iv}

Narihira had been seeing a woman living in the western wing of the palace of the Gojō Empress, and loved her dearly. Shortly after the Tenth day of the First Month, she disappeared off to somewhere else and, though he found out where she was, he could not communicate with her. When Spring came and the plum blossom was in full bloom, on a night when the moon was especially beautiful, he was yearning for the love of the previous year and went back to the western wing and, until the moon was low in the sky, lay upon the bare boards; then he composed the following:

月やあらぬ春や昔の春ならぬわが身ひとつはもとの身にして

tsuki ya aranu haru ya mukashi no haru naranu wa ga mi hitotsu wa moto no mi ni shite

No moon!

The spring
Is not the spring of the old days,
My body
Is not my body,
But only a body grown old.

(Pound and Fenollosa 1917)

And the light of the moon was not so serene
Or the spring quite the same as the springs of
yore,
Yet still is he the Narihira of old

(Sadler 1934)

What now is real?
This moon, this spring, are altered
From their former being--
While this alone, my mortal body, remains
As ever changed by love beyond all change.

(Brower and Miner 1961)

Is it not the moon--
is it not the spring--
of yesteryear?
And oh, myself too as I used to be.

(Honda 1970)

The moon is not the moon of that year!
Spring is not the spring of that year!
I alone am the same as I was then.

(Walker 1979)

The moon, the spring, are the moon and spring of old.
And only I remain as I was then.

(Seidensticker 1981)

is this not that moon
is this spring not that spring we
shared so long ago

Is this not that moon?
And Spring: is as the Spring of old
Is it not?

it seems that I alone am
unaltered from what was then

(Rodd and Henkenius 1996)

Only this body of mine
Is as it ever was...

(McAuley 2001a)

My intent here is not to offer these various translation up for critique, or to propose that any of them are superior to any of the others, but simply to show the range of translational practice which has been inspired by one single *waka*.

The common feature of all these English translations, regardless of the type of lineation, use of capitalisation, spacing, or whether they have retained the syllabic structure of the original poem is that they are recognisable as poetic texts in English. If we were to interrogate the reasons for this, we would, no doubt, find a range of influences on readers which affirm this impression. First, and not to be underestimated, is the simple fact of discourse context: as the majority of these appear in larger works, and are described as poems within those works, readers will be predisposed to identify them as such. Beyond this, however, I would suggest that the most significant influence is lineation: English language readers expect poems to be laid out in multiple lines on the page, and seeing a text in this format is generally sufficient for them to assume that they are reading a poem. This impression is reinforced by non-standard spacing and use of capitalisation. While there are, of course, patterns of rhyme and metre used in English language poetry, and poetic forms which depend on adherence to these, such as the fourteen-line sonnet in iambic pentameter which Shakespeare wrote to such masterful effect, the presence of metre and, indeed, rhyme is no longer a crucial condition for a text to be accepted as poetic. If anything, the judgement in English is now that the best vehicle for serious poetry is free verse (Jones 2011, 178).

This suggests that the translators' decisions in producing their versions of the *waka*, above, have been largely influenced by their understanding of these poetic norms in English, and that their abandonment of the 5-7-5-7-7 syllable pattern is as a result of their belief that there are other mechanisms which will be sufficient to identify the products of their work to their readership as poetry. An exception to this general tendency is Laurel Rodd, who in both her translations of *Kokinwakashū* 古今和歌集 (Rodd and Henkenius 1996) and *Shikokinwakashū* 新古今和歌集 (Rodd 2015), chooses to retain the source text formal structure in her translations on the grounds that not to do so when 'translating an anthology of nearly two thousand poems all of which are in the same form...lead[s] to flabbiness and loss of tension' (2015, ix). As this statement shows, translators' decisions about the form which their translations will take are also influenced by the knowledge of the larger context in which the original texts appear, and hence the context in which the translations will appear, if the entire larger work is being translated. In the case of *waka* anthologies, however, this decision is neither easy nor simple, as we shall see in the next section, on poetic diction in *waka*.

Use of Diction in *Waka*

On the face of it, an anthology of *waka* is a collection of discrete, individual poems. There are often a large number of these in an individual anthology – as many as two thousand, as Rodd states, above. These individual poems are grouped into 'books' based upon the 'Topic' (*dai* 題) to which the poems were assigned. It has long been argued, however, that the internal organization of many anthologies goes beyond that of the books and, instead it is more appropriate to regard them as 'integrated unity...that may be read from beginning to end in a single long structure' (Konishi 1958, 68). If this view is accepted, then it imposes additional constraints upon translators: they need to consider, and be aware of, the links between individual poems and how these function to bind the anthology into a single, lengthy poetic work. This inevitably introduces further complexities into the translation process, as a solution which may work well for a poem translated in isolation may conceal the links and commonalities between it and other poems in the anthology.

