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# Translations and Migrations of the Poetic Diary: Roy Kiyooka's Wheels

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Translations and Migrations of the Poetic Diary: Roy Kiyooka's *Wheels*

by Judith Halebsky

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ABSTRACT: Formal aspects of haiku inform Roy Kiyooka's 1969 travel journal *Wheels*. In contrast to earlier scholarship, this study differentiates haiku traditions in Japan from English language haiku in North America. This framework reveals how Kiyooka employs select aspects of haiku practice to voice his othered cultural location.

In 2012, on a Graves Award Fellowship, I retraced parts of Matsuo Basho's (1644–1694) route in his travel journal *Narrow Road to the Interior*. The journal, a mix of prose sections and haiku, records Basho's five-month journey, beginning in the Spring of 1689, through northern areas of Honshu. He traveled with a disciple and fellow poet Sora. Together they visited places with poetic associations and historical significance. As I traveled, I felt a shadow, a double memory, and realized that Canadian poet and painter Roy Kiyooka (1926–1994) had also led me on this journey. A number of Kiyooka's writing projects are based on travel to Japan including *Kyoto Airs*, *Wheels*, and *StoneDGloves*. Returning from my trip to Basho's poem places, I began to investigate connections between Basho's travel journal and Kiyooka's work.

A number of scholars have linked Kiyooka's *Wheels: A Trip Thru Honshu's Backcountry* with Japanese literary forms. The work chronicles a trip the poet-narrator takes through the southern parts of Honshu in 1969 with his elderly father and their "intrepid" guide Syuzo. It integrates multiple modes of writing including prose sections, short poems, haiku, letters,

photographs, and photo-text montage. Kiyooka was born in 1926 in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. His parents immigrated to Canada from Shikoki, Japan. A major theme of *Wheels* is the poet's relationship with his father in terms of migration and identity. The work explores the generational differences within migration, the experiences of family members during World War II, both in Japan and Canada, and issues of language. Like Basho's *Narrow Road*, Kiyooka's work presents as a journal; however, he carefully edited it for a number of years after the trip and was even in a process of revising the work when he died (Miki, 311).

*Wheels* is informed broadly by the concept of Basho's travel journal and specifically by the aesthetics of both twentieth-century English language poetry and the English haiku movement. Haiku was translated and brought into English language poetry by successive groups of poets in the early- to mid-twentieth century. Underlying the translation process, then as now, are literary and cultural values that shape how the form is interpreted and re-created. The lack of differentiation between English haiku and the haiku tradition in Japan has led to over simplified connections between Kiyooka's work and Japanese literary traditions. Examining translations and transformations in haiku in terms of Kiyooka's work illuminates not just some of his literary and formal influences but how North American scholars have chosen to see and position his work. A comprehensive look at Basho's creative practice reveals areas of connection between the haiku tradition and distinctive qualities of Kiyooka's interdisciplinary poetics that include his transposition of haiku aesthetics and how he employs the form to articulate his subject position in terms of displacement and discrimination.

## **Basho**

Matsuo Basho (1644–1694) was a haikai poet. He joined a group of poets writing humorous, light verse that poked fun at classical poetry. He brought poetic weight to this form and elevated this poetic practice by mixing the themes of classical poetry with the language and experience of common culture. The name *haikai* is a shortened version of *haikai no genga*, which refers to the haikai version of the linked verse form *renga* (Miner, 4). Part of haikai practice is the cultivation of an aesthetic sensibility called the haikai spirit. Aspects of this approach include the juxtaposition of images and language. This juxtaposition is created by employing themes and images from within the tightly controlled poetic topics of classical poetry, mixed with unrefined and rugged images of common everyday life. An example of this is a haiku from *Narrow Road* in which Basho describes spending the night at an inn where prostitutes were also staying, “under the same roof, working girls were also sleeping, bush clover and moon.” Referencing prostitution is in sharp contrast with the established conventions in court poetry of avoiding vulgar images and vocabulary. Basho’s work rejects these literary values. His haiku draw from aspects of common life while creating a sophisticated aesthetic experience.

