33 Buson summer, autumn and winter haiku

Key to translators mentioned —


Cheryl A. Crowley — Professor of Japanese Language and Literature at Emory University. (Profile at: http://realc.emory.edu/home/people/faculty/cheryl_crowley.html) Some of these poems, but not all, can be found in her *Haikai Poet Yosa Buson and the Bashō Revival*. Brill, 2007.

Goldstein & Shinoda = Sanford Goldstein (poet) & Seishi Shinoda (translator)


McAuley = Thomas McAuley at: http://www.temcauley.staff.shef.ac.uk/waka1801.shtml Professor at School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield (profile: http://www.shef.ac.uk/seas/staff/japanese/mcauley)

Merwin & Lento = *Collected haiku of Yosa Buson*, trans. by W.S. Merwin and Takako Lento. Copper Canyon Press, 2013. Merwin was born in 1927, has won numerous awards, and is our current poet laureate for the United States.


Robin D Gill — From a wiki entry: “Robin Dallas Gill, born in 1951 at Miami Beach, Florida, USA, and brought up on the island of Key Biscayne in the Florida Keys, is a bilingual author in Japanese and English, as well as a nature writer, maverick authority on the history of stereotypes of Japanese identity and prolific translator of, and commentator on Japanese poetry, especially haiku and senryū. He writes haiku in Japanese under the haigō (haikai pen-name) Keigu (敬愚).” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin_D._Gill)


Ueda = *The Path of Flowering Thorn: The Life and Poetry of Yosa Buson* by Makoto Ueda. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. (There are no entries on this handout for him, but his book is excellent, as are the translations. Makoto Ueda was a professor of Japanese literature at Stanford University.)
Further reading suggestions:


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**Summer poems**

The man and his wife
once to be punished by death
change into summer clothes

They were not beheaded after all
but went on living as man and wife
and put on their summer clothes

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Death penalty by their Lord Remitted;
The couple change clothes.

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1

御手討の夫婦なりしを更衣
*oteuchi no / myōto narishi o / koromogae*

Kigo: 更衣 *koromogae* “changing clothes [putting away the winter clothes into storage; moving the summer clothes out of storage to regular closets]”

Note: Adultery was punishable by beheading, but these lovers were spared. (Merwin) In the Edo period 'Oteuchi' was the death penalty, mostly being cut to death by the sword, imposed by the Lord of samurai family, when his retainers committed some indiscretion or violated family bans. In former times, the custom of seasonal change of clothing, or koromogae was regularly kept, young and old, high and low. (Terebess Asia Online) Changing the clothes should be seen as a positive-nuance moment and the couple should be viewed as happy, not fearful, or, at least mostly happy. (Wallace)
Little cuckoo there is a mad woman
at the Iwakura waterfall
you could fall in love with her

Cause the madwoman at Iwakura
to fall more deeply in love
O hototogisu

Night is short in the summer
the silvered folding screen
glimmers beside my pillow

Short night;
Near the pillow stands
A silver folding screen

At a Place Called Kaya in the Tango Region
This is happiness
crossing the stream in summer
carrying my straw sandals

stream in summertime—
this joy of wading across
with sandals in hand

All the way I have come
all the way I am going
here in the summer field

All this study—
it’s coming out your ass,
oh firefly!

An Idle Student by the Window
Whatever he learns goes in
one ear and out the other
a firefly

All this study—
goes right through me.
Fireflies.
Mind somewhere else
a cat is chewing a flower
of the bottle gourd

Merwin & Lento

Cicada chorus
time for the head priest
to take his bath

Merwin & Lento

Summer afternoon downpour
a flock of sparrows
hanging on to the grass

Merwin & Lento

An evening shower!
Holding onto the bushes,
a flock of sparrows

Sawa & Shiffert

Don’t wake me from
This intoxicating dream
On this intoxicated night.
“Welcome luck! (Go away demons!)”

