

“Tricks of the Trade: Approaches to Lineation in Three English Translations of the *Hyakunin isshu*.” *Hikaku bungaku nenshi*, no. 57, 2021, pp. 1-26.

Errata

Page 8: Poem 4 --> Poem 3

Tricks of the Trade: Approaches to Lineation in Three English Translations of the *Hyakunin isshu*

Mark Jewel

The more English translations one reads of Japanese waka, the less confidence one has that clear principles of translation can be identified that might be applied consistently regardless of translator. Even something as basic as formal consistency remains elusive in practice. For example, most translators of waka into English feel obligated to note the distinctive 5-7-5-7-7 syllabic pattern that is standard in Japanese, and the majority adopt a five-line arrangement in which the lines correspond to a greater or lesser degree with the original metrical pattern.¹ But over the space of several pages of any standard collection or anthology, strict rhythmic correspondence yields almost inexorably to a consideration of the demands of standard English syntax, the desire to bridge cultural barriers, and the need to accommodate rhetorical devices available only in Japanese. As a result, it is usually taken as self-evident that English and Japanese are such different languages both linguistically and culturally that formal distortion is to a certain extent inevitable.²

Surely some sort of collateral damage must result from the failure to apply basic Japanese formal conventions to English translation. For the most part, however, translators acknowledge the difficulty involved with preserving rhythm in their lineation, outline the basic principles they have tried to follow, and then proceed to let their translations stand (or fall) on their own. The reluctance to address thorny technical issues in what is, after all, being offered primarily as a selection of poetry is certainly understandable. But if something as basic as rhythm can be treated as contingent, readers may well be justified in wondering what other poetic features have been distorted in the process of translation.

Now that major collections by such translators as Brower and Miner, Bownas and Thwaite, McCullough, Cranston, Carter, and Rodd and Henkenius have made available translations of thousands of waka—many of them overlapping—one might suppose that an empirical basis exists for collating the various translation practices in an attempt to determine the ones most commonly adopted and, perhaps, those that could even be called the most effective.³ Such a project, however, is not to be undertaken lightly. Instead, it seems advisable to begin on a much more modest scale—with a study based on a tightly restricted set of poems and a relatively narrow technical focus. That is the goal here: to examine a number of examples from three complete published translations of the classic thirteenth-century anthology *Ogura hyakunin issbu* (One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets)⁴ in order to identify differences in the way the translators have handled certain aspects of line arrangement when translating from Japanese into English.

The translations to be considered are those by Stephen D. Carter, Joshua S. Mostow, and Peter MacMillan, published between 1991 and 2018. Specifically, these translations will be examined for the way the translators have approached the technical issue of *kugire* (syntactic measure breaks; often translated as “caesura”). After noting the general extent of correspondence to the originals in terms of the techniques of *shokugire*, *nikugire*, *sankugire*, and *shikugire* (where the caesura appears at the end of the first, second, third, or fourth measure, respectively), I will focus on four particular examples—all involving the techniques of *shokugire* and *shikugire*—with the more subjective aim of judging which translator seems to have dealt with the *kugire* technique most effectively.

It is by no means clear that the conclusions to be drawn will be broadly applicable to the translation of Japanese poetry. But given the relatively minor role that Japanese-to-English translation has played so far in the development of the newly emergent field of translation studies (TS), it is hoped that even a highly circumscribed analysis such as this will prompt research that is both more probing and possibly more provocative in its general implications.

The *Hyakunin issbu* in English Translation

Mayer has compiled an annotated list of twenty-one complete English translations of the *Hyakunin issbu* published between the years 1865 and 2008 (7-10, 12-32). Károlyi incorporates these translations into a longer list of twenty-nine translations that ends with MacMillan’s revised translation of 2018 and adds a number of items specifically excluded by Mayer, including self-published editions and editions intended primarily for Japanese students (11-13).⁵ It is a strikingly large number, suggesting just how representative the collection, selected by waka poet and critic Fujiwara no Teika (1162-1241), has come to be regarded in both Japanese and English. Excepting some individual poems, no other work of classical Japanese literature has been translated into English nearly as often.

As might be expected, a wide variety of approaches obtains in these translations, some of which are revisions of previous versions. A convenient, if necessarily sketchy, survey of the changing practices of the *Hyakunin issbu* translators over the span of some 150 years has recently been provided by Horton, who anchors his study of waka translation since 1865 on a number of key poems, including Poem 4 of the *Hyakunin issbu*, about Tago Bay.⁶ Horton’s main point is that, both individually and collectively, the “trajectory” (as he repeatedly puts it) of modern Anglophone translators of waka has been from the naturalized toward the literal in terms of both form and content.⁷ Aspects of “naturalized” translation include metrical and rhyme schemes and diction that derive from English poetic conventions, but also involve the expedient of prose paraphrase and even the assumption that left-aligned stanzas and line capitalization should be considered standard poetic practice. “Literal” translation involves not only respecting standard waka rhythmic patterns (however they may be defined), but also translating notoriously vague fixed epithets (*makurakotoba*), returning to the original sense of metaphors (“white as mulberry cloth” in the Tago Bay poem, for example), and removing distracting linguistic features that might misrepresent Japanese usage.