To demonstrate this, take a look at the following four *waka*, all from Rodd's translation of *Shinkokinwakashū*:

scattered as the dried
stalks of field grasses on
short-reed meadow their
tips burnt with frost my thoughts too
are unsettled this season

IV: 345

now that autumn's here
the tips of the low-growing
reeds in my garden
are suffused with new color
as the white dewdrops settle

V: 463

not even in those
dewdrops clinging to the tips
of the low rushes
whipped by the wind can it find
shelter lightning of the night

IV: 377

was this their promise
as they left that they'd return
again with autumn –
white dewdrops gleam this morning
on fields of cogon-grass

V: 464

Individually, there is no doubt that these are fine translations and fine poems, all of them on the topic of 'Autumn', however, there is a further link between these four poems, which becomes apparent if one examines the original texts:

うらがるとあさちがはらのかるかやのみだれ
てもものをおもふころかな

uragaruru
asajiwara no
karu kaya no
midarete mono o
omou koro kana

秋といへば契をきてやむすぶらんあさちがは
らのけさのしらつゆ

aki to ieba
chigiri okite ya
musuburan
asaji ga hara no
kesa no shiratsuyu

風わたるあさちがすゑのつゆにだにやどりも
はてぬよみのいなづま

kaze wataru
asaji ga sue no
tsuyu ni dani
yadori mo hatenu
yoi no itazuma

秋さればをくしらつゆにわがやどのあさちが
うは葉色づきにけり

aki sareba
oku shiratsuyu ni
wa ga yado no
asaji ga uwaba
irozuginikeri

As can be seen from the transcriptions above, all four poems contain a common piece of vocabulary, the word *asaji* あさち. This refers to a plant, cogon grass, which was commonly used in *waka* of the period to convey an image of desolation.^v This means that the originals are all connected, both to each other and the wider *waka* canon, through this common piece of diction. Rodd's translation solution, however, which is imposed upon her by her decision to retain the 5-7-5-7-7 syllable pattern conceals this link completely. That is to say, she has had to sacrifice intertextual elements and awareness in the interests of compliance with formal structure.

Compare these retranslations with both the originals and Rodd's versions of SKKS V: 463 and SKKS V: 464:

aki to ieba

aki sareba

chigiri okite ya
musuburan
asaji ga hara no
kesa no shiratsuyu

was this their promise
 as they left that they'd return
 again with autumn –
 white dewdrops gleam this morning
 on fields of **cogon-grass**

'In autumn...'
 Was their vow, cast,
 Tangled on
 The meadows of **cogon-grass**
 Lies white dewfall...

oku shiratsuyu ni
wa ga yado no
asaji ga uwaba
irozuginikeri

now that autumn's here
 the tips of the low-growing
 reeds in my garden
 are suffused with new color
 as the white dewdrops settle

With autumn,
 White dewfall
 My dwelling's
Cogon-grass fronds
 Has touched with different hues.

While both versions do demonstrate the links between these two poems in terms of common imagery – the use of *shiratsuyu* ('white dewfall/drops'), for example – Rodd's version does not reveal that these poems are also linked by the use of the same botanical reference and its associations. It could be argued that given the likely lack of familiarity of the target audience with cogon grass as a plant, and also with the associations it conveys in *waka*, little is lost by not using 'cogon grass' as a consistent translation-equivalent for *asaji*. A counter-argument to this is that many readers might be reading translations of *waka* in the hope and expectation that they would be educated about the literary usages of the form, and so to deny them this opportunity is to do them a disservice. In addition, not providing consistent translations for key diction throughout the work makes it more difficult for readers of the translation of an anthology to recognize it as essentially single a poetic unit composed of a multitude of smaller elements.

There is, of course, no correct answer to this conundrum, and the solution chosen by individual *waka* translators will be influenced by their intended audience for their work, and by the purpose behind their translation. In my own recent translation of *Ropyakuban uta'awase* 六百番歌合 ('The Poetry Contest in Six Hundred Rounds'; 1193-94) (McAuley 2020), I felt that as the purpose of a poetry competition was for poets to compose poems on the same topic, often using identical diction, and for the judge and participants to frequently comment on individuals' use of diction in their assessments of poems' quality or lack of it, it was essential for readers of the translation to be aware that those involved in the competition were discussing the uses of the same words. This meant that I had to be consistent in my translations of these words, if only to avoid the need for additional explanatory footnotes to clarify the discussions in the text for readers.

Metalinguage

The same considerations have a bearing on the next issue of significance in the translation of *waka* I wish to discuss: the poems' tendency to contain poetic metalanguage, by which I mean set phrases and expressions which are used, either in specific linguistic contexts, or to convey set images and associations. While most of these types of expressions have their own semantics – they independently 'mean' something – their significance in *waka* derives from the fact that they are conventionally understood to have these connotations and associations, which may be entirely unclear in a direct translation. Deciding how to deal with these types of metalinguistic expressions is, therefore, a key challenge for the translator of *waka*.

There are two of these types of expressions used frequently in *waka*: *makura kotoba* 枕詞 ('pillow words'), and *utamakura* 歌枕 ('poem pillows'). Broadly speaking, *makura kotoba*

are used in specific linguistic contexts, while *utamakura* convey set images, although there is a blurred dividing line between the poetic functions and usages of some of these expressions.

