

The AALITRA Review
A JOURNAL OF LITERARY TRANSLATION
No. 8, June 2014



The AALITRA Review

A JOURNAL OF LITERARY TRANSLATION

No. 8, June 2014

Website: <http://aalitra.org.au>

Lost and Found in Poetic Translation – A Transnational
Experience
Tomoko Takahashi

To cite this Article:

Tomoko Takahashi, “Lost and Found in Poetic Translation – A
Transnational Experience”, *The AALITRA Review: A Journal of
Literary Translation*, No.8 (Melbourne: Monash University, 2014),
pp.22-32.

Published by
MONASH UNIVERSITY

© Monash University 2014

Lost and Found in Poetic Translation – A Transnational Experience

TOMOKO TAKAHASHI

Soka University Of America

Abstract

Poetic translation is a unique genre that requires special techniques and is notoriously difficult, perhaps even “impossible” according to some experts (Landers 97). At the same time, because of the challenge, poetic translation is found to be rewarding, particularly when it is done in a transnational situation. In this study I describe the “losses and gains” that I have experienced as a Japanese-American transnational in the process of translating Japanese waka (31-syllable poems) and haiku (17-syllable poems) into English.

In the field of literary translation, “more time has been devoted to investigating the problems of translating poetry than any other literary mode” (Bassnett, *Translation Studies* 83). Poetic translation “is so difficult as to be called impossible by most experts” (Landers 97). It is a unique genre that requires the use of special translation techniques. Mexican writer, poet and diplomat Octavio Paz remarks, “[the] greatest pessimism about the feasibility of translation has been concentrated on poetry” (155). He disagrees, however, with those “many modern poets [who] insist that poetry is untranslatable” (155). In so doing, Paz contends that the “good” translator of poetry is a translator who is also a poet (158), making a vital distinction between the task of the poet and that of the translator:

The poet, immersed in the movement of language, in constant verbal preoccupation, chooses a few words – or is chosen by them. As he [*sic*] combines them, he constructs his poem: a verbal object made of irreplaceable and immovable characters. The translator’s starting point is not the language in movement that provides the poet’s raw material, but the fixed language of the poem. A language congealed, yet living. His procedure is the inverse of the poet’s: he is not constructing an unalterable text from mobile characters; instead he is dismantling the elements of the text, freeing the signs into circulation, then returning them to language.

(Paz 159)

Paz goes on to maintain that the poet creates a poem – an unalterable text – by “fixing” language, while “a good translator moves in the opposite direction”, making the “intended destination” a poem that is “analogous although not identical to the original poem” (158). That is, the translator first takes apart the fixed text and then reassembles its components in another language – composing a poem in the target language (TL). Mirroring the arguments put forward by Paz, the American expatriate poet Ezra Pound also attributes to the translator’s role a dual responsibility:

Through [Pound’s] many notes and comments on translation, there is a consistent line of thought [...]. The translator needs to read well, to be aware of what the source text is, to understand both its formal properties and its literary dynamic as well as its status in the source system, and then has to take into account the role that text may have in the target system.

(Bassnett, “Transplanting the Seed” 64)

The two phases of translation suggested by Paz – dismantling and reassembling – are, he argues, an inverted parallel of poetic creation, resulting in “a reproduction of the original poem in another poem [...] less a copy than a transmutation” (159-160).

My experience with translating Japanese poetry into English has required a close reading of the text as well as dismantling and reassembling. In this intricate reproduction process, which must also take into account the constraints of typological distance between the source language (SL) and the TL, I have found that much gets lost in poetic translation. And yet, I also have learned that it is precisely this difficulty that invigorates the process of translation, as Wilson points out:

The losses and gains in the passage between the source and the target language and the ensuing lack of precision take the writer into the realm of the inexpressible, the space where new expressions are generated in pursuit of the inner voice.