Horton recognizes, of course, that the choice between naturalized and literal translation is not always clear and that compromise is part and parcel of the process; but he does finally situate such compromise (and any

subsequent technical innovations) along an overall historical arch that bends toward the literal. Generally speaking, this concession to the literal seems to mean offering romanized versions of the poems in addition to the translations, using modern Japanese pronunciation to transcribe those romanized versions (to facilitate diachronic comparison), providing the English translation in a five-line format (to prompt an awareness of how the measures of the original were manipulated by the poet), translating in the form of grammatically complete sentences, eliminating explanatory padding, avoiding “breezy” or excessively colloquial language, and retaining the historical connotations of words and images.

Although Horton stresses in his conclusion that his history is “descriptive” (183), it is finally impossible for him to avoid value judgments completely, and sometimes he appears to want to have it both ways. Despite characterizing the post-World War II generation of Anglophone translators as being both more accurate and authentic than their predecessors, for instance, he ends up criticizing the over-scrupulous attention paid by Yasuda to the 5-7-5-7-7 structure of his *Hyakunin isshu* translations (162). He also reveals himself to be quite opposed to postwar ultra-literalists like Sato and Morris, who advocate a one-line format for translating waka (173-74; 194, n. 124). This is because Horton regards a multiline format in a translation of a poem such as the one about Tago Bay as essential to fostering “the ongoing dialectic between poetic form and audience imagination” that gives the poem much of its affective power (174).⁸ These are value judgments no less for being couched in descriptive terms.

Clearly, literalness by itself is an insufficient guarantee of quality. Horton acknowledges, for example, that greater freedom of expression may be needed “to let the poem sing for the modern readers” (167). And MacMillan’s idiosyncratic translation of Poem 3 of the *Hyakunin isshu* (consisting of twenty-five words on twenty-five lines) is “too personal to work in, say, a literary history, but it is invigorating as a work of art in its own right” (180). Apparently, different intentions permit different standards of evaluation, so experimentation can be embraced at the same time readers are cautioned that Japanese poets prized orthodoxy to a much greater extent than modern readers of English translations are accustomed (182-83). Thus, Horton declares that it is “invidious” to draw a clear line between the translations

of scholars and those of poets and creative writers (164). The lesson would seem to be that literalness is fine until it is not.

But ambivalence of this kind no doubt simply indicates that translation must be still be classified as an art rather than as a science, or at best a very inexact science. The point that translators constantly adopt and adapt techniques that have proved useful—that there is an active and ongoing dialectic between “naturalizing” translation and “literal” translation—is a valid one, as is the point that, over time, readers grow conditioned to accept previously unfamiliar but authentic techniques of producing poetic meaning in translation. The dialectic remains in operation today, and the reader must ultimately refer to specific cases to judge the extent to which concrete outcomes have succeeded in faithfully conveying the effect of the original: in “making it old,” as Horton puts it in his title. We turn therefore to the three translators under consideration here to focus on the way they have coped with “translating” the *kugire* technique in their versions of the *Hyakunin isshu*.

Three Translators, Three Approaches to Form

The translations of the *Hyakunin isshu* by Carter (1991), Mostow (1996), and MacMillan (2018) are all fairly recent, so I think it is fair to say that they represent the current state of affairs regarding the historical dialectic outlined by Horton. Horton in fact mentions the names of all three and makes pertinent comments about the translation practices of Carter and MacMillan (as we have already seen in the case of the latter). Curiously, however, even though Horton refers to the history of waka translation (similar to Horton’s own) contained in the introduction to Mostow’s translation, he offers no critique of any of Mostow’s actual translations. We will therefore be on our own when applying Horton’s description of the features of literal translation to Mostow, although we can start by postulating that Mostow, like Carter and, to a lesser extent, MacMillan, at least *tends* toward the literal in his translations.