The communal and visual aspects of Basho’s poetics are overlooked in North American conceptions of haiku. The linked verse form *renga*, in which poets take turns composing stanzas, was a major part of Basho’s poetic practice. *Renga* alternate between seventeen-syllable links or stanzas and fourteen-syllable stanzas. Basho often wrote as a group activity, side-by-side with other poets and in direct response to their writing. His poems are in dialog with past poets through intertextuality and allusion. He created *haiga*, which are works that integrate a haiku with calligraphy and drawing. In translation, aspects of the form that integrate communal composition and visual qualities have been diminished. In many ways, the tradition was translated to fit with existing poetry genres as well as the means of distribution of literature

through the printing press. These forces contributed to a narrowed view of the haiku tradition as simply 5-7-5 poems with a connection to nature.

In the Meiji era (1868–1912), Shiki brought about a renewed interest in haiku. He assigned the name haiku to the poems previously called *hokku*. The term is also applied to the compositional practice previously called *haikai*; however, this generally signals a narrowed view of the practice. By the modern era, the popularity of linked verse *haikai* had diminished in favor of independent haiku. This modern haiku maintained aspects of Basho's practice such as the use of one season marker (a word or phrase that signals the season) and a cutting word that shapes the phrases and timing of the poem. Shiki's writings that fuelled a revived enthusiasm for haiku were shaped by modern values and international influences. As a result, there are significant differences between the modern haiku in Japan that informed English haiku and Basho's haiku of the seventeenth century (Shirane 47–48).

In his lifetime, Basho was one of a number of respected haiku poets. After he died his reputation increased due to the success of his students. These students went on to become respected haiku poets; they recorded Basho's teachings and promoted his work (Shirane 31). Over time Basho became singularly celebrated as a haiku master and *Narrow Road to the Interior* is his most celebrated and revered work. Other widely celebrated haiku poets include Yosa Buson (1716–1784), Kobayashi Issa (1763–1828), and Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902); however, Basho remains preeminent.

## **Kiyooka**

Kiyooka's work voices the complexities of identity, migration, and cultural location. Kiyooka learned spoken Japanese from his mother as a child but did not read or write in

Japanese. The racism toward Japanese Canadians during World War II caused great hardship for his family and ended Kiyooka's formal education. Kiyooka experienced a complex cultural situation and faced hostility and exclusion in Canada. This exclusion in the country of his birth was voiced through the language of his lived experience. Traveling to Japan did not remedy this fractured space. "Kiyooka saw himself as both inside of Canadian culture and outside of it, and this in-between state, which he calls an 'athwarted' one, meant that he would experience a doubled existence, straddling the boundaries between his 'Canadian' birthright and his 'Japanese' ancestry" (Miki, 2). Having grown up in Canada, Kiyooka's Japan is an imagined place informed by family stories, family letters, and other images of Japan that he absorbed growing up in Canada. In 1963, he traveled to Japan for the first time and made notes that later would become part of *Kyoto Airs*. He described the impact of this trip on his writing, "beginning with 'kyoto airs' in '64 i've tried to shape the fragmented images of nippon i've carried with me my whole life long" (Kiyooka 1997, 320).

Kiyooka published his first book, *Kyoto Airs*, in 1964, into a poetry landscape in North America that had already absorbed multiple layers of Japanese literary and artistic traditions. However, this lineage of influence is diminished and at times subsumed into a North American poetics marked as "Western." Kiyooka chose a Wallace Stevens (1879–1955) poem as an epigraph for his 1987 book, *The Pear Tree Poems*. The aesthetic concepts of Stevens's work were strongly influenced by haiku through imagism. His poem, *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*, is an example of haiku aesthetics in North American poetry, with its attention to image and brevity. Scholar Haruo Shirane describes the influence of imagism on Stevens's work as profound (41). In contrast, Susan Fisher, even while discussing issues related to Japanese poetry in Kiyooka's work, overlooks the influence of haiku on the poets coming out of the

imagist movement. She sees Wallace Stevens as a reference in Kiyooka's work that is "overwhelmingly western" (106). Kiyooka quoting Stevens demonstrates that the poetry that informed Kiyooka's work was already influenced both formally and conceptually by English haiku.