A *makura kotoba* is a ‘stylized semi-imagistic epithet’ (Brower and Miner 1961, 12) used to modify particular words. There are approximately 1200 of these, although a smaller number are widely used in *waka*.^{vi} Take, for example, the *makura kotoba ashihiki no* あしひきの: this epithet was used to modify words connected to mountains, such as *yama* 山 (‘mountain’), *o* 峰 (‘peak’) and so forth. There are a number of different theories about its meaning, given that its first element *ashi* could be either *ashi* 足 (‘leg(s)’) or *ashi* 葦 (‘reeds’), while *hiki* is thought to derive from *hiku* 引く (‘pull’, ‘draw up’) (Jōdai jiten henshū iinkai 1967), with the most widely accepted theory being that either it was a reference to the tiredness (the ‘pulling’) a person felt when walking up a steep mountain, or to the fact that in Japan’s early mythology, when the primordial deities created the land – *Ashihara no nakatsukuni* 葦原の中つ国, the ‘central land of the reed plains’ – they formed mountains by ‘pulling’ (*hiki*) up ‘reeds’ (*ashi*). Given that the earliest written forms of the expression vary the use of Chinese characters which are used to write it, however, the possibility exists that even as early as the eighth century there was no consensus about what it meant (Kubota Jun and Baba Akiko 1999, 36).

Nevertheless, there was consensus about how it should be used in *waka*, and it was used productively in poetry dating from the late Yamato period (250-710), with a representative early example being:

あしひきの山下とよみ行く水の時ぞともなく恋ひわたるかも

ashihiki no
yamashita toyomi
yuku mizu no
toki zo tomokaku
koiwataru kamo

Leg-wearying,
The mountain’s foot resounds with
Rushing waters
Endlessly –
As flows my love for you!

Hitomaro-shū 人麿集 180^{vii}

This usage continued until the close of the Muromachi period (1392-1573):

あしひきの山遠き月を空におきて月影高き末の架け橋

ashihiki no
yama tōki tsuki o
sora ni okite
tsukikage takaki
sue no kakehashi

Leg-wearying,
Above the distant mountains, the moon
Hangs in the sky;
Soaring moonbeams
A bridge between the peaks.

Shōhaku 肖柏 (1443-1527)
Shunmusō 春夢草 III: 2000

To contemporary readers of the first poem, *ashihiki no* would have conveyed a fresh air of novelty as a new and exciting piece of poetic diction, while to readers of the second, eight hundred years later, it was a reassuring linkage with the canon and confirmation that the poet knew the correct forms of poetic expression, and it is with this purpose that the epithet was probably most frequently used. Modern readers of the original poems, too, would not immediately feel the novelty of the first usage.

Thus, these expressions pose challenges for the translator: if it is true, as seems likely, that even soon after it was coined there were disagreements about what the expression meant, the translator has no recourse but to rely initially upon one of the interpretations provided by later scholarship. If the poet’s main motivation for using the expression, however, was simply to demonstrate their knowledge of poetic conventions, or because the *makura kotoba* just ‘went’ with a noun they had chosen to use, or even because they simply needed a five syllable

expression to make their poem work, then there are a range of other possible translation solutions.

A translator can dispense with the *makura kotoba* completely: if the expression is essentially meaningless, then it can be replaced by alternative expression in translation without loss, or even omitted. If the sense of *ashihiki no / yama* is '[an appropriate descriptor for mountains] / mountain(s)' then any number of English adjectives can be substituted: 'high-peaked / mountains', 'lofty / mountains', 'craggy / mountains', etc. Or, if the translator has decided to replicate the 5-7-5-7-7 pattern of the original, then an appropriate five syllable English phrase can be used. Rodd (2015), for example, translates *ashihiki no* as follows:

on rugged far-off (II: 161)	in foot-weariness (XI: 992)
the rugged mountains (III: 196)	thoughts of love well up (XI: 1015)
behind the rugged (IV: 382)	beneath the rugged (XI: 1067)
in the shining dew (IV: 398)	beneath the rugged (XI: 1068)
dry in the rugged (VI: 563)	there in the rugged (XIII: 1213)
by the color of (VII: 712)	in foot-weariness (XVIII: 1690)
the rugged mountains- (X: 906)	in waters flowing (XVIII: 1710)

Table 1: Translations of *ashihiki no* in Rodd (2015)

As can be seen from the above, Rodd has decided upon two basic translations for *ashihiki no*, 'rugged' and 'foot-weariness' and one of these appears elsewhere in the translations of IV: 398, VII: 712, XI: 1015 and XVIII: 1710 to ensure that the sense is conveyed in the translations. Nevertheless, she has adopted twelve different translation solutions for the same original expression in the same work.

Alternatively, if the translator wishes readers to be able to grasp the conventional nature of *makura kotoba* usage, and also expects them to be reading their translations of a considerable number of *waka*, then he or she can adopt a single consistent translation for these epithets and use it in all circumstances. Particularly if the translation is accompanied by a transcription of the original poem, this allows readers to grasp the fact that a single expression is being used consistently in similar lexical contexts. This is the solution I adopt in my own practice, although I will confess that with some *makura kotoba* which were used in a relatively wide range of contexts, the link can be easier to see in some poems than others.