Carter succinctly states his own approach to translation in the “Translator’s Note” of the anthology that contains his complete translation of the *Hyakunin isshu*. We find first of all that he alternates long and short English lines to approximate the Japanese mora count and attempts to retain

the original order of images, although the former is qualified by acknowledging the need to pay “careful attention” to English rhythm and the latter with the proviso “whenever syntactic patterns make that possible” (xiii). Carter regards these points—and presumably his five-line, complete-sentence translations of waka—as “nothing new,” but then goes on to describe what he considers to be a formal innovation:

In punctuation and line format, however, I have attempted to find new ways to suggest the variety of pauses and stops in the original poems. To this end, I begin flush left each new poem and generally every new line following any punctuation mark, then indent two spaces the next one or two lines when those lines constitute one complete sentence or phrase, with the restriction that this “jogging” of lines will never continue for more than three lines. (xiii)

The result is a set of five different basic patterns of lineation, three of which apply to five-line waka translations and two to translations of shorter hokku or renga-style verses.⁹ It is hardly a transparent system, and in the classroom I have found that students basically ignore it: the irregularity fails to achieve the intended effect of calling attention to itself. Also distinctive with respect to Carter is his decision to place the transliterations—which are in modern orthography—below the English translations rather than *en face*, and in single-line form (with long lines wrapped). On the one hand, this can be considered a naturalizing tendency in that it privileges the target language over the source language; on the other, it prompts an awareness on the part of the reader that the imposed English form may be arbitrary, which comes under the literalness heading. Like the staggered indentation of the translations, it appears intended as a sort of formal compromise between naturalizing and literalness.¹⁰ In any case, granting the existence of this sort of compromise, Carter can on the whole be said to favor the literal. But as far as I can tell regarding technique, Carter has nothing to say about *kugire* anywhere in his anthology, although the lack of an index of terms makes it frustratingly difficult to locate references for any specific item. Comprehensiveness of content takes precedence over the detailed analysis of individual poems, and the annotation provided for

Hyakunin isshu poems is brief, mostly informational, and avoids aesthetic judgments.

Mostow, unlike Carter, does not cast his approach to translation in formal terms at all. Rather, his purpose is to place the translations in a context that would allow the poems to be interpreted as the compiler would have interpreted them:

I have attempted to translate the poems according to a historically specific interpretation—that is, to translate them to reflect our understanding of how Teika himself read the poems. This strategy has led me to include discussions of how the individual poems have been interpreted in different historical periods. The explanation of such interpretations has, in turn, led me to discuss specific words and phrases of the poems—in other words, to provide notes and annotations. (85)

Basically, then, introducing the historical background, explaining the connotations of a certain number of key expressions and images, and providing relevant biographical and bibliographical information (including the contents of the headnotes to the poems in imperial anthologies) would seem to constitute the core of Mostow’s approach to translating the poems in the *Hyakunin isshu*. Despite Mostow’s reference to this as part of a “new approach” (8), the truly innovative aspect of his book is placing the collection in a specific cultural context by investigating how it was represented pictorially principally in the Edo period. If we (perhaps unfairly) set aside the front matter and the pictorial elements and focus solely on the translations, the impression received is nothing so much as an abridged form of the sort of study references used by high school students and general readers in Japan (omitted is the detailed grammatical analysis typical of such sources).¹¹

Mostow does address technical issues in his “Introduction,” discussing the three categories of grammatical techniques, lexical techniques, and figurative techniques and placing the four variant forms of *kugire* under the “grammatical techniques” category (although the term *kugire* itself is not used and *nikugire* has unaccountably been omitted from his index). But

other than noting the use of *sankugire* in conjunction with the use of *tōchi-hō* (inversion) in Poem 23 and providing a very short list of additional examples, the terms vanish from the text, except once when Mostow notes the existence of a disagreement over whether or not Poem 70 actually contains a *shikugire* (349).¹² The translations roughly follow a five-line pattern of alternating long and short lines in complete-sentence format (except where lack of space interferes—see Poem 51), and the first and third lines of the translations are indented (more or less standard practice since the 1980s). The syllable count is more relaxed than in Carter, accommodating sense over rhythm, but thanks to the indentation, the general impression is of alternating short and long lines. Mostow’s transliterations, however, appear *en face*, and unlike Carter, Mostow adopts historical orthography when transliterating, primarily because this allows readers to find the words more readily in dictionaries of classical Japanese (xvii). So once again we see clear evidence of compromise between the naturalizing and the literalizing impulses. But on the whole, it can be said that Mostow is relatively unconcerned with exploring the interpretive implications of form or of diction and style, despite a marked tendency toward the literal in his actual translation practice (his Tago Bay translation, for instance, ends with the line “white as mulberry cloth” [152], the sort of linguistic originalism Horton identifies as literal).