(Wilson, “The Writer’s Double” 194)

In this study, in order to illustrate the “losses and gains” and the “pursuit of the inner voice” that I have experienced in poetic translation, I use examples from *Samurai and Cotton*, my autobiography, originally written in Japanese and self-translated into English.¹ The letters quoted in *Samurai and Cotton* include a number of poems that the correspondents, most notably my parents, wrote in the mid-1970s after I had left Japan to study in the US.² This presents a unique situation. First of all, the translator (myself) is the recipient of the poems. Secondly, the poems were written several decades ago. Thirdly, the correspondence between the poet and the recipient of the poems was transnational in nature – moving between Japan and the US. To make the situation even more distinctive, although the recipient and the translator of the poems is the same person (myself), their statuses are different – the former being a newcomer to the US and the latter a transnational who has lived in the adopted country for several decades. Thus a situational as well as temporal distance is presented, between the receipt and the translation of the poems, in addition to the physical distance originally present in the transnational correspondence. Also of note is that the target audience of the English translation was mainly American.³ My poetic translation, therefore, interacted closely with my “self” as a Japanese-American transnational and my transnational experience bridging the two remote times as well as the two distant places.

¹ *Samurai and Cotton* is an autobiography as well as a tribute to the author’s father, family and ancestors. It is based on the true stories of seven generations of her family in Japan and centres around the lives of the author and her father. The book takes the reader on an historical journey through the world of the samurai, a transition to the merchant class, and finally to the aftermath of the author-protagonist’s decision to leave Japan and pursue her dream to study in the United States. The story is narrated by the transnational and translingual writer and protagonist, and serves as a metanarrative providing clues about the author-translator’s psyche and transformation as she transitions through geographical, cultural and linguistic changes. See Takahashi (*Lost and Found in Self-Translation*) for a detailed analysis of the translation process through which *Samurai and Cotton* was produced.

² Being the author of the present study as well as the author-translator of *Samurai and Cotton*, I refer to myself in the first person (e.g. “I”) as both. I also refer to myself in third person (e.g. “the translator”, “she”) when describing the book and/or translation.

³ Considering the readership and the notion of creativity side by side, I realize that the influence of the audience may possibly hinder one’s creativity – for example, functioning as a “creative constraint” (Wilson and Gerber). If, for instance, the translator is forced to “conform” to the expectations and conventions of the target audience due to commercial purposes or political pressure, this external force will likely go against the translator’s desire to be creative. In such a case, translation becomes a battle between external and internal forces. In my case, however, there was no commercial or political pressure. My relationship with the target audience was rather personal and free of any pressure, and this independence allowed me to interact freely with my desire to translate creatively and to turn my translation into “(a form of) creative writing and creative writing as being shaped by translation processes” (Wilson and Gerber ix).

Lost in translation

A waka (31-syllable Japanese poem) consists of five lines of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables in each line. The following waka is written by my mother, Sachiko, responding to my letter that enclosed a maple leaf from New Haven in Connecticut, where I was studying in the mid-1970s:

*One leaf of maple
Found in the airmail...
To my daughter's heart
I press my cheek.⁴*

(Takahashi, *Samurai and Cotton* 154)

The sense of the rhythm of the original poem is captured in the following transcription, in the middle column (with a literal translation in the third column):

一葉の	<i>ichiyō-no</i> ⁵ 1 2 3 4 5	one leaf of
紅葉に託す	<i>momiji-ni takusu</i> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	maple sent via
航空便	<i>eamēru</i> 1 2 3 4 5	airmail
吾が子の心に	<i>wagako-no kokoro-ni</i> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (8) ⁶	to my child's heart
ほほすり寄せる	<i>hoho suri yoseru</i> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	(I) press (my) cheek

The rhythm is at the heart of Japanese poetry. The Japanese syllable, however, is very different from the English equivalent, for example:

Japanese “syllables” are quite uniform, most of them consisting of a consonant and a vowel: *ka*, *ri*, *to*, and so forth. As a result, they are also very short. English syllables have much greater variety in structure and length.

(Barnhill 5-6)

Due to such linguistic differences between the SL and the TL, I found it almost impossible to preserve the same syllabic rhythm in the TL. I thus translated the entire poem line by line, mostly focusing on trying to preserve the content rather than the form. For instance, I chose the message over the rhythm.

Let us look at another example:

*When young and innocent,
I picked dandelions in the fields.
Their fragrance I still remember.
The thirtieth wedding anniversary is near.⁷*

(Takahashi, *Samurai and Cotton* 154-55)

The source text (ST) of this poem is transcribed and literally translated as follows:

⁴ 一葉の紅葉（もみじ）に託す航空便（エアメール）

吾が子の心にほほすり寄せる

⁵ A Japanese long vowel indicated with a macron (̄) is counted as two syllables.