### ***Uta Nikki and Haibun Forms***

The concept of an *uta nikki* was widely influential in twentieth-century poetics in Canada. The term translates as *uta* for poem and *nikki* for journal or day record. Modern poets embraced the concept of an *uta nikki* as long form poetry. An *uta nikki* or poetry journal is not a strict form in any sense but examples show that *uta nikki* generally have some shared characteristics. They are chronological and time-based, which supports a central concern of Japanese literature in terms of Buddhist themes of impermanence, temporality, and an attention to the seasons. The second main aspect of the *uta nikki* is a mixing of poetry and prose. It is important to note that poetry was integral in many works that also contain prose narrative. *The Tale of Genji* by Murasaki Shikibu, written more than a thousand years ago, mixes prose with the composition of poems (in the form of love letters) as a central structure of the text. Noh plays mix poetic recitation with descriptive spoken speech sections. Noh plays in this form were composed two hundred years before Basho's poetry journals mixing prose description and haiku. The concept of an *uta nikki* as a combination of poetry and prose was widely embraced by Canadian poets in the work of Fred Wah, bpNichol, and others.

Looking at the *uta nikki* from the Western European conceptions of genre, with a delineated separation between poetry and prose, the poetry journal seems to be a distinctive

form. However, it has an extensively wide reach within Japanese literature and very few formal constraints. Ann Munton, in her 1985 article, “The Long Poem as Poetic Diary,” discusses *uta nikki* as a long poem model for bpNichol, Fred Wah, Kiyooka, and others. In comparing Basho’s *Narrow Road* with Kiyooka’s *Wheels*, she writes, “Both include, to fulfill the *utanikki*’s ‘requirement of one love-verse,’ encounters with prostitutes” (104). She cites Earl Miner’s scholarship on the *uta nikki* to make her point; however, the source text is slightly confusing, and a closer reading reveals that a love verse is a requirement of a *haikai* sequence, not an *uta nikki* (Miner, 43). This misreading frames the *uta nikki* as a more rigorously structured form than is found in key examples of poetic diaries. There are many other forms of writing within Japanese literary traditions that have more complex structures. *Renga* or linked verse have syllable count requirements as well as topical and thematic requirements. Haiku, our focus here, has a number of constraints in addition to the 5-7-5 syllable count. The *uta nikki* is a wide reaching concept within Japanese literature that has taken many forms over time. Basho’s *haibun* is a mixture of prose and haiku. It is not separate from an *uta nikki*. Rather, the *haibun* has slightly more formal constraints than an *uta nikki* in that the poem sections adhere to the conventions of haiku. It might be tempting to consider *uta nikki* as a nonfiction diary reflection of life experience in contrast to other works in Japanese literature, which have fantastical and fictional aspects. While the diary structure might employ some structures of realism, it remains a creative work not limited to actual events. Basho’s *haibun* journal was edited over a four-year period and differs significantly from his traveling companion Sora’s records of the same journey.

The concept of an *uta nikki* is broad and fluid. It is the delineation of poetry from fictional prose narrative in European traditions that frames the *uta nikki* as a specific cohesive form. Within Japanese literature there are many varied examples of writings that joins poetry and

prose through a time-based structure. Basho's *Narrow Road* as a *haibun* is informed by these models but brings the formal aspects and constraints of haiku to the poetic journal.