With MacMillan, we seem to witness a distinct swing back toward the nonliteral, as Horton’s remarks have already indicated. MacMillan is forthright about placing his own personal preferences and the unmediated experience of the reader foremost. Despite generally trying to follow Teika’s own interpretations when translating, for example, he indicates that he will go back to the “original reading” when it suits him (xxxix, xl), and three of the translations can be counted radical formal experiments in which the shape of the poem is intended to reflect sense: Poem 4, already mentioned; Poem 10, a famous poem by Semimaru, translated in nine lines apparently to suggest “a marvellous sense of movement” (132); and Poem 55, which adopts an eleven-line format with the purpose of suggesting the flow of a waterfall (171). MacMillan will also occasionally draw out what are actually only implications in the original (see the discussions below). The translations are all presented on individual pages with plenty of empty

Poem 3

space and without transliteration or annotation, on the assumption that “the poems can be read and enjoyed with no background knowledge” (xvii) and so that the reader can “encounter them without encumbrances” (121). MacMillan ultimately compares his translation to a visual art, describing it as “a combination of a painting and a print, not completely literal in every respect but faithful to the *heart* of the original” (xlv; emphasis in the original). This half-impressionistic, half-mimetic approach has clear implications for the 5-7-5-7-7 syllable count, the necessity for which MacMillan disposes of on the basis that “this makes for an unnatural and meaningless constriction in English” (xl). And in fact, no consistent syllable count is to be found in the translations.

On the other hand, MacMillan adopts a five-line block format for the ninety-seven non-experimental poems in his translation—five lines “in order to give a sense of the *form* of the original” (xl; emphasis in the original)—and all follow complete-sentence syntax, with multiple sentences when called for.¹³ Moreover, despite the rhythmic freedom, the sense of the translations is normally quite close to interpretations provided by modern scholars (granting the presence of differences among those interpretations), and *makurakotoba* epithets are invariably translated (“cloak of white” in the Tago Bay poem, for instance, and “raging age of gods” in Poem 17, about tinted leaves in the Tatsuta River).¹⁴

The truth is, the poems have not been presented as “context-free” as MacMillan claims (121), for the front matter introduces the rhetorical techniques of *kakekotoba* (“literary puns”), *jokotoba* (“prefaces”), *engo* (“associative words”), *makura kotoba* (“pillow words”; MacMillan’s romanization), *mitate* (“elegant confusion”), and *utamakura* (“poem pillows”), and additionally offers “a few details of the political context and culture...along with Teika’s principles for selecting, interpreting and arranging poems” (xvii). The reader is referred to the “Glossary” and “Commentary” at the back of the book for more details, but even at this point, readers are undeniably being conditioned to read the poems in terms that might challenge any uninformed preconceptions. Both in the introduction and at the start of what turns out to be a fairly voluminous commentary in the manner of Mostow (although more engagingly evaluative), MacMillan explains this return to literalness, so to speak, as intended to “make the reader’s encounter with

the text more informed and pleasurable” (121). Mediated experience, it appears, must finally be counted nearly as valuable as unmediated experience. Transliterations, too, of all the poems are provided in the back of the book, in modern orthography and five-line block form, but with initial capitalization and capitalized proper nouns (although without periods). In this way, literalness is reintroduced through the back door, so to speak. Form can be distorted for experimental purposes, but apparently there is risk involved in ignoring it entirely—or even mostly.

MacMillan even explicitly mentions the caesura in his “Commentary,” without identifying it with the usual Japanese term *kugire*. It is just as well that he does not, for MacMillan only means that he has inserted pauses into his English translations rather than that he has followed the syntax of the Japanese. With respect to Poem 56, for example, he implies that there is a caesura after the first measure of the original, which he says he has moved to the end of the third line in his main translation (172). However, Poem 56 does not actually appear on any of the *kugire* lists I have had occasion to consult, and grammatical exegeses of the poem indicate that the first line actually ends in an attributive (*rentaikei*) form. Poem 80 is said to feature a caesura at the end of the first and third measures of the Japanese (192). Some Japanese-language references do take note of a *kugire* in this poem, but rather awkwardly in this case, it is as a single *nikugire*, with the syntactic break at the end of the *second* measure (the first measure ends in an attributive form, while the third measure ends with a subject particle (*kaku joshi*)).¹⁵ This does not argue for a very close syntactic fit between original and translation.

Furthermore, several paradoxes (or contradictions) inhere in achieving the compromise between imaginative adaptation and literal transference in MacMillan’s translation, and they make themselves evident in the introduction. Besides the paradox that background information is understood to enhance the unmediated reading experience, readers are told at the outset that the *Hyakunin isshu* is “a collection of one hundred of the best poems by one hundred representative poets” (ix), only to learn later that Teika chose some poets “for their historical importance, rather than for the beauty of their poems” (xxviii). And the introduction ends with MacMillan’s recommendation that “if you want to understand the Japanese, read the

One Hundred Poets” (xxxix), even though readers were earlier assured that “most Japanese have only the vaguest idea of what the poems mean” (ix-x). Freedom of interpretation and the grand notion that “great literature knows no barriers in time or distance” (xxxix) plainly do not square with the modern facts of everyday life or reading.

