

2014

## Haiku in West Coast Poetics: What Kigo?

Judy Halebsky

*Department of Literature and Languages, Dominican University of California,*  
[judy.halebsky@dominican.edu](mailto:judy.halebsky@dominican.edu)

**Survey: Let us know how this paper benefits you.**

---

### Recommended Citation

Halebsky, Judy, "Haiku in West Coast Poetics: What Kigo?" (2014). *Faculty Authored Books and Book Contributions*. 132.

<https://scholar.dominican.edu/books/132>

This Contribution to a Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty and Staff Scholarship at Dominican Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Authored Books and Book Contributions by an authorized administrator of Dominican Scholar. For more information, please contact [michael.pujals@dominican.edu](mailto:michael.pujals@dominican.edu).

## Haiku in West Coast Poetics: *What Kigo?*

Judy Halebsky

Department of Literature & Language  
Dominican University of California  
judy.halebsky@dominican.edu

When I attended the Meguro International Haiku Circle last year, I asked for ideas for presentation topics. Someone suggested that I explain why poets in the U.S. are not overly concerned with kigo. Coming from a lineage of California poets influenced by haiku and Japanese poetry, I am not sure if I understand the subtleties of this challenge. However, the question of kigo brings up a larger issue: the cultural translation of haiku in the work of English language poets. Today, I would like to touch on the issues that have shaped how free verse poets in California translate haiku both as a text and as a creative practice.

As I am sure this audience knows, a kigo is a season marker within a haiku. This word or a short phrase immediately locates the poem in a specific time and often place. A kigo efficiently brings density to the brevity of haiku through depth of association. Because kigo are generally established references, they are also intertextual and bring the haiku into a conversation with other literary works and shared knowledge of specific histories, events, and places. Kigo rely on the reader recognizing the season marker as a sign that evokes related images and sensory experiences. The necessity of audience knowledge for the full effect of the kigo is just one of many reasons why they might have diminished importance in English language poetry that is informed by haiku.

Haiku became influential in English language poetry in North America in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was a formative influence on Imagist writers such as Amy Lowell (1874-1924) and William Carlos Williams (1883-1963). Imagist poets generated emotion in a poem not through explication or narrative but through image. This image was often object based or what T.S. Eliot described as the 'object correlative' (Shirane 42). This concept of the object connects to the way a kigo functions in haiku. However, scholar Haruo Shirane explains that imagist poets were not aware of this connection. In *Traces of Dreams: Landscape, Cultural Memory, and the Poetry of Basho*, Shirane explains,

Although the Imagists were unaware of it, the seasonal word (kigo) in haikai, which was anchored in communal

## 西海岸の詩歌の中の俳句：季語とは

ジュディ・ハレブスキー  
訳 小金井康臣

昨年、目黒国際俳句の集いの句会に参加した時に、本日の講演内容は何が良いか思案していましたら、アメリカでは季語にほとんど関心がない理由でも説明したら、と示唆されました。

日本の詩歌の影響を受けたカリフォルニアの詩人の一員として、文化的背景のある季語を含む俳句が、カリフォルニアの自由詩派の詩人たちにどのように翻訳され、実作されて来たか、この大問題の一端をお話いたします。

皆さんご存知のように、季語または季節用語は俳句に詠まれた時と場所を示し、想起される感情、情景を、言わば凝縮しています。

つまり作者は季語を使えば、読者が、その成り立ち、それが使われている詩歌、事件、名所などを含め、想起するイメージや感情を知っています。

しかし、このテキスト相互相関性（間テキスト性）が、じつは、彼らが季語を重視しない理由の1つなのです。

俳句は20世紀の初期から北米の詩人たちに影響を与え始め、イマジズムの詩人たち、エイミー・ローウエル（1874 - 1924）、ウィリアム・カーロス・ウィリアムス（1883 - 1963）への影響は明瞭です。イマジストたちは、詩で表現したい感動を説明し、物語るのではなく、客観的イメージで、またはT. S. エリオットの言う客観的相関物で表現します。この客観的相関物と言う概念は俳句における季語の概念と似ています。白根治夫教授によれば、イマジストたちはこの相似性に気がつかなかったそうで、教授の著書では：

日本語版：

ハルオ・シラネ、

衣笠正晃 訳

芭蕉の風景 文化の記憶、

株式会社角川書店、

平成13年5月31日、

memory, functioned like an object correlative in being able to arouse emotions in the reader through what appeared to be an objective description of nature of the external world. (42)

While the importance of a season marker was not central to the imagists, it did overlap with the formal aspirations of the movement.