For example, the *makura kotoba azusayumi* 梓弓 ('catalpa bow') was used to modify words such as: *hiku* 引く 'pull', *iru* 射る 'shoot', *moto* 元 'base', *sue* 末 'end/tip', *tsuru* 弦 'bowstring', *yoru* 寄る 'draw near', *ya* 矢 'arrow', *oto* 音 'sound', *kaeru* 返る 'return', and a number of others (Jōdai jiten henshū iinkai 1967, 29). While the archery-related usages are transparent in translation, others are opaque, as they rely upon a knowledge of the expression's origin. *Azusayumi* is used to modify *sue* ('end/tip'), for example, because a mystical bird is said to have alighted on the tip of a bow belonging to Emperor Jinmu 神武, the grandson of the sun goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大神 and the mythological first emperor of Japan, granting it the power to repel evil. Understanding of the expression's purpose in a *waka* is thus dependent upon the reader being aware of this intertextual echo, which links the poem with Japan's mythic past, and again serves to demonstrate that the poet 'knows his or her stuff'.

For example:

On thinking deep thoughts.

梓弓末はし知らずしかれどもまさかは君に寄りにしものを

azusayumi

sue hashi shirazu

shikaredomo

masaka wa kimi ni

yorinishi mono o

A catalpa bow:

The end, indeed, I know not,

And yet, and yet,

'Tis you that

My thoughts have ever dwelt upon...

Anonymous
MYS XII: 2985

In this poem, *sue* is used metaphorically to represent the future, and the use of *azusayumi* provides both a sense of length (some types of bow were two metres or more in size) – the future stretching ahead into the unknown distance – and also, due to its mythic qualities, a link into the remote past. ‘I do not know what the future will bring,’ says the poet, ‘but I have always loved you (and so always will...)’. If readers lack an awareness of the connotations of expressions such as *azusayumi*, however, translations such as the above risk presenting them with a poem seemingly containing a puzzling and out-of-place expression. There are various solutions to this, such as clarifying the image conveyed by the *makura kotoba*:

**A catalpa bow: so long that at
The end,** indeed, I’ll not arrive,
And yet, and yet,
‘Tis you that
My thoughts have ever dwelt upon...

Or dispensing with the *makura kotoba* and, instead, explicating its usage:

**The future (and the past, too) is
Endless,** and unknown,
And yet, and yet,
‘Tis you that
My thoughts have ever dwelt upon...

None of these solutions, of course, is superior to any of the others, and whether any one of them should, or should not, be adopted will depend upon the purpose and venue in which the translation is due to appear, and the purpose which the translator wishes to achieve with it.

Similar considerations apply to the translation of the second type of metalinguistic expression, *utamakura*. Crudely put, *utamakura* are place names which have acquired a range of imagistic associations due to their location, the potential for wordplay or dual meanings inherent in their construction, or due to their usage in other literary works, and the connotations these convey.^{viii} For example:

When Lord Tachibana no Tamenaka left to become Governor of Michinoku, this was presented from pantry of the Grand Empress Dowager, without any mention of who had sent it.

東路のはるけき道を行かへりいつかとかくべき下紐の関

*azumaji no
harukeki michi o
yukikaeri
itsuka tokubeki
shitahimo no seki*

On Eastern paths
So distant
Will you go, and then return
When, indeed, will you pass
The Barrier of Shitahimo again?

Anonymous
Shikashū VI: 184

The *utamakura* here is *shitahimo no seki* 下紐の関 (‘the Barrier of Shitahimo’). This particular barrier was located in Michinoku province, about twenty kilometres north of modern Fukushima. The barrier marked the boundary between the territory controlled by the Yamato court, and that controlled by the Emishi, and so was an important military outpost. Going

beyond it, further to the north, meant that a traveller was entering the uncivilised unknown, and so a reference to it in a *waka* was a way of expressing the poet's concern that the addressee of their poem might be going into danger and might possibly never return. This is one sense conveyed by the poem above, which is obviously written by a court lady who was one of Tamenaka's lovers. This sense can probably be grasped in outline by the reader of the English translation above, even without detailed explanation of where the Shitahimo barrier was and what passing through it meant, and so it does not pose a substantial translation challenge.

The *utamakura*, however, carried an additional meaning, in that *shitahimo* 下紐 as a place name was homophonous with, and written with identical characters to, the word *shitahimo* 'under-belt'. This was a piece of clothing which both men and women would use to fasten the trousers which they wore underneath the array of garments of different sizes and shapes which composed normal everyday wear for members of the nobility. Undoing one's under-belt meant removing, or lowering, one's trousers, and in the context of *waka* this meant as a prelude to making love. Similarly, the verb *toku* 解く ('undo') could be used both of a belt (as in 'undoing a knot'), but also of a gate (as in 'unbarring a door/gate/barrier'), so *shitahimo no seki o toku* is both 'unbar the Barrier of Shitahimo (and pass through)' and also 'undo the "barrier" of my under-belt (and make love to me)'.