### ***Wheels***

Kiyooka's *Wheels: A Trip Through Honshu's Backcountry* references Basho's *Narrow Road* both geographically and thematically. The word *oku* in Basho's title can mean the outer lands, the countryside, and the remote interior. It is used in phrases such as "deep in the forest" or "deep in the mountains." Kiyooka echoes Basho's *oku* by his use of the word *backcountry*. The second meaning of *oku* is interiority. In this way the title calls on a journey that is both a physical journey to out-of-the-way places and a spiritual interior journey. This journey calls for a heightened realization of life as transitory and a detachment from the material concerns of urban life. Basho wrote himself into a lineage of traveling poets seeking spiritual cultivation from Kamo no Chomei's *Hojiki (An Account of My Hut)* to other writers named directly in the text, such as Saigyô. In *Narrow Road*, this temporary journey is as permanent as any other situation in our continually fleeting life. It is not that Basho is away from home, but rather the journey itself is his home. The opening to *Narrow Road* as translated by Donald Keene:

The months and days are the travelers of eternity. The years that come and go are also voyagers. Those who float away their lives on ships or who grow old leading horses are forever journeying, and their homes are wherever their travels take them. Many of the men of old died on the road, and I too for years past have been stirred by the sight of a solitary cloud drifting with the wind to ceaseless thoughts of roaming.

Here we see both the “solitary cloud” for the loneliness of travel and emphasis on a human life span as a journey.

*Wheels* begins and ends in Kyoto. From there, our poet-narrator, his father and the guide travel south to Izumo, Hiroshima, and Miyajima. The writing is rich with the sights and sounds of this journey through details of train stops and the landscape out the train window. There are many long prose sections as well as a number of conversations between the narrator and the father. There is also the repeated focus on silence in the failed conversations and the unspoken between the narrator and the father. Page 138 reads, “how come we have so little to say/given all the years we’ve travelled separate ways.” In reading this line, another line is suggested. As the reader, I anticipate the phrase that begins “given all the years we’ve traveled” to continue with the word “together.” However, this poem pivots to “separate.” The anticipation of the word “together” heightens the contrast between “together” and “separate.” In this way, the text articulates through suggestion a sense of loneliness and isolation while it directly names separation. One way to read this through the concept of Basho’s journey is that the physical journey is of a father and son together; however, their interior journey is worlds apart. This pairs with their journey to Japan. For the father, he is returning to his earlier home. For the son, this journey highlights his otherness both in Japan and Canada.

Near the start of *Wheels* is a short section of text that demonstrates central themes in haiku and echoes a famous haiku by Kobayashi Issa. The poet-narrator is traveling on the “Pine/Wind train” (a reference to the Matsukaze train line that today runs from Tottori to Masuda, places named in *Wheels*). The poem is positioned as a view out the window. Pictures on the adjacent page of the rice fields and the coast line contribute to this sense. The poem reads:

. . . pictures-of-the-floating-world

pictures-of-our-passage-thru-it . . .

i thot, winding the film up (138)

The text references the floating world, which has a double meaning. The floating world or *ukiyo* is a term for the nightlife or pleasure quarters in the Edo era. The woodblock prints from the Edo era and the world they depict, called *ukiyo-e*, are some of the most famous representations of Japan. Katsushika Hokusai (1770–1849), named later in *Wheels*, is an artist famous for his woodblock print series *Thirty Six Views of Mt. Fuji*. His woodblock images of breaking waves, best known in the print *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, are iconic. At the same time, the term “floating world” also references the impermanence of our human lives as both temporary and fleeting. Here the bright floating world is the view out the window. This reference to the pleasure quarters and vivid woodblock prints evokes a celebration of life. The second line of “our-passage-thru-it” stresses the impermanence of our journey in this life. The third line leaps from an expansive picturesque image to the tactile, grounded, and mundane work of winding film in a camera. With this gesture, there is the insight that while this life is brief and temporary, we try to hold onto it through capturing it on film. This voices similar themes to Issa’s haiku, “This world of dew /is only a world of dew/ and yet and yet.” In Issa’s haiku, impermanence is voiced through describing the world not in concrete long lasting elements of stone and wood, but with dew that forms and evaporates momentarily. The “and yet, and yet” functions like Kiyooka’s picture taking. Against all of the evidence that life is passing and temporary, our human condition is to hold onto our experience of the world around us.