The *Kugire* Technique in Practice

The foregoing discussion of the caesura as (mis)understood by MacMillan serves as a convenient point on which to pivot to the consideration of *kugire* in a small set of poems from the *Hyakunin isshu*. Technically speaking, the primary syntactic requirement for the presence of a *kugire* is sentence-ending grammar at the end of a measure, including *shūshikei* for inflected items; *kakari musubi* constructions (“bound ending” is the expression used by Shirane in his *Classical Japanese: A Grammar*, where *kugire* is translated as “phrase break”); *tōchi-hō* (inversion); and possibly *taigendome* (nominal endings). A certain amount of subjective judgment comes into play in deciding what counts as a *kugire*: as mentioned earlier, some inflections share the same form despite functioning differently grammatically, and breaks in meaning may not always neatly match grammatical breaks (and a *kugire* can occasionally appear within a measure rather than, as usual, at the end). But for *kugire* to be translated “literally” into English, ending punctuation, and thus multiple sentences, would seem to be required. Other types of grammatical suspension may perform a similar function, but this technical difference is worth keeping in mind.

To focus the discussion, let us start with the most conservative accounting I have been able to find of *kugire* in the *Hyakunin isshu*. This is the listing of thirty-one poems provided in 2007 by Suzuki, et al. (131), which basically replicates an earlier list compiled by Suzuki in 1990 (231).¹⁶ Furthermore, Poem 72, which is classified in both books as containing the “equivalent” (*junzuru*) of a *shikugire* because a syntactic break comes *within* the fourth measure, will also be excluded from consideration. That leaves the poems in the following table (it will be noted that Poem 90 is listed twice because it contains both a *shokugire* and a *shikugire*):

<i>shokugire</i> poems	42, 90
<i>nikugire</i> poems	2, 9, 17, 20, 24, 29, 34, 35, 38, 40, 83, 89, 93, 99
<i>sankugire</i> poems	8, 12, 23, 28, 41, 66, 73, 84, 86, 95
<i>shikugire</i> poems	11, 14, 51, 60, 78, 90

Now, different punctuation marks can be used in English to accommodate a range of different pauses, a circumstance that introduces its own set of interpretive problems. But to get a general sense of adherence to the strict definition of *kugire*, I examined all of these poems in the translations for their use of punctuation to signal syntactic breaks at the end of the line. Counting periods, exclamation points, and question marks as ending punctuation, I found that of the thirty-two possible locations for *kugire*, Carter uses ending punctuation in eight, Mostow uses ending punctuation in thirteen, and MacMillan uses ending punctuation in three. Extending the definition of “ending punctuation” to include dashes, colons, and semicolons results in an additional thirteen breaks for Carter, eight breaks for Mostow, and four breaks for MacMillan.¹⁷ Cases in which the Japanese contains a *kugire* but the translation is unmarked (in other words, the sentence continues uninterrupted) number six in Carter, three in Mostow, and sixteen in MacMillan. It should be stressed that these simple counts are complicated formally by the use of commas in *kugire* positions and relationships with punctuation in other lines of the translations. Still, the conclusion that Mostow is the most syntactically faithful, Carter somewhat less rigorous in terms of technical fidelity, and MacMillan quite reluctant to interrupt the flow of his sentences seems to hold generally for these three translators and allows me to argue for the representativeness of the following analysis.

Space requires rather drastically limiting the number of poems to be analyzed to an easily managed number, so that will be accomplished by discussing four poems: the two *shokugire* poems and two of the unshared *shikugire* poems. It must be acknowledged that limiting the analysis in this way runs the risk of mischaracterizing the general practice of the individual translators. But the *shokugire* and *shikugire* poems, being outliers in terms of numerical frequency, may for that very reason serve to highlight the translators’ distinctive approaches to lineation, and the general tenden-

cies of the translators have already been noted.

We begin with the translations of Poem 42, the first *shokugire* poem (the italicized transliterations indent measures one and three; translators are identified by their initials):

Poem 42

Have you forgotten
wringing tears from our sleeves—
vowing that our love
would stand high above the waves
like Pine Mountain in Sue? [C]

chigiriki na
katamini sode o
shiboritsutsu
Sue-no-matsuyama
nami kosaji to wa
—Kiyohara no Motosuke

But we promised!
while wringing out the tears from
each other’s sleeves,
that never would the waves wash over
Sue-no-Matsu Mountain. [M]

Wringing tears from our sleeves,
did we not pledge never to part,
not even if the waves engulfed
the Mount of Forever-Green Pines—
what caused a change of heart? [MM]

Immediately it will be noticed that only Mostow preserves the *shokugire* in his translation, reflecting the grammatical inversion of the original, in which the first measure has been displaced from its normal grammatical position after the other four in order to add an emphatic note of protest. The lover’s complaint is the focus of the poem. The other two translators have evidently avoided *shokugire* lineation so that the entire poem can be presented as a single question, but in doing so, they end up inserting long pauses (signaled by dashes) in completely different locations: at the end of the second line for Carter, so that the two *-ing* forms do not clash; and at the end of the fourth line for MacMillan, so that he can add an implication only suggested by the Japanese and join what are actually two different

questions in English.