Knowledge of this obviously puts a new complexion on the poem above, adding an erotic note of physical desire to the plea for Tamenaka's safe return. This immediately poses challenges for the translator in that both of these senses are core to the poem's meaning – in fact, it is likely that the woman's witty use of the *utamakura* is what made her poem worthy of including in an imperial anthology in the first place.

One solution is to dispense with the reference to the *utamakura* completely, as follows:

On Eastern paths
So distant
Will you go, and then return
When, indeed, will you undo
The barrier of my under-belt again?

This can be justified on the grounds that the sense of the poem as plea for Tamenaka's safe return is adequately conveyed by the initial section of the poem, and so it is unnecessary to use the place-name to reinforce this, given that the target audience will likely not be aware of the *utamakura*'s connotations in any case. This solution, though, conceals the poet's technique and, as suggested above, also why it was considered a good quality poem.

An alternative is to incorporate both usages explicitly, as in:

On Eastern paths
So distant
Will you go, and then return
When, indeed, will you slip beneath
The Barrier of Shitahimo and, my under-belt, again?

While this does not indicate to target readers that the original poem is engaging in wordplay around the place name, and the final line in the translation is lengthy, at least it does go some way towards demonstrating the poet's skill, and providing a link with other usages of the *utamakura* in other poems.^{ix} As with *makura kotoba*, which of these solutions will be most appropriate will depend largely upon the purpose of, and audience for, which the translation is envisaged. My own practice tends towards the third option – for the reasons given above.

Intertextuality

The final aspect of *waka* composition which I wish to discuss here is the use of intertextuality. This had two broad types, although there was a somewhat fuzzy boundary between them. The first, and most explicit, type of intertextuality was the technique of

allusive variation (*honkadori* 本歌取, literally ‘taking from a source poem (*honka*)’), which involved a poet incorporating a line from a well-known prior poem into one of their own, in the expectation that the audience for their poem would recognize the reference, and use this knowledge to add an additional layer of meaning to the sense of the *waka* when they encountered it. The second technique was to compose a poem which alluded to a well-known prior literary context, either by mentioning a character, or referring to a scene, and thus adding richness to the poem’s imagery and semantics. Given the brevity of the *waka* as a poetic form, these types of references were a key resource for poets, enabling them to break free to some extent from the constraints of the 31-syllable count of the poems.

For example, in Love IV, Round Twenty-Nine in *Ropyyakuban uta’awase*, both poets use the technique of *honkadori*:

Left

寝覚まで猶苦しきは行帰り足も休めぬ夢の通ひ路

nezame made
nao kurushiki
yukikaeri
ashi mo yasumenu
yume no kayoiji

Until I awaken
It is ever painful
Going back and forth
My feet not resting once
Upon the path of dreams.

Fujiwara no Ari’ie
837

The speaker of this poem has obviously had a restless night, or nights, dreaming constantly until he awakes, and this is painful for him. Given that this poem is included in the Love poems in the competition, we can infer that his dreams are to do with that emotion, and that it is not making him happy. This sense is, I think, sufficiently conveyed to the target reader by the English translation, above. Into his poem, however, Ari’ie has incorporated a line from an earlier poem which appears in *Kokinshū*:

Topic unknown

夢路には足も休めず通へども現に人目見しごとはあらず

yumeji ni wa
ashi mo yasumezu
kayoedomo
utsutsu ni hitome
mishi goto wa arazu

Upon the path of dreams
My feet don’t rest,
Constantly trailing to you, yet
In reality, a single glimpse:
Not even that have I had of you.

Ono no Komachi 小野小町
KKS XIII: 658

Ono no Komachi is *Kokinshū*’s premiere example of a passionate female poet, for all that little is actually known about her life.^x In her poem she refers to the well-known belief that if you saw the face of a person in your dreams, they were thinking of you fondly. A meeting on the ‘path of dreams’, therefore, was a metaphor for requited love. The speaker of Komachi’s poem, however, has an unrequited love because no matter how much she dreams she never sees the face of her beloved, but even worse, she has never seen him in ‘reality’ (*utsutsu*) – the waking world. Her poem is thus an expression of the power of her love, but also an ironic comment about her own foolishness: ‘(I love you so much) I dream of you constantly,’ her speaker says, ‘(fool that I am, because) I have never seen you even once.’ Via the mechanism of the repeated line from Komachi’s work, Ari’ie adds the sense of her poem to his own, and thus intensifies its emotional effect.

The opposing poem is:

Right

忘らるる身をば思はで竜田山心にかかる沖つ白波

wasuraruru
mi o ba omowade
tatsuta yama
kokoro ni kakaru
oki tsu shiranami

Forgotten
 I think not on myself, but
On Mount Tatsuta
 Dwells my heart
Whipped by whitecaps.

Jakuren
 838

This poem also alludes to a poem from *Kokinshū*, but one which, unusually, has an extended prose colophon:

Topic unknown

風吹けば沖つ白波竜田山夜半にや君がひとり越ゆらん

kaze fukeba
oki tsu shiranami
tatsuta yama
yowa ni ya kimi ga
hitori koyuran

This gusting wind
 Whips up the whitecaps
 High as Mount Tatsuta
 Where, through night's depths, my Lord,
 Makes his solitary way.