Kiyooka’s journey in *Wheels* touches on themes important in haiku such as impermanence but focuses most directly on family ties and cultural history. Kiyooka’s title

*Wheels* names a repeated motif throughout the work. It reflects the multiple modern modes of transit: train, bus, and car of the journey and stresses that contrast with Basho's months spent walking. Kiyooka writes, "trackin' a post-industrial Tokkaido Road at 70 mph" (159) and on the train toward the end of his journey, "these iron wheels annealing my midnight blues" (172). Wheels also evokes the Buddhist wheel of the dharma and the cycle of rebirth (Fisher 103). However, the wheel reference pivots from a Buddhist symbol to a Christian symbol with the Wheel of Fortune. Reading the wheel as fortune evokes concepts of fate through the Christian traditions found in Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* which informed Chaucer's writing. Although Fisher reads the wheel concept as a Buddhist symbol, in Kiyooka's use of the wheel there is an equally strong connection to concepts of fate and chance in terms of family location and situation during the war. This concept of fate connects to different plights of branches of Kiyooka's family who faced hardships either in Japan or Canada during the war and in the postwar era.

Another distinctive quality of *Wheels* that can be seen as a transposition of haikai practice is Kiyooka's use of visual art through photography. One of the differences between Basho's haikai and English haiku is that much of Basho's work is visual. The tools of writing in Basho's time were paper and ink brush, the same tools as *nihonga* painting and *sho-do* calligraphy. The practice of these arts was interconnected. Basho created *haiga*, which are poem paintings. He also made calligraphic poem cards. In this way, Basho's haikai connects with Kiyooka as a painter and a poet and with Kiyooka's use of photography and text in *Wheels*. The visual aspects of haiku, which continued into the twentieth century in the work of Masaoka Shiki, who blended haiku with nature painting, are largely absent in North American haiku. British and American poets that came to haiku translated the practice through modern Western constructions of genre

with distinct separation between the visual arts and poetry. In this way, haiku in English became a text-based written poetry form. This was encouraged also by print technology that could easily reproduce type but not images.

If Kiyooka was intentionally creating a modern day version of Basho's *Narrow Road*, one would expect for him to write in response to specific poetry places called *uta makura*. The term *uta makura* translates as poem pillow. It is a poetic device of intertextuality and allusion. Generally, *uta makura* are place names that have established poetic associations. Basho's haikai practice was highly intertextual. His route in *Narrow Road* was planned around visiting these *uta makura* or poem places that held currency as places in the poetic imagination of an Edo-era readership. Basho's writing is imbued with allusions to previous poems written referencing the same place as well as places significant to Japanese history and cultural memory.<sup>1</sup> Drawing on associations with known poems and historical events is one of the ways that haiku can create density and depth of communication with very few words.

However, poetic associations based on a place require a readership with a shared knowledge. If we can assume that Kiyooka was not writing for an audience that could access allusions to classical Japanese poetry, Chinese poetry, and sites of historic significance in Japanese history, such as battlegrounds and temples, what might Kiyooka draw on to create the effect of poem pillows? In *Wheels* Kiyooka transposes the concept of a poem pillow in interesting ways. He writes to the events of World War II such as the bombing of Hiroshima and the discrimination faced by Japanese Canadians through allusion. He draws from these points of reference and assumes audience knowledge to connect to their significance. After leaving the Hiroshima museum, Kiyooka writes, "nobody can live inside the Monstrous very long/ without becoming one father said, / as we sipped our tea and bit into our sandwiches" (170). This short

poem employs contrast and a leap in perspective through the integration of the father's voice. It also has a juxtaposition in the reference to the war and the mundane daily activity of drinking tea and eating sandwiches. It does not outline the events of the war but functions through an assumed shared knowledge of these events.