How the Imagists understood and interpreted haiku was shaped by their knowledge of poetry in western literary traditions and the values of modernism. For Amy Lowell, the intensity of mind in haiku dovetailed with her poetic vision. She wrote "concentration is the very essence of poetry." However, the Imagists translated haiku to fit with their American and British poetic practice. They saw haiku as individual poems, each one coming out of observation of the present moment largely devoid of allusion or intertextuality. The aspects of Basho's haikai that included *renga* group composition and *haiga* visual poem paintings, if understood at all, were largely overlooked. Haiku was translated to fit into modern poetics of 20<sup>th</sup> century North America. This meant that the communal and visual aspects of the practice were diminished for a print-based practice.

The Imagists' interpretations of haiku in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century laid the ground work for a later generation of poets to reinterpret haiku. Poets in the 1950s and 1960s wove together English language translations of Japanese literature with a body-based practice of Buddhist meditation as modes of accessing haiku. These poets, particularly the Beat poets, studied the philosophical and aesthetic concepts of Buddhism. Some traveled extensively such as Gary Snyder's years in Japan and Allen Ginsburg's time in India. Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki's writings on Zen were widely influential along with the teaching of Tibetan Buddhist leader Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche and the founder of the San Francisco Zen Center, Shunryu Suzuki-roshi. With this point of view, particular aspects of haiku were emphasized. These included: sensory perception of momentary experience and revelations of the transience of human existence. Kigo and intertextuality were not of central importance.

In the 1990s, former U.S. Poet Laureate, Robert Hass edited the widely successful: *Essential Haiku*. This book brought translations of Basho, Issa and Buson to a large and diverse poetry readership. Hass drew from a growing body of English language haiku scholarship to compile the collection. As a result, it shows an increasing sophistication about the practice of haiku. Hass' addresses kigo in his introduction,

88 ページに：

以下と同様の要旨の  
説明が記載されて  
いますので  
ご覧ください。

(翻訳は割愛：訳者)

イマジストたち、例えば、エイミー・ローウエルは俳句の精神的強さ、緊張感を彼女の詩的ビジョンに取り込んで、「集中は詩の本質」と言っていますが、俳句を20世紀北米のモダニズムの価値観で理解、解釈していたため、季節語がイマジストの中心的課題でなかったこともあり、「俳句は現在の瞬間を詠む」ので引喩またはテキスト相互相関性がないと考えていました。

イマジズム運動の目的との重なりや、芭蕉の俳諧の共同作業的連歌、また俳画が詩のビジュアル化である側面を見落としていたのです。

20世紀前半のイマジストたちの俳句解釈は1950年代、60年代の詩人たちによって見直されます。

この代表格がビート詩人で、仏教の哲学的、美学的概念を研究し、俳句などの英訳をするにあたり座禅をするようになりました。ゲーリー・シュナイダーは日本に何年も滞在し、アレン・ギンズバーグはインド旅行をしています。