Anonymous

Some people tell the following tale about this poem. Long ago, a man began to live with the daughter of someone from the province of Yamato. When the woman's parents died, and her house became poorer, the man became friendly with a woman in the province of Kawachi and visited her often, becoming increasingly distant towards his wife. In spite of this, she was never cold towards him and, every time he went off to Kawachi, she sent him off just as he wished; thinking this strange, and wondering if her affections might have shifted elsewhere, one beautiful moonlit night he pretended to go off to Kawachi and, concealing himself in the greenery in the garden, watched her. Until late at night she plucked at her zither, grieving, then recited this poem and went to bed; the man heard it and, from that day on, never left her again.

KKS XVIII: 994

The *Kokinshū* poem is an expression of the woman's love and concern for her husband, and this is sufficient to provide a happy ending for the relationship – at least, according to the provided context. Jakuren's 寂蓮 (1139?-1202) poem is somewhat ambiguous: is it expressing the feelings of the woman in a more direct way? Or is it spoken by another, who has been abandoned and knows it, and wishes that their words could be as successful as those of the speaker of the original? Which of these interpretations is correct was disputed even at the time of the poem's composition: the team of the Left criticize it as 'not having anything to say beyond what is contained in its source poem' while the competition's judge, Fujiwara no Shunzei 藤原俊成 (1114-1204), is more generous, saying, 'The Right's poem is based upon the poem 'where, through night's depths, my Lord' (*yowa ni ya kimi ga*), but then says 'Dwells my heart whipped by whitecaps' (*kokoro ni kakaru oki tsu shiranami*), which sounds pleasant, too' (McAuley 2020, 700).

Either way, while Jakuren's poem can be enjoyed as a work in its own right, the true depth of its meaning can only be understood if the audience is aware of the earlier poem. This poses a significant challenge for the translator, in that even an audience extremely familiar with *waka* is unlikely to have the knowledge required to identify the source poems used in

allusive variation. Translators are thus faced with three alternative solutions to this issue: first, they can ignore the allusive variation entirely, and simply translate these *waka* as individual works. As I have just said, it is generally perfectly possible to enjoy these poems as stand-alone works, although some of the meaning and depth is lost.

Second, they can use annotation and present the poem and its *honka* together. They can either be presented together as parts of the main text, or included in foot- or endnotes. Here the translator is ‘filling in the gaps’ left by the audience’s lack of knowledge of *waka*, compared to readers of the original. These first two solutions are the ones most commonly applied in translations of *waka* poetry, with the likelihood of the latter increasing the more the intended audience inclines toward the academic rather than the popular.

The final solution would be to attempt to incorporate at least some of the sense provided by the *honka* into the translation of the second poem. This type of strategy might produce a translation of Ari’ie’s poem, above, along the lines of:

Until I awaken
It is ever painful
Going back and forth, constantly
My feet not resting once
Upon the path of dreams, though
In reality, a single glimpse:
Not even that have I had of you.

The problem with this as a solution is that, as target readers of *waka* translations are generally, if not always, aware of the originals’ formal structure as texts composed of five units, producing a translation which is significantly lengthier than this runs the risk of suggesting to them that the translator has inserted material into their translation, and thus provoking resistance to, or criticism of, the translation strategy. This can, of course, be mitigated by providing an initial explanation of that strategy, but as Venuti’s account of his own attempt at a translation strategy which challenged reader expectations shows, even when explained, this can invite criticism (Venuti 1998, 16-20).

Allusive variation, though, was not the only type of intertextual referencing practiced by *waka* poets. They also used references to well-known earlier literary-historical sources. For example, in Love V: 4 of *Ropyyakuban uta’awase*, Fujiwara no Ari’ie’s 藤原有家 (1155-1261) poem for the Right is as follows:

玉箒手にとる程も思きやかりにも恋を志賀の山人

tamahabaki
te ni toru hodo mo
omoiki ya
kari ni mo koi o
shiga no yamabito

A jewelled broom
I’ll take in hand now,
Could that have been my thought?
Briefly in love now as
The old man of Shiga Mountain!

848

The intertextuality here is particularly dense and involved as not only does Ari’ie employ allusive variation by incorporating a line from an earlier poem into his own – the reference to taking hold of a *tamahabaki*:

初春の初子の今日の玉箒手に取るからに揺らく玉の緒

hatsu haru no
hatsune no kyō no
tamahabaki
te ni toru kara ni
yuraku tama no o

At the start of spring
On today, first day of the Rat
A jewelled broom
I take in hand
And shake the gemmed thread of life!