Kiyooka challenges a concept of shared knowledge or a firm cultural location through a number of devised words in his text. He uses the word, "Kanada," for Canada but spelled with a *K* (142). Foreign words are brought into Japanese using the katakana syllabery (similar to a phonetic alphabet) that brings the words into existing Japanese syllables and sounds. Foreign words are written in katakana and remain marked as foreign through this script. (The script is also used for emphasis and exclamations in written Japanese). Kiyooka writes Canada with a *K* taking the romanization from the katakana spelling of Canada. The word is now translated twice with the second translation bringing it back into English not in its source form but marked and changed. This echoes the struggles of migration and evokes ideas of insider/outsider, displacement and home. Kiyooka visits the birth place of his parents; however, he does not arrive unmarked and able to seamlessly join the cultural landscape of Japan. The layers of migration have shaped him just as the *K* in Kanada retains a trace of the translation into Japanese and back into English.

Another example of this is when Kiyooka describes a kind of Japanese shoe called *geta*. He brings the word into English grammar by making it plural, "getas" (158). Now the word is new or at least neither firmly English or Japanese. Here we have a departure from the proposed categories of language and a making of a new path, much the same way that Kiyooka in *Wheels* works with an established literary concept of a *haibun* journal and makes it his own. The theme of loneliness of the traveler in *Narrow Road* can be read more narrowly in *Wheels* through

disrupted home place, emotional toll of the war, and the ripple effects of discrimination and alienation. While these might not be markers of intertextuality as Japanese literary technique, they do create a similar density of association as a very small gesture that brings layers of complexity to the text.

With these shifts in language Kiyooka is creating a liminal space of associations without an easily discernable shared-knowledge audience. Leading Kiyooka scholar and poet, Roy Miki, offers a perspective on what might seem to be the lack of an intended audience and suggests that Kiyooka was writing for an imagined future audience (2011, 28). Kiyooka was writing from a racialized and othered space within Canada. While traveling in Japan shifted his cultural location, it did not provide a home place where Kiyooka could live as unmarked and central. It also did not offer a place of shared knowledge that could support central aspects of haiku.

These are just a few examples of the many language innovations and disruptions that Kiyooka creates in *Wheels* and in many of his other works. In these language shifts, Kiyooka is making his own cultural space and location. He is othered in Canada, and at the same time, he cannot go to Japan as solely Japanese. His shifts in language work both to mark his exclusions and also to create a place where he is no longer othered, where his experience, language, and identity are the central, fluent cultural knowledge. Miki explains that Kiyooka's cultural location within Canada can be "aligned with post colonial writers in other national contexts, who often worked alone to resist the forms of dominant language conventions and, against the odds, carved out a hybrid lingo that was "in" the language of the white majority but was not "of" the values imbedded in it" (2011, 28). Here we see Kiyooka's isolation and how he was not writing for an existing audience but was creating a space for himself and in this an imagined audience.