⁶ A line sometimes ends with an extra syllable, which is called 字余り (*jiamari* [lit. extra/leftover letter]).

⁷ 幼きは野辺にて摘みしタンポポの

香もなつかしく象牙婚かな

幼きは	<i>osanaki-wa</i>	when young
	1 2 3 4 5	
野辺にて摘みし	<i>nobe-nite tsumishi</i>	in the field (I) picked
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
タンポポの	<i>tanpopo-no</i>	dandelions
	1 2 3 4 5	
香もなつかしく	<i>ka-mo natsukashiku</i>	fragrance (I) remember
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
象牙婚かな	<i>zōgekon kana</i>	ah... the ivory wedding ⁸
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

The final target text (TT) of this poem is similar to the literal translation provided above. The only changes I made were to add “innocent” to “young” for the translation of 幼き (*osanaki*) and to increase the number of syllables in the line, as well as expressing the meaning of the ST accurately.⁹ I slightly amplified the last line with the interpretation that the poet was thinking about her thirtieth wedding anniversary while reminiscing about her childhood. The last word かな (*kana*) is an expression that is equivalent to “oh” or “ah” in English, implying the poet’s deep emotion. In this case, she was marvelling at the fact that time had flown since her childhood, as she welcomes her thirtieth wedding anniversary. While the SL expression かな (*kana*) was found to be impossible to translate into English, my choice was to explain the poet’s feeling by clarifying the situation, as in “The thirtieth wedding anniversary is near”. The choice of “near” was triggered by the last word of the previous line – “remember” – intended to have a rhyming effect. Similarly, the addition of “innocent”, mentioned above, was intended for a rhythmic effect. Despite such attempts, however, the original rhythm and flavour were ultimately lost in translation.

Loss and gain

In the examples discussed above, images and experiences attached to the original poem were also lost due to the geographical, linguistic and cultural distance caused by the transnational and translanguaging situation. At the same time, however, it is precisely this distance, resulting in unique interlingual interactions, that enables fresh feelings, nuances and new narratives in the target culture.

In the ST of the first poem discussed above, the poet uses the Japanese word 紅葉 (*momiji* [lit. “crimson leaf”]) to refer to the maple leaf found in the letter. This SL term is, then, translated (back) into the TL as “maple”, which accurately depicts the object described in the poem. It must be noted here that the visual images of 紅葉 (*momiji*) and “maple” leaves are quite different. Not only are their leaves very different, but the trees are dissimilar as well. Japanese *momiji* trees are usually shrubs and much smaller than fully-grown North American maple trees. In the ST, the reader is left with the inauthentic image of the maple plant due to the SL term 紅葉 (*momiji*), which is most likely associated with images that are “Japanese” and unlike the typical image held by Americans.

Likewise, one’s experiences associated with 紅葉 (*momiji*) and “maple” may differ, bringing dissimilar nuances and feelings as well. When I hear the word 紅葉 (*momiji*) in Japanese, for example, I think about the colour 紅 (*beni* [crimson]), the song I learned in elementary school and trips to places such as Nikko and Hakone – mostly related to my childhood experiences in Japan. On the other hand, the English word “maple” triggers word

⁸ In the past, the thirtieth anniversary was celebrated as the ivory wedding. Today it is the fourteenth.

⁹ The Japanese adjective 幼き collocates with words such as “child”, but not with “adult”. The meaning of this adjective is thus more marked than the English adjective “young”, which can modify “child” or “adult”.

associations such as “orange color”, “New England”, “syrup”, “pancakes”, etc. Apparently, those two sets of images come from different experiences separated by geographical distance.¹⁰

My ST readers are given the following description prior to reading the poem, but this is most likely insufficient for them to attain the accurate image of the maple leaves:

キャンパスは、自然に恵まれ、ニューイングランドの香り高く「異国情緒」満点でした。
紅葉の時季には、街の並木が濃いオレンジに色づいたメープル (もみじ) の葉に包まれ、青空によく映えていました。その燃えるようなメープル並木の美しさには、ため息を漏らすほどの感動を味わいました。
(Takahashi, サムライと綿 243)

The TT of this passage is as follows:

The campus was surrounded by a beautiful natural setting, full of the New England fragrance and exotic atmosphere. In the fall foliage season, the streets were aflame with autumn tints of **maple leaves**. The **reddish orange leaves** made a sharp contrast with the blue sky, which was simply breathtaking.
(Takahashi, *Samurai and Cotton* 143)

As can be garnered from this TT content, the ST reader is given an image that American maple leaves are 濃いオレンジ (*koi-orenji* [lit. “dark orange”]), translated, “reddish orange” in the TL. The ST readers may wonder about メープル並木 (*mēpuru namiki* [lit. “maple-lined streets”]) since they would rarely see streets lined with *momiji* trees in Japan but instead would be accustomed to different types of taller and thicker trees lining streets, whereas *momiji* trees or shrubs are usually found in shady woodlands and gardens.

It should also be noted here that, in the ST quoted above, I used the SL *katakana* term (loanword form) メープル (*mēpuru* [“maple”]) amplified with もみじ (*momiji*) – as in メープル (もみじ). In the above bilingual-bicultural as well as bidirectional translation situation, the TL word and its images were rightly revived in the TT, as a result of the interlingual interactions. As a Japanese-American transnational, I have the privilege of having two sets of images, experiences and word associations that are related to my L1 and L2, which is typical of “coordinate bilingualism” (see footnote 10). Thanks to this special privilege, I found this type of poetic translation rewarding and fulfilling.

Yoko Tawada, a Japanese-German bilingual author, writes:

I’ve been living in Hamburg for twenty years now. “Have you become a different person?” I am asked. “Are you a different person when you speak German?” I am asked. These questions are not easily answered. If a person were to acquire an additional personality when learning an additional language, someone who speaks five languages would possess five personalities. Should this person look like a country fair with five different booths? I don’t have a single booth. I’m similar to a web. The structure of a web pattern is formed. There are more and more knots, tight and loose spots, irregularities, uncompleted corners, edges, holes, or superimposed layers. This web, which can catch tiny planktons, I will call a multilingual web.

(Tawada 148)

¹⁰ Keeping two languages separate in such a manner is one of the characteristics of “coordinate bilingualism”, as opposed to “compound bilingualism” – the dichotomous distinction first introduced by Weinreich. Cook describes compound and coordinate bilinguals as those “who link the two languages in their minds, or keep them apart respectively” (152). The difference is normally due to the bilingual’s experience with the two languages – for example, whether the languages are learned/acquired in the same environment or separate locations. Transnational situations tend to lead to language acquisition/learning environments resulting in coordinate bilingualism, in which one’s first language (L1) and second language (L2) are kept separate.

Tawada's description of bilingualism/multilingualism describes well what constitutes, or contributes to, the basis for the linguistic creativity that transnational writers/translators possess – a “multilingual web” with “superimposed layers”.

Quoting Alice Kaplan, Evangelista describes how, in bilingual writing, for each loss there are, equally, a number of possible gains:

Kaplan [...] writes about the “privilege of living in translation” [140], which might even suggest that the loss in translation belongs to writers who never have had the “privilege” of having to confront such different aspects of self.

(Evangelista 181)

A loss can hence be turned into a gain with the creativity of a “multilingual web” but only in the hands of an adventurous bilingual writer.

Poetic translation as self expression

The brevity of a waka poem makes it difficult to convey the original flavour of the ST in the TL. Translating haiku, which is shorter than waka, is thus more challenging. It only consists of three lines of 5-7-5 syllables and emphasizes simplicity of expression, focusing on the beauty of each season and images from nature. Haiku poems by one of Japan's most famous poets, Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694), have been translated into many other languages including English. Take the following example:

古池や	<i>furuike-ya</i>	The ancient pond
	1 2 3 4 5	
蛙飛び込む	<i>kawazu tobikomu</i>	A frog jumps in
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
水の音	<i>mizu-no oto</i>	The sound of the water.
	1 2 3 4 5	

This is probably the best-known haiku in the world (Ueda). The translation rendered above is by Donald Keene [1955] and it is translated faithfully and straightforwardly.

This poem has also been translated by many other Anglophone translators – for example, Hiroaki Sato's *One Hundred Frogs* includes over a hundred translations plus a number of adaptations and parodies. These translations of the same poem suggest that there can be as many translations as the number of translators. Some translations are long and others extremely short. Some consist of complete sentences, others only of nouns. The following one, for instance, provides much more information than found in the original haiku (ST):

There once was a curious frog
Who sat by a pond on a log
And, to see what resulted,
In the pond catapulted
With a water-noise heard round the bog.