Ōtomo no Yakamochi 大伴家持
MYS XX: 4493

But he also ends the poem with a reference to *shiga no yamabito* ('the old man of Shiga Mountain'). The tale of the old man of Shiga Mountain is related by Minamoto no Toshiyori 源俊頼 (1055?-1129?) in his poetic treatise, *Toshiyori zuinō* 俊頼髓脳 ('Toshiyori's Poetic Essentials'; 1111-1115). The old man was a religious ascetic who catches sight of the face of the empress Yoshiko (Hōshi) 褒子 when she passes near his hermitage and has the blinds of her carriage raised so she can view the scenery. Struck by her beauty, and unable to continue his devotions, the old man makes his way to the palace and visits her where, out of kindness, she has the curtains between them raised slightly and allows him to take her hand, which he states is the greatest joy of his life. He then recites Yakamochi's poem, and Yoshiko replies with one of her own:

よしさらばまことの道の知るべして我をいぎなへゆらぐ玉の緒	
<i>yoshi saraba</i>	Yes, if it be so,
<i>makoto no michi no</i>	Upon the path of truth
<i>shirubeshite</i>	As a guide
<i>ware o izanae</i>	Do lead me!
<i>yuragu tama no o</i>	For unsteady is my gemmed thread of life ...

The two then make mutual vows to guide each other to paradise, should one of them die before the other. Toshiyori comments that this tale is probably apocryphal, but considers this unimportant, given the skillful way the poems have been fitted to the context (Hashimoto, Ariyoshi, and Fujihira 2002, 138-41).

Ari'ie's use of intertextuality in his poem adds to its meaning significantly: his speaker has been struck by love suddenly and is in an agony of indecision. The old man of Shiga Mountain acted on his desires and received a positive response – something which changed his life and brought him great happiness – but will the same be true for the speaker? Yoshiko's response poem warns that nothing is certain and life is fleeting: the speaker of Ari'ie's poem knows this, and worries that that acting on their desires will bring them only unhappiness. The use of the past tense question *omoiki ya* ('Could that have been my thought?') in the central section of the poem implies that the speaker has decided it is not worth the risk.

Ari'ie was composing his work for an audience of fellow cognoscenti – experienced poets who he knew would have read *Toshiyori zuinō* and been familiar with its contents. They would, therefore, have understood what the intertextuality in his poem meant, and how it contributed to the poem's meaning. We can, indeed, be certain that this is the case, as the Left, in their comments on Ari'ie's poem, ask rhetorically, 'Should one mention a monk in a poem about Love?' (McAuley 2020, 707), implying that this was incongruous and in poor taste. The judge, Shunzei, can be assumed to agree with this assessment as he awards victory to the other poem in the round and does not contribute any further comments about Ari'ie's work.

To give an additional example, it was even possible for intertextuality in *waka* to become so obscure that even the poet's contemporaries would fail to recognize and understand it. For example, in Love IX: 18 in *Ropyyakuban uta'awase*, the Left's poem is:

いとはれて胸やすからぬ思をば人の上にぞ書きうつしつる	
<i>itowarete</i>	Being despised
<i>mune yasukaranu</i>	And my unquiet heart
<i>omoi o ba</i>	Filled with feelings
<i>hito no ue ni zo</i>	Upon her
<i>kakiutsushitsuru</i>	I paint them out!

Kenshō

The Right simply cannot understand this poem, asking, ‘What is the Left’s poem about?’ Kenshō 顕昭 (1130?-1209?) replies that ‘it reflects Changkang 長康, who, feeling a woman living next door was beautiful, painted her and was then able to meet her’ (McAuley 2020, 927). Changkang was the style name of Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (ca. 344–406) a famous Chinese painter, who was reputed to have wooed a woman by painting her portrait and piercing its breast with a nail. When the woman became unwell with pains in her chest, he stated he could cure her, removed the nail, dipped it in honey and replaced it. The woman made a miraculous recovery and was then willing to meet him. Kenshō’s poem is an attempt to capture the essence of this ancient Chinese story in *waka* form, in much the same way as an envoy (*hanka* 反歌) was intended to reflect the content of a long poem in *Man’yōshū* 万葉集. The point of his work, though, is missed if the audience do not understand the reference he is making.

In his judgement, Shunzei takes him to task for his obscurity, saying:

I, too, was unsure of the meaning of [the poem] and after reading the Left’s response, I am still unclear. In general, in these cases it is customary to cite the source of such things, and to hear of such wide reading is interesting indeed, but this...would be difficult to locate within the usual Three Histories; furthermore, I have no recollection of a person named in this Chinese manner, and so an ignorant old man like myself can only ask, who is this Nagayasu?

(McAuley 2020, 927-28)

Shunzei is being jocular in his judgement, in that ‘Nagayasu’ is the Japanese pronunciation of the characters used to write the name ‘Changkang’. His point, though, is serious: Kenshō’s reference is so obscure it invites confusion.

The challenges this type of material poses the translator is obvious: in both of the examples, the poets rely upon their audience having knowledge of an additional literary, or historical, work in order for them to grasp the full import of their poems. Indeed, having that background and knowledge might be described as an essential condition for being considered a worthy member of the original audience in the first place. The in-depth knowledge of premodern East Asian literature which this requires, though, is something which virtually no members of a twenty-first century Anglophone audience could be expected to possess.

While it would be possible to produce ‘translations’ of both of the poems above which incorporate the sense transmitted by the intertextuality, such as:

Should I seize the day, and
Tell her how I feel? I
Wondered, but
Caution makes me hesitate
For love’s first flush does fade...