Loneliness and isolation are major themes in travel writing. As Basho intended, his physical journey serves as material evidence of his internal journey. Kiyooka's travels create the external material evidence of his internal isolation that is part of his daily experience within Canada and brought into heightened relief as he travels to his parents' birth country. As an artist, he is for the most part, alone in this cultural location. While many poets that informed his work such as Wallace Stevens and Charles Olson were influenced by concepts of imagism and haiku, these were interpreted through Western European literary traditions and the experiences of white society in North America. They were aesthetic peers but not working toward the cultural transformations of Kiyooka's work. The Regina art scene was similar with Kiyooka as part of a generation of white artists. In this way, Kiyooka was writing into cultural transformations without like minded peers or a shared community. As Miki explains, "Kiyooka enacted forms of resistance, but without the coalitional framework of a network of like-minded artists and writers, and this gives his work a quality of interiority always verging towards the void of speechlessness" (2011, 28). Miki goes further to explain that Kiyooka wrote to an imagined future readership that would be able to read through aspects of shared knowledge to engage with visions for change embedded in Kiyooka's language strategies, "Even as this edge pressed in on his language, however, Kiyooka refused the path of assimilation and instead imagined a future of readers through whom his language might accumulate new social and cultural values" (28). It is this lack of community that resonates with the loneliness and isolation of the travel journal form. Kiyooka makes tenuous connections in various ways—his tense relationship with his father and his references to artists and poets. He imagines a creative community and a future readership but he travels alone.

The one poet Kiyooka names directly is Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902). As they are traveling along the Inland Sea of Japan, across from Shikoku, Kiyooka writes, “Shiki/ & father’s / Shikoku/ a stone throw/ away” (160). Shiki was born Matsuyama, on the Inland Sea side of Shikoku at the beginning of the Meiji restoration. He became a leading haiku poet in the modern era. He advocated the concept of *shajitsu* or *shasei* meaning “sketching from life,” in which haiku should be written from individual direct observation of people and nature (Shirane, 38). Toward the end of his life he revised this to advocate that haiku just be written about nature and that human affairs should be left for fiction writing. With Shiki, haiku in isolation from communal practice is stressed. Also, haiku as a direct response of observation was emphasized over the many examples in Basho’s work of haiku as intertextual. It is through Shiki’s haiku that we come into the modern era and see the seed of what will become English haiku. Shiki, born in 1867, was raised in an era of massive modernization and foreign influence in Japan. Thus, we can see haiku in Japan developing through exposure to international literary influences. Into the twentieth century, haiku was interpreted through modernism and modernist poets in North America giving birth to new, diverse and multithreaded haiku lineages.

By citing Shiki, naming the *oku* as the backcountry, and fusing visual images with text, Kiyooka is writing himself and his twentieth century experience into a haiku lineage. Traveling along the Japan Sea toward Hagi, he ends a letter to “Dear M:” with this post script: “p.s. it almost feels like I’ve come this way/ before but that’s another pilgrim’s odyssey (148).” Here Kiyooka echoes Basho’s journey. While I followed Basho’s route on my own journey, it was Kiyooka’s work that came to me in a faint echo. Since then, I have tried to trace the poetic lineages in Kiyooka’s work and found that he drew from Basho, Issa, Shiki, and North American haiku as aesthetic ideas but more than anything was making his own creative road through

poetry's backcountry. Kiyooka brings the complexity of migration to the travel theme of Basho's *haibun* form. He's not concerned to recreate Basho's work but changes the form and applies it selectively as a means to create his own poetic vision.

Of the many connections between *Narrow Road* and *Wheels*, the most important to me as poet is the shared haiku spirit. Basho disrupted the poetry rules of the ruling court class. He cultivated a way of seeing, an attention to the poetic moment through contrast and juxtaposition. He was breaking established rules and conventions. Kiyooka too was a lone traveler. He rejected the constraints of genre and form in both poetry and visual art. He strived to create art through text that resisted adhering to dominant literary values and established genres for visual art forms. Haiku has been translated into English haiku as a text-based form. Kiyooka, however, relates to the possibilities of the form as both text and graphic and even the further reaching aspects of cultivating an artistic sensibility through the practice of writing. Through the rough and unfinished qualities of his work, he creates a wonderful aesthetic intensity. The off center, off kilter beauty of Kiyooka's travel journal *Wheels* voices inequality, displacement, exclusion through an external journey, and the internal experience of migration.

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<sup>i</sup> Hiroaki Sato's translation of *Narrow Road* offers highly detailed annotations of the text, which explain many of Basho's allusions to literature and historical events.