Wallace

7
夕暮の花咲ム猫や余こゝろ
yuûgao no / hana kamû neko ya / yosa-gokoro
Kigo: 夕顔 yûgao “evening glory [the flower]”

8
せみ啼や僧正房のゆあみ時
semi naku ya / sôjôbô no / yuami doki
Kigo: 蝉 semi “cicada”

9
夕だちや草葉をつかむむら雀
yûdachi ya / kusaha o tsukamu / mura-suzume
Kigo: 夕立 yûdachi “[summertime] late afternoon thunderstorm”

10
よい夢のよび寝ますな副うち
yoîyume no / yoi nesamasu na / fuku wa uchi
Kigo: This is tricky because of the playful nature of the poem. It is a summer poem. And bats are a summer kigo. Bats are usually pronounced kômori. However, it can also be written: 蝙. This is similar to, and pronounced the same as 福, fuku, “good luck / wealth”. On the last day of winter, Japanese go around the house tossing soy beans out of the house and placing them at key locations in the house, saying “Fuku wa uchi! Oni wa soto!” (“In with good luck, out with demons”). This poem plays with that idea, and so, in a sense, the season should be end of winter but there is no kigo “fuku”. The word play is to take fuku wa uchi to mean “There are bats in my house!”
I slurp cool gelatin noodles
three thousand feet of the Milky Way
upside down
Merwin & Lento

Making a mess
While eating noodles
three thousand feet of Milky Way
Wallace

Note: Tokoroten is a noodle dish. They are clear and served cool in the summer. “Sakashima” does have a meaning of “upside down” but it also means “doing something the wrong way”. That is clearly the meaning in this case. The last line is a real challenge. Literally: “Milky Way. Three thousand feet.” I really have no idea how to put these together. The phrase sanzen-jaku is used in Chinese poetry to refer to a certain very high and very narrow waterfall in Jiulong province. Li Po, a poet that Buson no doubt loved, mentions it several times. I think this is relevant but I am still not quite sure whether to think of the Milky Way itself as stretching beautifully above him (he is eating at a stall, outside) or the slight whiteness of very long noodles hanging down from his chopsticks reminds him of the high waterfall and/or Milky Way. This sounds unnatural, too. I’m missing something. (Wallace)

Autumn poems

In the flash of lightning
I hear the dewdrops rolling
down the bamboo leaves
Merwin & Lento

In his pillow talk the sumo wrestler
can’t leave the subject
of the match he should not have lost
Merwin & Lento

at a flash
of lightning, the sound of dew
falling from a bamboo
Ueda

over the sumo match
he should have have lost
a pillow talk
Ueda

Kigo: ところてん逆しまに銀河三千尺
tokoroten / sakashima ni ginga / sanzen-jaku
Kigo: ところて tokorote “clear gelatin noodles”

Kigo: 稲妻 inazuma “lightning”

Kigo: 相撲の節 sumai no sechi “[autumn] sumo match”
Under the Yūgyō Willow
Leaves fallen from the willow
the spring gone dry
rocks showing here and there

the willow is bare
the clear stream has dried, and stones
lie scattered here and there

Merwin & Lento

Yūgyō Willow:
Named after a Noh play of this title in which the learned priest Yūgyō encounters the spirit of a willow tree. (Merwin) Except that Yūgyō means Saigyō.
This poem is in honor of him, who wrote at this spot:

Alongside the road
a stream of clear water
shaded by a willow—
wanting to take a rest
I stopped—and I am still here

... a spot that Bashō then visits in Narrow Road to the Deep North and writes:

over an entire field
they have planted rice—before
I part with the willow

That is how Bashō spent time with the long dead Saigyō.
Now, Buson visits the spot and writes his haiku.
I find this interesting: is Buson suggestion that the good days of haiku has dried up? Here are links to the willow which, it is claimed, still stands. The second one has clearly been Photoshopped to make it a bit more grand than it really is. http://www.bashouan.com/pbYugyouyanagi.htm http://www2.ucatv.ne.jp/~jata-45.snow/image101.jpg

