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## Translating the Haiku of Takanori Hayakawa

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We met the poet Takanori Hayakawa at the fifth Monash Literary Translation Spring School in September 2017. Hayakawa has long held a deep interest both in the poetic medium of haiku and the study of languages, especially as a means of maintaining his ties to his homeland since migrating to Australia in 1996. In addition to being the winner of the Special Prize in the 6th Love Haiku Competition run by the non-profit organisation Kigosai in February 2017, he is actively involved with the Australian Haiku Society, promoting and broadening the public's understanding of haiku. The haiku translated into English below are twelve original works selected by the author. Our translation decisions were informed by two overarching aims: to transfer the imagery of the source texts into the target texts, and to maintain certain stylistic characteristics of Japanese haiku in English in order to convey some of the effects that exist in the originals.

In 1995, there were an estimated twenty million haiku poets in Japan belonging to at least one of twelve hundred haiku organisations engaged in producing publications and holding competitions (Kirkup 24). This popularity continues today, with twenty-three introductory guides and over two hundred haiku-related books and magazines published in 2017 alone. Annual competitions on a national scale include the International Kusamakura Haiku Competition, the NHK National Haiku and Tanka Competition, and the Association of Haiku Poets National Competition, all of which invite foreign applicants.

Japanese haiku are typically characterized by the use of a seasonal reference in the form of a *kigo* ('seasonal word'), and the principle of cutting, often manifested in the form of a *kireji* ('cutting word'), a kind of verbal caesura. The importance of these formal features cannot be understated.

*Kigo* serve two primary functions. As *kigo* are words that have acquired fixed referents over the centuries through their continued use in the Japanese poetic tradition, their first function is to anchor individual poems within the larger communal body of poetic and cultural associations (Shirane 83). The second function is thematic: according to some theorists, in the aesthetics of haiku, the human world exists as part of the world of nature, symbolized in its purest shape in the form of the seasons (Ōsuga 54). The importance of nature in haiku, as embodied by the seasons, is underscored by the medium's focus on aesthetic preoccupation over human cogitation, which allows the poet to touch upon the kind of universalities that lie behind small aspects of phenomena (Ōsuga 4). Seasonal references, as symbols for wider forces of nature, help make this possible.

*Kireji* serve to give a haiku structure. When a *kireji* occurs in the middle of a haiku, it functions both to cut and to join, separating the two parts of the poem while at the same time implying an intrinsic correspondence, prompting the reader to consider the connection that lies between. When it occurs at the end of a haiku, the *kireji* serves to pull the reader back to the beginning, thereby leading one into a state of reflection. The *kireji* may be used to introduce playful puns and wordplay, but its primary function is to create a "thought-pause" (Yasuda 75), a verbal manifestation of the principle of *ma* ('negative space'), serving to draw the reader into a state of contemplation.

Haiku frequently describe everyday objects and experiences (Kirkup vii). Likewise, in our personal communication with the author on 21 September 2017, Hayakawa stated that his inspiration often comes suddenly, and is converted into haiku before it can fade away. As such, his poems feature a wide range of themes, from coincidental sightings during his daily commutes (no. 4), to reflections on his own state of mind (no. 3 and 6), to observations made

during his uncle's funeral (no. 10-12). While Japanese aesthetics are evident in many of Hayakawa's haiku, several of them revolve around his experiences in Australia, thus providing a unique blend of Australian imagery and Japanese poetic convention (no. 4 and 8).

The translation of poetry, especially haiku, is often considered among the most difficult in literary translation. In this vein, Satō (iii, 236-237) reflects on how Japanese haiku poets and critics have questioned whether a non-Japanese language haiku can truly be described as exhibiting the characteristics of authentic haiku, while Hagiwara (456) has argued that haiku translation is "impossible" unless the translator has developed a full understanding of the Japanese cultural and aesthetic nuances through immersion in the Japanese lifestyle. Nevertheless, many successful anglophone translators, such as Kenneth Yasuda, William Higginson, and Jane Reichhold have made significant contributions to the breadth and availability of haiku in English.

The challenges that we encountered arose from the wide range of interpretations that each haiku provides. While some haiku may initially appear straightforward, closer examination and discussion with the author offered a surprising depth into the thought processes that lay behind the word choice and subsequent imagery. For example, in poem no. 3, the poet describes his empty body, lying on a couch on a misty night. This image may suggest a weary person in a contemplative state; and yet, following discussion with the poet, we learned that the author's own interpretation is that the subject of the poem is in a state of mental disorientation after a night of heavy drinking. Similarly, poem no. 10 allows for multiple meanings: the widow may be lamenting the early death of her husband, or the early coming of summer, or perhaps both. The self-expression of the poet, how he perceives the world, and how he chooses to represent it in his poems offer the readers with multiple possibilities for interpretation, and our approach to translation hopes to offer the target audience a similar level of interpretative freedom.