鈴木大拙の禅の著作の影響は大きく、チベットの仏僧チョギヤム・トゥルンド・クンボチェの教え、サンフランシスコ禅センターの創業者鈴木俊隆老師の影響も無視できません。

ここでも、一瞬の知覚、人間のはかなさの悟りなど、俳句の禅の様相が強調されましたが、季節語とテキスト相互相関性は重視されませんでした。

1990年代には、アメリカの桂冠詩人、ロバート・ハスは、成長しつつある英語ハイク団体の助成を得て、「エッセンシャル・ハイク」を編集し、大成功しました。

この本に掲載された芭蕉、一茶、蕪村の俳句の訳詩がさまざまな読者層に受け入れられました。

結果として、ハイクの実作は洗練されていきました。

ハスは導入部で季節語に触れ、

“The insistence on time and place was crucial for writers of haiku. The seasonal reference was called a kigo and a haiku was thought to be incomplete without it.” (xii). The translations do generally have a season marker. However, for an English language reader, these kigo can function much more generally as nature images rather than a specific codified evocation of season. With study, a poet can come to see the season markers in these poems. However, a reader of Hass’ translations can access their poetic intensity without a conscious interpretation of a season marker. In this form of translation, the density of the haiku is diminished. None the less, it was my own personal experience with kigo. In my early twenties, I read and wrote haiku largely unaware of kigo. Now, I do employ kigo in my writing, but often as a secondary concern. I’ve already built the pathways to the aesthetic experience of haiku without conscious attention to that aspect of the form. I came to study haiku through Hass’ work and have been delighted to find that a simplified American understanding of haiku has given way to an wonderfully rich, robust, and multifaceted haiku world. Hass’ translations are immensely successful at what they set out to do: to share haiku with a new readership. As poems, they shine. His translations are masterful and many poets, myself included, came to a deeper study of haiku through his work.

Hass came to haiku through book study, while Jane Hirshfield, another leading California poet, came to haiku through other avenues. Hirshfield studied Japanese literature at Princeton and soon after undertook an extensive 1000 day training in Zen. She is lay-ordained in the Soto Zen lineage (Hirshfield 2004:90). She studied literature prior to her practice of Buddhism. However, in her writing practice Buddhism becomes a point of deeper knowledge and she in turn employs her knowledge of Buddhism to understand haiku.

In her 2010 presentation at Waseda University, Hirshfield discussed the influence of haiku in the West Coast poetry. She explained that there is a particular sound to the grammar of haiku translated into English. It reflects the difficulties of translating from Japanese to English while trying to maintain the poem’s syllable count and structure. In particular, this grammar is the result of trying to maintain the image sequence of a poem so that the last image of the haiku in Japanese can also be the last image of the haiku in English. Hirshfield pointed out that translations of Japanese haiku from the early and mid 20th century influenced west coast poetry to such a degree that this awkward grammar became part of the voice and sound of poets writing original work in English not tied to haiku.

「俳句の詠まれた時と場所を示す季語は重要で、季語のない俳句は不完全と考えられていました。」と言っています。

翻訳された俳句には、通常、季節語が含まれていますが、英語圏の読者にとって季語は自然のイメージを想起させるだけで、本意・本情を想起させるコードではありません。

本意・本情は学習すれば理解できるでしょうが、ハスの翻訳句の読者は、季語を解釈しなくても詩の強度（緊張感・鮮明度）を味わえるのです。この訳句方式では俳句の深さは減少します。私も20代の初め頃は季語に無頓着でした。

今は季語を使いますが、2義的です。

方式がどうあれ、私の俳句の美を感受する流儀は確立されていますが、ハスの作品を学び、簡素化されたアメリカの流儀で、素晴らしく豊饒で、強靱で、多面的な俳句の世界を理解できることを発見し、うれしくなりました。

ハスの翻訳は巧妙で、輝いていて、新たな読者層を開拓し、私も含め、多くの詩人が俳句の深さを学んだのです。

ハスの俳句は座学からでしたが、カリフォルニア詩人界のもう1人のリーダーである、ジェーン・ハーシュフィールドは、プリンストン大学での日本文学研究が終わるとすぐに、1000日間の曹洞宗の禅修業に参加し、接心に成功しました。ここで得た仏教の知識がやがて俳句の理解に反映されます。

ハーシュフィールドは、俳句が西海岸の詩に与えた影響について、2010年に早稲田大学で講演していますが、この中で、俳句を英訳する時の文法上の特殊な違和感について説明しています。

この違和感は、俳句の5-7-5音韻構造を、翻訳詩でも保持しようとする時に感じます。

特に、イメージの順番を、日本語の最後のイメージを、翻訳詩でも保持しようとする時に感じる困難さにあり、日本の俳句が20世紀前半の西海岸の詩に及ぼした影響のなかで、この文法的違和感が、もともと英語詩を書いていた一部の詩人たちを俳句に向かわせなかった要因になっていたと指摘しています。

Her comments are evidence of the layers of influence of Japanese literature broadly, and haiku specifically in West Coast poetics.