(Wallace)
The autumn chill becomes part of me
in the bedroom I step on a comb
that belonged to my dead wife
Merwin & Lento

When it grows old
its voice becomes plaintive—
katydid
Addiss

It Would Be Easier to Die Before Forty
Flowers die young without knowing
the embarrassment of a gourd
still alive full of seeds
Merwin & Lento

Upon Maruyama’s Request for a Caption to His
Painting of a Black Dog
His bark comes
from the darkness inside him
deep in the autumn night
Merwin & Lento

15
身にしむや亡妻の懐を闇に踏
mi ni shimu ya / naki tsuma no kushi o / neya ni fumu
Kigo: 身に入む mi ni shimu “to soak into the body, to penetrate the body, to feel keenly or sharply”
Note: The comb should be seen as a very intimate item once used by his wife. The Japanese feel that objects touched by hand over a long time by a certain person has something of that person in it. (Wallace)

16
としよればこえもかなししききぎりす
toshi yoreba / koe mo kanashiki / kirigirisu
Kigo: きりぎりす kirigirisu “cricket” (early autumn)

17
おのが身の関より吼て夜半の秋
ona ga mi no / yami yori hoete / yowa no aki
Kigo: 夜半の秋 yowa no aki “autumn evening”
Note: Once the painter, Maruyama Okyo (1733-1795), drew the figure of a black dog and asked Buson to write an inscription to go with it. (Terebess Asia Online)
Autumn weighs upon me but tomorrow will come and I will miss tonight

This evening, autumn chills me—

But there will be a day

When I will lovingly recall this evening

Kigo: 秋 "autumn", I think it is as simple as that (as far as I know, mi no aki isn’t a kigo).

Note: There is something of a kakekotoba / pivot word in this poem which is unusual: mi no aki ya koyoi means "this evening that chills me" while koyoi o shinobu asu means "this evening that I will long for in coming days" (Wallace)

After its weather-beating the Japanese lacquer tree goes on quivering

Kigo: 楓 "drying/withering tips [o grade blades, tree branches etc]" — late autumn kigo, an early sign of winter

Note: The tree from which the sap is drawn to make lacquer (common name: Chinese lacquer tree) can be enormous in size. This is a possibility here, but not required. (Wallace)

Secluded house—
The lord of this chrysanthemum:

Fox Spirit Hakuzōsu

Kigo: 菊 "chrysanthemum"

Note: Hakuzōsu is a type of fox spirit. Here is an example: http://metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/49821 . (Wallace)
Autumn is nearly over
that person dressed in fine silk
has borrowed everything

Merwin & Lento

Winter poems

In the winter rain
I too hear the fleeting night
the old masters heard

overcome by this cold falling rain:
how very similar,
my life to my old friend

Merwin & Lento
Sanford Goldstein & Seishi Shinoda

Fox fire at night
while the rain fills a skull

A fox-fire and,
in a skull, rain has made
a pool tonight.

Merwin & Lento
Sawa & Shiffert

22
行秋やよき衣きたる掛り人
yuku aki ya / yoki kinu kitaru / kakariudo
Kigo: 行く秋 yuku aki “the parting autumn” (late autumn kigo)
Note: A kakriudo is someone who depends on his or her survival entirely from the good graces, the money, of another. It literally means "one who relies upon [someone, something]. This pronunciation is vernacular, a bit casual. (Wallace)

23
しくるるや我も古人の夜に似たる
shigururu ya / ware mo kōjin no / yoru ni nitaru
Kigo: 時雨 shigure “scattered light, cold rain that falls unexpectedly and briefly during the transition to early winter” (early winter kigo)
Note: Merwin is more convincing in taking kōjin to mean "the old masters", since this is how Bashō uses the word. (Wallace)