Translated by Alfred H. Marks [1974] (Sato 68)

This example contains so much more than the ST – for example, there is no reference to the frog being curious in the original poem. The translator also made the lines rhyme and turned the haiku into a limerick, which was probably his playful and creative way to express feelings and impressions. In contrast, the following only contains nouns:

pond
frog
plop!

Translated by James Kirkup [n.d.] (Sato 100)

This translation relies on simplicity and the reader's imagination. Thus the wide range of translations of this particular poem suggests that there is infinite potential hidden in poetic translation.

In *Samurai and Cotton*, several of the haiku poems that my father, Kiyoshi, wrote and included in his letters are introduced.

*Excerpts from my father's letter
dated September 21, 1975¹¹*

I saw the harvest moon (August 15 on the lunar calendar) yesterday. It's rare to see it since it's always rainy or cloudy on this day every year. [...]

[...] After finishing the delivery, I was relieved and looked up in the sky to find the full moon of the 15th night [in a lunar month] rising in the east. It was quite pleasing to admire the harvest moon from the 5th floor of the housing development. I wondered if you would be watching the same moon and composed a haiku poem:

The harvest moon shines.

Looking up in the sky,

I think about my scion.

—Kijirushi¹²

I saw people carrying Japanese pampas grass [one of the decorative items used for a moon-viewing festival] at Kitaguchi Shopping Mall. They seemed to be enjoying the fall festival in a modest way. After getting home, I wrote down my haiku poem with a brush and ink and posted it under my New Year's calligraphy.

(Takahashi, *Samurai and Cotton* 155-156)

The ST haiku included in the above letter is transcribed and literally translated as follows:

中秋の	<i>chūshū-no</i>	mid-autumn [harvest]
	12 34 5	
月を仰ぎて	<i>tsuki-wo aogite</i>	moon (I) look up
	1 2 3 45 6 7	
吾子思い	<i>ago omoi</i>	(I) think about my child
	1 2 3 4 5	

We notice here that this poem in its final form in the TT was amplified beyond the direct translation presented above – there are expressions in the TT that did not appear in the ST. For example, the first line in the TT reads: “The harvest moon shines” but there is no word equivalent to “shine” in the ST. The second line contains the phrase “in the sky”, but again, there is no equivalent expression found in the ST. If the poem were translated more literally, it would read:

The harvest moon
Looking up
I think about my child.

¹¹ Translations of letters are italicized in *Samurai and Cotton*. Information in parentheses () is original – provided by the letter writer. Information in square brackets [] is provided by the author-translator. The use of [...] in letter excerpts indicates that one or more sentences or paragraphs are omitted from the original letter by the ST author. Non-italicized [...] indicates an omission from the TT made by the author of the present study.

¹² 中秋の月を仰ぎて 吾子（あご）思い — 喜印

Kiyoshi signed his haiku here as 喜印 (Kijirushi). He evidently came up with this name using one character from his first name – i.e., the 喜 [Ki] of 喜儀 [Kiyoshi]. And he playfully added jirushi/shirushi [印 “mark”] to make it to resemble kijirushi [a euphemism for “crazy”].

Some may think this translation is sufficient, but I reproduced it as follows:

The harvest moon shines.
Looking up in the sky,
I think about my scion.

Here, the brevity of the poem was compensated for with additional descriptions of the scene. It should also be noted that the last word in each line was inserted in order to alliterate (beginning with the letter *s*), as underlined above. The word “shines” was added in order to make the scenery more vivid. To go well with “shines”, the word “child” was changed to “scion”. Those were my efforts to make the short haiku poem more poetry-like in the TL.

The following excerpt includes another haiku by my father, together with background information given by the narrator (me):

In the same month, I received another haiku from Dad.

*On the world map
Where my daughter lives
I paste a Jizō talisman.*¹³

Right before this poem arrived, I had received a letter from my father telling me: “We received a *Jizō* talisman from the Temple today. I have posted it on the map where New Haven is and prayed for your safety from far away. I especially hope that you will take care of your throat and won’t catch a cold.”