I am interested in haiku not only as a form of poetry but also as a creative practice. The concept of haiku as the cultivation of attention and aesthetic sensibility draws me to read and study haiku. I came to this topic through a series of surprises. I wanted to study Japanese literature to be closer to the work of haiku poets Basho, Issa, Buson, and Shiki. I also wanted to better understand the work of Robert Hass and Jane Hirshfield. What I found, however, was a complicated mesh of *translation and transformation* of haiku. The distance between bodies of knowledge and how point of view shapes what we see has become a key interest in my writing.

After studying in Japan for five years (two in Kanazawa and three in Tokyo at Hosei University), I started to lace together my study of Japanese language and literature with my poetic practice. My writing explores what I call 'expansive translation.' I strive to create new poems that address what gets lost in the translation process. Part of this challenge is to explore aspects of haiku or the Japanese language that do not have a direct correspondence in English. While we can translate the words of a season marker, it is a much greater struggle to impart the cultural knowledge needed on the part of the reader to make meaning from the season marker. The kireji *ya* also brings up issues of translation. This cutting word is found in Basho's frog pond haiku at the end of the opening phrase, *this old pond Ifuru ike ya*. Since this haiku is so famous, there are an almost endless number of examples of how writers have translated this cutting word. Hass converts the *ya* to a dash. Others use a semi colon, an exclamation mark, even an ellipses, while most just employ a line break (Matsuo Basho's Frog Pond, 30 translations). In my poem, *A Breaking Word*, I attempt to explain the concept of a cutting word. I grapple with how to translate the cutting word *ya* by offering multiple concepts of how the cutting word functions in a poem. I end the poem with quoting how other poems have translated *mizu no oto*. I will share my poem:

### A BREAKING WORD

There's that part  
after Basho writes  
*old still pond*  
of pressing a fingerprint into wet clay



彼女のコメントが、日本文学、俳句がいかに広く、多層的に西海岸の詩歌界に影響したか、端的に物語っています。

私は俳句の詩としての姿にも興味がありましたが、創作もしてみたくありませんでした。俳句を読み、研究することで注意力や美的感性を磨けると思っていたのです。

芭蕉、一茶、蕪村の作品を理解するために日本文学を研究したくなる一方、ロバート・ハスやジェーン・ハーシュフィールドの作品をもっと良く理解したかったのです。

ですが、俳句の翻訳とその変容の複雑さに気づいたのです。持っている知識と視点の変化につれて変わる実景との乖離が、創作時の興味の中心になりました。

5年間（金沢で2年、法政大学で3年）、日本で日本語と日本文学を研究してから、その成果を詩作活動に取り入れ始めました。

私の言う「拡大翻訳」の探求を始めたのです。翻訳過程で失う内容を補う、新しい詩の創作に努めました。

この挑戦の1部は、直接対応する英語のない俳句や日本語の様相を探求することです。季節語の文化的意味が読者にわかるように翻訳できるかで、これは挑戦中の大挑戦です。

切れ字の「や」もどう訳すか問題です。芭蕉の「古池や」の「や」です。この句は有名なので、膨大な翻訳例があります。ハスは「ダッシュ」で、他には「セミコロン」、「感嘆詞」、「省略記号」がありますが、多くは「破線」のようです。

私の詩、「ブレイキング・ワード」（中断語）で切れ字の概念を説明しようと試みました。詩の中での切れ字の役割の解釈に応じてどう翻訳されるか示しています。この詩は「水の音」を詩人たちがどう訳したか、その例の引用で終わります。