Other structural compromises (or “tricks,” as I have put it) are in evidence as well. Carter’s question format and his dash do allow him to recuperate some of the emphasis lost by displacing the verb “vow” from its proper position in the first line. Mostow continues his opening sentence after ostensibly ending it with an exclamation point, something he would probably justify by pointing to the combination of a comma with the word “that,” thereby representing the quotation particle *to* used in the last measure of the original. Quotations, that is to say, can accommodate internal punctuation. MacMillan, after allowing question form to stand in for inversion, employs a comma (the one at the end of the second line) to mark a division between the artificially constructed halves of the four lines that now contain the literal content of all five measures of the original, and then attaches his own completely new line to add the unstated implication of the original.

There is a great deal that could be said about other aspects of these translations—the influence of syntax upon image order, for instance, or the treatment of the *utamakura* Sue-no-matsuyama, or register (Mostow’s opening “but”), or diction (“vow” versus “promise” versus “pledge”). And certain semantic issues simply cannot pass unchallenged: Mostow creates the rather bizarre image of each lover wringing the tears from the other’s sleeves (one always wrings out one’s own sleeves in classical Japanese poetry), while MacMillan exaggerates the role of Sue-no-matsuyama in lyrical Romantic fashion by turning it from a symbol of endurance into a symbol of transcendence (the waves most definitely do *not* cross the pine mountain in Japanese). These issues unquestionably have a bearing on one’s evaluation of the quality of the translation. In this paper, however, I want to confine myself as far as possible to commenting on the faithful transference into English of the *kugire* technique. And in this case the “literalists” have it: the lover’s protest is most emphatically conveyed by Mostow, with Carter not very far behind. MacMillan, paradoxically perhaps, dilutes the emotional power of the *shokugire* by making explicit what is only implied by the original and placing that element at the end of the poem rather than at the beginning.

The second *shokugire* poem likewise involves the copious tears of the poet:

Poem 90

Look here, look at these!
Would even a fisher’s sleeves
at Ojima Isle,
drenched, drenched, over and again,
change so in color as mine? [C]

*misebaya na
Ojima no ama no
sode dani mo
nure ni zo nureshi
iro wa kawarazu
—Inpumon-in no Taifu*

How I’d like to show him!
The sleeves of the fishermen
of Male Island,
when it comes to wet, are wet indeed,
but their color doesn’t change! [M]

How I would like to show you—
the fisherman’s sleeves of Ojima
are drenched, but even so
have not lost their colour,
as mine have, bathed in endless tears. [MM]

As stated earlier, this poem contains both a *shokugire* and a *shikugire* in Japanese. This time, all three translations reflect the *shokugire* syntax of the original: both Carter and Mostow use an exclamation point at the end of the first line, while MacMillan’s first line takes the form of an unmarked (or perhaps irregularly marked) exclamation that does not actually conclude the sentence. Carter and Mostow thus infuse their translations with an appropriately high level of emotional intensity, which is just slightly attenuated in MacMillan, who ends up striking a good balance between first-line exclamation and remaining-line declaration.¹⁸ With respect to semantics, Mostow ignores the convention that takes waka poetry to be a means of personal communication, giving rise to a different and misleading sort of disjunction by using the third person. And MacMillan again makes explicit what it only implied in the original: the word “tears” does not exist in the Japanese, even if countless Japanese commentaries attest to their presence. Could this be an attempt to recuperate the bathos effaced by the failure to observe a strict *shokugire* format? In any case, the impression

received is of a willingness to take greater advantage of poetic license than either of the other two translators.¹⁹

Trickier to adapt is the three-part syntactic organization achieved in the original by the insertion of a *shikugire*. As will be noted again later, one function of the *shikugire* is to make it possible in the fifth measure for the poet to insert an ironic comment on what has come before. Carter recasts the last four measures of the poem as a single question, which is misleading syntactically, and since the fifth line of his translation is tied so closely to the second, the *shikugire* effect is largely lost.²⁰ Mostow's is the only version in which the fifth line could conceivably stand on its own as an independent sentence in English, although Mostow has treated it grammatically as a clause, perhaps to avoid an impression of excessive abruptness (as in MacMillan's treatment of the poem's *shokugire*). Mostow's second exclamation point, though, adds a little too much excitement, in effect negating the restraint just shown and turbocharging the sarcasm without, however, making its basis clear, leaving the reader a bit mystified. MacMillan, in order to attach his interpretive tag, has once again compressed the literal content of the original, resulting in pronounced pauses in the middle of the third and fifth lines, with a more conventional pause at the end of the fourth line. This kind of mid-line breaking is not how the *kugire* technique is supposed to work (and it is a clear departure from the original syntax), but it must be admitted that the result is an appealing alternation of pauses and continuations that achieves some semblance of the original.