(Takahashi, *Samurai and Cotton* 156)

The ST haiku in the above letter is transcribed and literally translated as follows:

吾が子住む	<i>wagako sumu</i>	(where) my child lives
	1 2 3 4 5	
地図のところへ	<i>chizu-no tokoro-e</i>	the map’s point
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
地藏札	<i>jizō-fuda</i>	Jizō talisman
	1 2 3 4 5	

If this haiku were translated literally, it would be:

On the map
Where my child lives
A Jizō talisman

The following is the final translation:

On the **world** map
Where my daughter lives
I paste a Jizō talisman.

This poem in the TL gained a couple of additions – for instance, “world” was added to “map” as well as the phrase “I paste”. The term “world” was included in order to create a contrast between the old Japanese tradition and the transnational aspect of the situation – the poet is in Japan and his daughter in the US. The phrase “I paste” was added in order to clarify the meaning of the poem, based on the explanation provided in the letter.

¹³ 吾が子住む 地図のところへ 地藏札

As seen in this and other examples, my translations of the poems in *Samurai and Cotton* tend to consist of complete sentences rather than lining up nouns or noun phrases. This is my personal preference, reflecting my personality as well as my profession (a linguist and English educator), which has led me to believe that sentences must be complete. In other words, my poetic translation is a product of my self-expression.

Gain from a distance

A physical and temporal distance plays an intricate role in the creative process of translation (see Evangelista). In the poetic translation described above, I was brought back to the past to live the elapsed time and my old self while reading and translating the poems written by my parents in the 1970s. When the temporal distance was diminished in my mind, it unlocked the door of nostalgia I experienced as a Japanese-American transnational. In reality, however, no one can go back to the past. Moving through time, we become exiled from our past. The temporal distance can only be overcome with the power of imagination. If it is a physical distance, on the other hand, as Klimkiewicz notes, as long as you keep your passport, you can freely travel and safely go back home any time you want, but if you are in exile, you can “live in the memory alone and can only go back home with an effort of imagination” (196). In this sense, reminiscing about the past and yearning for home are the same in an exile’s mind – for instance, “having another life elsewhere is felt as a different chapter of life, a completely distinct period of time that will be forever impossible to recover” (196). The power of imagination, however, can close both spatial and temporal gaps.

As Klimkiewicz points out, Vladimir Nabokov’s imagination provokes a “compression of space”:

a wild and poetic contraction which manifests in his novel *The Gift* when Fyodor is looking outside through the window of his apartment in Berlin: “The night sky melts to peach beyond that gate. There water gleams, there Venice vaguely shows. Look at that street – it runs to China straight, and yonder star above the Volga glows!”

(Klimkiewicz 196)

I can empathize with and appreciate this form of imaginative thinking, even though my situation was quite different. I was not in exile; it was my choice to leave home. While I was studying abroad, I had my passport, which allowed me to go home freely and safely at any time. In reality, however, my freedom and mobility were limited – it was as though I were in voluntary exile – because I was unable to go home freely for financial reasons:

Airfares were unbelievably expensive; I remember an economy-class one-way ticket from Tokyo to New York was 200,000 yen in 1975. It was about \$666 according to the exchange rate in the 1970s, but it would actually be over \$2,600 today (2011) with inflation.

Considering the cost of traveling, I was determined not to come home until I had graduated. (The situation back then was so different from that of today. Japanese students studying in the United States today often go home for a summer vacation, Christmas, and sometimes, even for spring break!)

(Takahashi, *Samurai and Cotton* 122)

This situation widened the physical distance and triggered more imaginative thinking about home. While studying in New Haven, I often wondered how my family might be doing back in Japan. At the same time, my parents also contemplated how I might be doing thousands of miles away from home. They, too, compressed the physical distance “with an effort of imagination”.

My father composed a haiku, looking at the harvest moon, wondering if I, too, might be viewing the same moon in the US. This is reminiscent of the “wild and poetic contraction” manifested in the words of Fyodor in Nabokov’s novel – compressing space through the sky,

water, streets and stars. My father, too, went beyond the physical yonder with the sight of the moon. Likewise, he compressed the spatial distance with the power of imagination, by looking at the world map. This imaginative act, in turn, unlocked his artistic creativity, resulting in the composition of the haiku. Thirty-some years later, going beyond the temporal distance, I translated his haiku.