Or:

In far Cathay did a painter
Once woo a maid;
His brush strokes, and
His pigments conveyed
His depth of passion!

These vary from the sense of the originals so greatly, however, that they would be better described as ‘versions’ rather than ‘translations’. As discussed earlier, there has been a long tradition of this method of transferring the message contained in the poetry of one culture to

another, in both the translation of Japanese works and those of other nations, and so I would not wish to dismiss this as a translation strategy out of hand. However, I can say that this is a method which I would not generally choose to adopt in my own translation practice.

Conclusion

Through the discussion above I hope I have provided at least some further clarification about the challenges and issues confronting a translator of *waka*, and some indications of the consequences for the translations which flow from adopting particular solutions. I have also outlined the solutions which I have found most convivial for my own activities as a translator. It is, of course, for readers and reviewers to consider my work and judge whether I have achieved my aims and produced texts which ‘effectively function as...receptor-language poems’ (Jones 2011, 179), while also providing sufficient explanation and commentary to allow my readers to understand them more fully. At times I have wondered whether I have been guilty of the sin of believing that ‘Westerners could not possibly understand a Japanese poem in all its simplicity’ (Rexroth 1973, 271) and hence providing too much additional information. On balance, though, I believe it is better to err on the side of providing too much information than too little. While poetry may be “writer-centred” [where]...the stress... is on the quality of the writer’s message rather than on its accessibility to the reader’ (Jones 2011, 177), I have felt that the majority of readers of *waka* in translation, have the desire to be educated about the nature of the form and the milieu which gave birth to it in company with the desire to read recognisable poetry.

I further hope that through my discussion of the wider scholarship around the translation of poetry, I have shown that while the particular linguistic and literary context of *waka* is unique, it is nevertheless subject to the same processes and concerns which motivate the translators of poetry from and into other languages. If by doing so I have succeeded in demystifying *waka* translation to some extent, and demonstrating its commonality with the work done in other languages, so much the better.

Thus far, I have said much about possible solutions to translation issues in *waka*, and provided some examples of my own work. Others are, of course, available,^{xi} but it seems fitting to close this article with a pair of *waka* from *Ropyyakuban uta’awase*, chosen because in the view of the competition’s participants and judge, they were particularly fine, and thus ending this discussion on a note of evocative beauty.

Love VIII: 24:

Left (Tie)

この比の心の底をよそに見ば鹿鳴く野辺の秋の夕暮

kono koro no

Of late

kokoro no soko o

Of the depths of my heart

yoso ni miba

Were you to catch a distant glimpse:

shika naku nobe no

A stag belling in the meadow

aki no yūgure

On an autumn evening ...

A Servant Girl

1067

Right

暮れかかる裾野の露に鹿鳴きて人待つ袖に涙そふ也

kurekakaruru

Twilight

susono no tsuyu ni

Drapes dewfall on the mountains’ skirts,

shika nakite

With a stag’s sad cry;

hito matsu sode ni

Awaiting him, my sleeves

namida sou nari

Are wet with tears.

Left and Right together: we find no faults to mention.

In judgement: it would be impossible to ever exhaust the overtones of feelings in 'a stag belling in the meadow on an autumn evening' (shika naku nobe no aki no yūgure) in the Left's poem: in the Right's poem the configuration and conception of 'awaiting him, my sleeves are wet with tears' (hito matsu sode mo namida sou nari) is richly evocative. I find it extremely hard to put both poems down, so this round, again, is a tie of quality.

(McAuley 2020, 892-3)

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ⁱ This article is based upon a presentation delivered at a symposium entitled *Hon'yaku no chikara – shika o yakusu? – The Power of Translation: Who's afraid of poetry?* held at Waseda University, Tokyo on 15 November 2019.

ⁱⁱ See Jones (2011, 8-11) for a brief survey of literature on poetry translation.

ⁱⁱⁱ It was possible for poets to occasionally diverge from the 5-7-5-7-7 pattern by including an additional syllable in one of the units of the poem, a practice known as *ji-amari* 字余り, however, this could lead to the work being considered of lesser quality in more formal contexts, such as poetry competitions (*uta'awase* 歌合).

^{iv} The translations below are taken from Chambers (N.D.) where forty-three different translations of Narihira's poem have been collected.

^v See McAuley (2020, 86-7) for an account of the evolution of the use of *asaji* in *waka* poetry.

^{vi} See McAuley (2001b) for a list of some of the more common *makura kotoba*, as well as examples of the expressions they were used to modify.

^{vii} A minor variation of this poem appears in *Man'yōshū* (XI: 2704), where it is listed as 'Anonymous', so it is unclear whether this is truly Hitomaro's work, or not.

^{viii} A full discussion of the range and nature of *utamakura* is well beyond the scope of this article, but this can be found in Kamens (1997).

^{ix} See McAuley (2020, 837) for further details on *shitahimo no seki* and additional examples of usage.

^x See Hirshfield (1990) for selected translations of Komachi's poems and a brief bibliography.

^{xi} Over 5,500 of my translations can be found on my website: www.wakapoetry.net.