On the whole, there is no outright winner to be declared here, with formal correspondence achieved by all with respect to the *shokugire*—which can probably be judged to be the easier technique to manage—but inadequately reflected in the freer treatment accorded to the *shikugire*. Formal deviations obviously do cause important nuances to get lost in translation. Still, MacMillan deserves recognition for his skillful adaptation of the rhythm and his smooth management of overall tone.

Moving to the two purely *shikugire* representatives (chosen because they end with grammatical constructions rather than, say, nominatives and can be expected to be more challenging to translate), we find a continuing naturalizing-versus-literal dialectic at work in all of the translations. The first is Poem 14, where the key fourth measure refers to disarray both in

terms of dyed patterns and human psychology:

Poem 14

As wholly confused
as cloth dyed in moss-fern design
from Michinoku—
so distraught is my heart now,
and for no one else but you. [C]

*Michinoku no
shinobumojizuri
tare yue ni
midaresomenishi
ware naranaku ni
—Minamoto no Tōru*

Whose fault is it
that my feelings have begun to tangle
like the tangled-patterned prints
of Shinobu from the distant north?
Since it is not mine, it must be... [M]

My heart's as tangled
as the wild fern patterns
of Michinoku's Shinobu cloth.
Since it is not my fault,
whom should I blame for this? [MM]

The *kugire* at the end of the fourth measure of the original marks the end of a question to which the grammatically incomplete fifth measure, having been displaced from its position in front of the third measure, implies an obvious (but unstated) answer. The effect is a rather sharp irony. In a sense, the structure reverses the pattern of protest found in the earlier *shokugire* poems, placing the emphasis at the end rather than at the beginning. All three translations contain an appropriately literal note of complaint in their last lines, but the syntax operates differently in each case to distort the sort of irony made possible by the *shikugire* of the original. Carter disrupts the grammatical continuity of measures three and four of the original with a dash, making it appear as though there is a major break after the third line and thereby setting the first three lines against the last two, with a minor pause added between lines four and five. I would guess that this is done so that both senses of the fourth-measure *kakeko-*

toba of *midare*- (“confused” and “distraught” in Carter’s translation) can be accommodated; but as a consequence, the translation stands as a single accusatory statement, leaving little room for irony.

Mostow’s fourth line, ending as it does with a question mark, more exactly corresponds to the *shikugire* form. But because of the English grammar, the content of the original has been significantly rearranged: roughly, measure one and part of measure two correspond with line four, measure two corresponds with line three; measure three corresponds with line one; and the punning sense of measure four is distributed between lines two and three. Mostow must then treat the fifth line as the beginning of a new sentence, which forces him to trail off with an ellipsis to suggest the effect of a rhetorical question. The archness of the poet’s irony has thus been sacrificed to the need to convey the unspoken implication, which produces a weak ending.

MacMillan’s fifth line could stand alone grammatically, but not his fourth, and joining the two grammatically both disrupts the *shikugire* pattern (even granting the comma pause) and once again dilutes the irony of the poet. Indeed, since a period appears at the end of the translation’s third line, a reader might be forgiven for taking this to be a *sankugire* poem with no inversion at all. For MacMillan, this strikes me as being a rather prosaic sort of construction: not quite as anticlimactic as Mostow, perhaps, but wordy nonetheless (and “whom” does not really help matters). All three poems can be said to reasonably convey the sense of the original, but to my mind, none effectively preserves its distinctive irony—an irony that depends on the *shikugire* format. To be fair, this may indicate not only the difficulty of managing the *shikugire* technique itself, but also the challenge of managing it in conjunction with the *kakekotoba* technique. But formal compromise is obviously the order of the day.

A similar problem arises in the final *shikugire* poem, which again complicates translation by incorporating wordplay, this time compounded: the place name “Ibuki” is superimposed on the verb *iu* (“to say”), and the repetition of *sashi* incorporates both a nominative use (the grass from which moxa is made) and an adverbial sense (the “anymore” of Mostow’s translation):

Poem 51

So do I love you—
but how can I find the words
to tell you that I yearn
like Ibuki’s moxa weeds,
consuming me from within? [C]

kaku to dani
e yawa Ibuki no
sashimogusa
sa shi mo shiraji na
moyuru omoi o
—Fujiwara no Sanekata

Can I even say
“I love you this much”?—No, and so
you do not know of it
anymore than of the *sashi*mo grasses of Ibuki,
my burning love for you! [M]

Because my feelings
are too great to put into words,
my heart blazes like the moxa
of Mount Ibuki,
with a love you cannot know. [MM]