### ブレイキング・ワード

芭蕉が

「古い静かな池」

を書いた後の

濡れた粘土に指紋の押捺

where the word *ya*  
holds a space in the air  
a cloud changes shape in the sky

make it a dash, a murmur  
a breath on the inhale

this old pond  
so many have tried to open

a sigh, a hum, a —

frog jumps in

*sound of water* says Hass  
*plop* says Watts  
*kerplunk* says Ginsberg

I am writing myself into the lineage of Li Bai, and Saigyō, and Bashō. As a poet in California, I am also writing into the lineage of California poets whose work is influenced by haiku. It is the poems and translations of these California poets that brought me to study haiku and Japanese literature. These poets, from the distant past to the present, are writing with me and guiding my work. I do not yet have a poem that addresses the translation of a season marker. Perhaps, I am resisting the standardization of a poetic vocabulary. Or maybe only the more extreme *kigo* would work for the many places that make up my personal history. I was born and raised in Nova Scotia, Canada. I have lived in both Kansai and Kanto. My current residence is in San Francisco. My work is published by New Issues press in Michigan, U.S.A. My parents moved between countries. My grandparents crossed oceans and borders. Does my life in migration resist the specificity of association required for a season marker?

No. This immensely wide geography of personal history paired with the limitless distance our writings travel does not diminish the importance of place in our writing. However, it does work against assumed audience knowledge of season markers, locations, and cultural histories. Part of haiku is cultivating a life practice and through this practice we learn *kigo*. My poetry community is broader than even the many places of my life and family history.

「や」の持つ空間が  
微風に漂い  
空では雲が形を変える

ダッシュ、つぶやき  
吸い込む息

この古池を  
皆が開放しようと

ため息、もぐもぐ、ダッシュ

蛙が飛込み

ハスは「水の音」  
ワッツは「ポチャン」  
ギンズバーグは「バシャン」

私は李白、西行、芭蕉の影響を受けており、またカルフォルニアの詩人として、俳句に影響されたカリフォルニア詩人たちのグループに属しています。カリフォルニア詩人たちの詩や翻訳詩に触発されて、俳句と日本文学を研究し、今でも共に詩を書き、助言を受けています。

私はまだ季節語の翻訳を含む詩を書いていませんが、詩語の標準化には抵抗しています。私の人生に係わった多くの場所に適した季節語が、究極の季節語が、まだないのかも知れません。

私はカナダのノバ・スコティアに生まれ、成長し、関西と関東にも住み、今はサンフランシスコに住んでいます。私の作品はミシガン州のニュー・イシュー・プレスから発行されています。両親は地方を渡り歩き、祖父母は幾つかの海と国境を越えました。この移住の多さの故に、特定の場所や連想に結びつく季節語に抵抗感を持つのでしょうか。

いえ、そうとは思いません。個人史の広大な地理誌と際限のない創作旅行ができるために、詩作場所の重要性が減少することはありません。

読者が季節語、場所、文化史を知っていると仮定することに抵抗感があるのです。

I'm humbled to include the Meguro International Haiku Circle as part of my creative community, a place of inspiration, friendship, and new points of view. Kigo or not, I'm honored to share this creative path with all of you.

#### Works Cited

"Amy Lowell." *Poets.org*.Web. <<http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/435>>.

Halebsky, Judy. "A Breaking Word." *Space/Gap/Interval/Distance*. San Francisco: Sixteen Rivers Press, 2012. Print. Poets-Under-Forty Chapbook Award .

Hass, Robert. *The Essential Haiku : Versions of Bashō, Buson, and Issa*. Hopewell, N.J.: Ecco Press, 1994. Print.

Hirshfield, Jane. "The Poem Behind the Poem." *The Poem Behind the Poem : Translating Asian Poetry*. Ed. Frank Steward. Port Townsend, Wash.: Copper Canyon Press, 2004. Print.

"Matsuo Basho's Frog Pond (30 translations)." *Bureau of Public Secrets*.Web. <<http://www.bopsecrets.org/gateway/passages/basho-frog.htm>>.

Shirane, Haruo. *Traces of Dreams : Landscape, Cultural Memory, and the Poetry of Bashō*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998. Print.

俳句には、実生活を深め、そこから季語を学べる側面があります。  
私の詩歌共同体は私の人生や家族史に現れる多くの場所よりも広大で  
す。詩的インスピレーション、友情、新しい視点の発見など、私の創作  
共同体に「目黒国際俳句の集い」が含まれていることは私の喜びであり、  
季語が有ろうと無かろうと、この創作の道を皆さんと共に歩めることを  
誇りに思います。



Photo: Judy Halebsky (Saito-an)