24
狐火や髑髏に雨のたまる夜に
kitsunebi ya / dokuro ni ame no / tamaru yo ni
Kigo: 狐火 kitsunebi “foxfire” (luminous gas phenomenon caused by gas from rotting wood but believed by the early Japanese to be the breath of foxes) (kigo for the third month of winter)
Endless bare fields
not even a bush
nowhere to abandon a child

Basho’s Tomb at Konpuku-ji Temple
I will die too
let me be a dry grass flower
beside this monument

The first light snow
then when the bowl of the sky is empty
the moon is hanging in the bamboos

A narcissus flowers
the beauty appears to have
a headache

25
子を拾る敷さへなくて枯野哉
ko o sutsuru / yabu sae nakute / kareno kana
Kigo: 枯野 kareno “withered fields/moors”

26
我も死して碑に辺せむ枯尾花
waredo shishite / hi ni horoti semu kare-obana
Kigo: 枯尾花 kare-obana “withered susuki grass / Japanese
pampas grass” (Jse pampas grass is much smaller than
the pampas grass growing wild in the Bay Area at the side
of the highways and such) (kigo for the third month of winter)
Note: む in this poem shows soft volition along the lines of
“I plan to, I intend to ...”. (Wallace)

27
初雪の底を叩けば竹の月
hatsu-yuki no / soko o tatakeba / take no tsuki
Kigo: 初雪 hatsu-yuki “first snow”
Note: Soko o tataku means “to empty out fully” (such as a
wallet); in other words, to use up so much of something
that you see the bottom of the container it was in. The
kireji for this poem is the grammar form ba and so the
phrase that needs emphasis is not the snow but the ending
of the snowfall. (Wallace)

28
水仙や美人かうべをいたむらし
suisen ya / bijin koube o / itamurashi
Kigo: 水仙 suisen “narcissus” (kigo for near the end of
winter)
Note: Merwin is more accurate but perhaps there is
something of the Sawa translation in this meaning.
(Wallace)
You who pray to Buddha beating your gourds
you are nobody at all
not even village priests

Merwin & Lento

(Part of eight verses on the humble life)
Stay honest whatever happens
says the bamboo bent under snow
over my window

Merwin & Lento

"Never give up!"—
says the snowy bamboo
darkening my window.

Wallace

(Part of eight verses on the humble life)
A mouse peeps out
its eye on the freezing oil
of my lamp

Merwin & Lento

(Part of eight verses on the humble life)
I can tell my neighbor dislikes me
from the way he clatters his cooking pots
in the cold night

Merwin & Lento

In the night with my few teeth
I try to chew the ice
off the tip of my writing brush

Merwin & Lento

With exposed teeth
the ice on the writing brush
is bitten off tonight.

Sawa & Shiffert

29

木の端に坊主のはしや鉦たたき
ki no hashi no / bōzu no hashi ya / hachi-tataki
Kigo: 鉦叩 hachi-tataki "drumming-the-gourd"
Note: "From the 13th of November until the 31 of December, the priests and lay people of the Kuya Hall walk the streets of Kyoto, hitting the gongs and dancing."
(http://darumapilgrim.blogspot.com/2005/09/kuya-shonin.html this is a great Web site for all things Kuya, one of the early founders of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan) (Wallace)

30

恵に耐よと窓を暗す雪の竹
gu ni tae yo to / mado o kurōsu / yuki no take
Kigo: 雪 yuki "snow" (If 雪の竹 "snow on the bamboo" is a kigo I have not heard of it.)

31

氷る燈の油かがふ鼠かな
kōru hi no / abura ukagau / nezumi kana
Kigo: 氷る kōru "to freeze"

32

我を厭ふ隣家寒夜に鍋を鳴うす
ware o itou / rin-ke kan-ya ni / nabe o narasu
Kigo: 寒夜 kan-ya "cold night"

33

歯あらはに筆の氷を噛む夜哉
ha arawa ni / fude no kōri o / kamu yo kana
Kigo: 氷 kōri "ice"