There is an expression in Japanese 思いを馳せる (*omoi-wo haseru*), meaning literally, “let one’s thought run (e.g. to one’s loved one who is far away)”. This is what I did. So did my father. In the waka poem mentioned above, my mother, too, let her thought run thousands of miles and compressed space via the maple leaf with the power of imagination and creativity.

Translating these artistic expressions by my parents, I was able to appreciate their thoughts and feelings much more than when I read them in their original forms. It was only when I lived their lives in translation that I came to comprehend and truly appreciate their emotional expressions, artistic work, imagination and creativity. It was also the power of imagination that allowed me to live in translation and to gain much from the lost past.

My bilingualism is a matter of choice, as for the transnational author-translator Francesca Duranti, as described by Wilson, and it is closely associated with my choice to live in the US and “the sensation of being at ease with [my] new ‘home’” (Wilson, “The Writer’s Double” 188). It is thus my affection toward my new home country and its people and culture that motivated me to translate the story that deciphers my transnational and crosscultural experience. More importantly, I was driven by a strong desire to relive the process of self-discovery and to encounter the lost past. As a result, just like Duranti’s, my journey took me “beyond language into the realms of nostalgia, loss of identity, rootlessness, and invisibility” (Wilson, “The Writer’s Double” 191).

If we consider the narrative that articulates the pre-migration self a source text, and the narrated self that emerges from the translating act carried out for their adoptive-language audience the target text, language migrants are translating from the mother tongue to the foreign language. They are translating the self into the other.

(Wilson, “Parallel Creations” 49)

The poetic translation I experienced was, indeed, more than translating the poem from Japanese to English. I was translating the self – old and new.

Bibliography

Barnhill, David Landis. “Introduction.” Matsuo, Bashō. *Bashō’s Haiku*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004. 1-18.

Bassnett, Susan. *Translation Studies*. London: Routledge, 2002.

_____. “Transplanting the Seed: Poetry and Translation.” *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*. Ed. Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998. 57-75.

Cook, Vivian. *Second Language Learning and Language Teaching*. New York: Arnold, 2001.
Evangelista, Elin-Maria. “Writing in Translation: A New Self in a Second Language.” *Self-Translation: Brokering Originality in Hybrid Culture*. Ed. Anthony Cordingley. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. 177-87.

Kaplan, Alice. *French Lessons: A Memoir*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Keene, Donald. *Japanese Literature: An Introduction for Western Readers*. New York: Grove Press, 1955.

Klimkiewicz, Aurelia. "Self-Translation as Broken Narrativity: Towards an Understanding of the Self's Multilingual Dialogue." *Self-Translation: Brokering Originality in Hybrid Culture*. Ed. Anthony Cordingley. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. 189-201.

Landers, Clifford E. *Literary Translation: A Practical Guide*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2001.

Paz, Octavio. "Translation: Literature and Letters." Trans. Irene del Corral. *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*. Ed. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971/1992. 152-62.

Sato, Hiroaki. *One Hundred Frogs*. Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1983.

Takahashi, Tomoko. サムライと綿 : 日本とアメリカ [Samurai and Cotton: Japan and America]. Osaka: Fueisha, 2010.

_____. *Samurai and Cotton: A Story of Two Life Journeys in Japan and America*. Bloomington: iUniverse, 2011.

_____. *Lost and Found in Self-Translation: Author-Translator's Re-encounter with the Past, Self, Inner Voice, and Hidden Creativity*. PhD Thesis, Monash University. 2014.

Tawada, Yoko. "Writing in the Web of Words." Trans. Monika Totten. *Lives in Translation: Bilingual Writers on Identity and Creativity*. Ed. Isabelle de Courtivron. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 147-155.

Ueda, Makoto. *The Master Haiku Poet: Matsuo Bashō*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1970/1982.

Weinreich, Uriel. *Languages in Contact*. The Hague: Mouton, 1953.

Wilson, Rita. "Parallel Creations: Between Self-Translation and the Translation of the Self." *Creative Constraints: Translation and Authorship*. Ed. Rita Wilson and Leah Gerber. Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2012. 47-65.

_____. "The Writer's Double: Translation, Writing and Autobiography." *Romance Studies* 27.3 (2009): 186-98.

Wilson, Rita and Leah Gerber. "Introduction." *Creative Constraints: Translation and Authorship*. Ed. Rita Wilson and Leah Gerber. Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2012. ix-xv.