Maintaining the stylistic parallelism between the source texts and the target texts also posed a challenge. In English haiku, the two principles of seasonal references (as in the case of *kigo*) and cutting (as in the case of *kireji*), remain invaluable (while the 5-7-5 prosodic scheme arguably does not). There are, however, certain significant differences in their manifestations between these two languages, particularly as the respective literary and poetic traditions of these two cultures differ significantly, to the extent that the common aesthetic qualities of one may have no functional equivalent in the other. As such, it is not so much the formal qualities of Japanese haiku that are reproduced in English, but rather their poetic effects and aesthetic functions.

Seasonal references used in Japanese haiku have acquired their meanings through centuries of use in the Japanese poetic tradition. As such, while there have been attempts to develop independent English lexicons of seasonal words in the form of specialized *saijiki* ('seasonal almanacs') designed to suit the geographical and climatic characteristics of territories outside of Japan (as in Higginson), in general, seasonal words are not always used in English haiku, and when they are, they often do not serve the same role that they would in Japanese (Shirane 85). Consequently, however, one of the key functions of *kigo*, what Shirane calls a "vertical axis" of meaning linking individual poems across time, whether to prior literary works or to other cultural memories, is largely absent in English haiku (80). For example, in poem no. 9, in which the poet reminisces about his homeland, the Japanese word *kaki* ('persimmon') carries connotations that do not exist in English: as a seasonal word, it implies autumn, and allusively conveys an astringent sense of nostalgia for things that have passed. As these connotations are not shared by the English poetry tradition, they are likely to be missed by English readers, who may approach the poem in a different manner. In order to address this, the connotations of nostalgia were reinforced in other ways, namely through the poet's description of thinking about home. In this way, specific meanings along the 'vertical axis'

may not always carry across into English, but they can be addressed in other ways, and it is of course possible for readers to ascribe new poetic experience to works entering a new culture.

Differences similarly exist in the use of cutting. In Japanese, cutting generally take the form of grammatical particles or particular verbal conjugations which have no clear equivalents in English. As such, where such caesura are marked in English haiku, it is generally through the use of punctuation in order both to indicate a verbal pause and to illustrate a juxtaposition and parallelism between the poem's constituent parts (Hiraga 468). For example, in poem no. 12, the reader is at first shown an image of pure, young hydrangeas, and only after the appearance of the cut is the funeral mentioned. This creates a parallelism which prompts the reader to go back to the preceding part of the poem and consider that the words *wakaki* ('young') and *kiyoshi* ('pure') may also be in reference to the deceased individual. Moreover, a cut may occur at the end of a haiku, in which case there may be no overt indication of its presence. Nonetheless, so long as the poem produces a negative space into which the reader may enter, the function of the cut may be said to have been retained.

To preserve the imagery and connotations that exist in the source texts in English translation, it is important to fully appreciate the poetic techniques utilized by the author and the aesthetic effects that these produce. While it may not have been possible to reproduce every nuance that exists in the Japanese source texts, it is hoped that these translations will allow the target text readership to share in and create their own interpretations of these works, and therefore partake in the aesthetic experience that is haiku.

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Selected Haiku  
By Takanori Hayakawa

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1. 風船や一歳になる親孝行  
a balloon in the sky—  
the filial devotion  
of turning one
2. 思春期のヒト科は臭し春の土  
spring earth—  
the scent  
of pubescent hominids
3. 朧夜の寝椅子横たふ我の殻  
my empty body—  
laying on the lounge  
this misty night
4. ロリキート鳴き過ぐる空春の空  
the cries of lorikeets  
shrilling past—  
the spring sky
5. 朽ちし薔薇美貌の婆に似たりけり  
a wilting rose—  
like a beauty  
past her prime
6. 空蟬や今日も昨日の繰り返し  
this moulted shell—  
the same today  
as yesterday
7. 千羽鶴胴つき抜かれ原爆忌  
origami cranes  
their bodies pierced by strings—  
atomic bombing memorial
8. 十字星たよりにさがす天の川  
the Milky Way—  
found with the aid of  
the Southern Cross
9. 豪州の柿見ておもふ祖国かな  
persimmon viewing  
in Australia  
and thinking of home  
*On the death of my uncle.*
10. 伯父他界す  
「あっけない」 呟く寡婦や夏浅し  
“too soon,”  
the widow sighs—  
summer’s arrival
11. 白百合や弔衣の伯母の丸背中  
a white lily—  
the rounded back  
of my aunt in mourning
12. まだ若き紫陽花清し通夜の庭  
the hydrangeas  
still young and pure—  
nightlong vigil