As indicated by the use of the particle *na*, found also in the *shokugire* poems already discussed, the *shikugire* in the original is exclamatory in nature, suggesting the likelihood that the fifth measure will constitute a grammatical inversion. And indeed, the usual location for the fifth measure is right before the fourth measure, identifying the object of the verb “not-know” (*shiraji*): the poet charges the recipient with being unaware (fourth measure) of his burning passion (fifth measure). As before, extra emphasis is the result, so this emphasis should be expressed formally as well as semantically in the translations for them to be considered “literal.” Carter inserts a dash after the first line of his translation, transferring the emphasis there from its original position. This misrepresentation of the form is then carried over into Carter’s transformation of a statement into a question (as Carter also did in both Poem 14 and Poem 90). A comma is used to insert a less pronounced pause at the end of the grammatically incomplete fourth line in the form of a comma—possibly an attempt to retain something of the original *shikugire* rhythm—but a question, of course, lacks the

force of a statement or an exclamation, and it is quite unclear how a person can “yearn like moxa weeds.” Despite the very close approximation to the 5-7-5-7-7 syllable count (Carter is off by only one syllable in the third line), the poem is distorted in other ways so that the metaphorical wordplay can be explained (concealed passion is the conventional topic being given expression). Such are the compromises Carter ends up making with the *shikugire* technique.

Mostow has made the strongest effort to match literal meaning with form, even finessing the inversion with an appositive introduced by a comma in the *shikugire* position, although this effort unavoidably conflates measures one and two and measures three and four, and the added punctuation significantly interrupts the flow in the middle of the second line. Not only that, the reader is apparently expected to know how *sashimo* grasses are used, a risky assumption for a metaphor that lies at the heart of the poem’s meaning (common knowledge of the tenth century, which is when Sanekata lived, has become more esoteric in the twenty-first). The overall awkwardness—reinforced by the extraordinarily long fourth line, which is nevertheless grammatically incomplete—finally seems too high a price to pay simply to achieve a different balance of formal and semantic correspondence. We may be close to the modern limit of the literal here.

MacMillan’s translation reads much more smoothly, once again letting language itself carry the burden of emphasis. As in his translation of Poem 14, MacMillan adds a comma at the end of his grammatically incomplete fourth line (and unlike Poem 14, the sole purpose here is to add a modicum of rhetorical force). This is not, strictly speaking, a use of the *kugire* technique, but it may perhaps be called an adaptation of that technique; MacMillan appears to prefer this formally understated expression of emotion while waxing somewhat lyrical stylistically. In that sense, MacMillan forms an instructive contrast both with Carter (“blaze” is hardly an image one associates with moxa, and contradicts the topic of concealed love) and with Mostow, who tends to exclaim with English punctuation whenever he comes across an exclamation in Japanese. In this particular poem, all three translators thus effect different compromises with the *shikugire* technique.

Tentative Conclusions

The word “compromise” has appeared so often by now in connection with all three translators that it should be apparent that no clear-cut conclusion is forthcoming. Rather, we reach the not entirely unexpected conclusion that literalness is relative, not just in content but in form. And in fact, we continue to find naturalizing impulses at work even in the case of these three contemporary translators, who employ punctuation (which is, of course, nonexistent in Japanese) in different ways in an effort to convey meaning authentically. But to avoid a complete absence of judgment, let me try to summarize the compromises regarding lineation that have been made by the three translators as concisely as possible in the space of a single paragraph.

Despite Carter’s professed respect for the original image order and the highly regular syllabic counts of his lines, comparison with the other translations in terms of the *kugire* technique suggests that these are not the only—and possibly not even the most important—aspects of formal correspondence. Semantically, something has been lost as well as gained as a result of *kugire* mismatching and transforming statements into questions, and the formal innovation Carter seems proudest of—staggering the lines to match the syntax—seems of distinctly minor import: formal subtlety is not always a virtue. (Did the reader happen to notice that none of the translations analyzed here actually follows the same pattern of staggering?) Mostow’s translations seem to reflect a stronger desire to call visual attention to formal aspects of grammar on a line-for-line basis, including the *kugire* technique. At the same time, the notational emendations (including quotation marks and exclamation points) are distracting, and Mostow’s wordiness can be pronounced: Japanese poetry reads more smoothly than this. The similar wordiness and the disruption of lineation found in MacMillan can be partly attributed to his drawing out unstated implications, although the wordiness is partly compensated for by reducing the impact of such formal interruptions as the *kugire* break. The translations flow, but (as Horton noted) the texture of the lyricism can be MacMillan’s rather than that of the original poet. Both Carter and MacMillan seem readier than Mostow to adapt rather than strictly observe the *kugire* technique;

Mostow and MacMillan are readier than Carter to augment meaning at the expense of form.

It is a truism that if complete authenticity is desired, one must learn the language and read the works in the original. Translation always involves mediation between different semantic orders, and hence compromise: no single translation offers a perfectly transparent window onto meaning (as if language itself could do so). I earlier grumbled about Horton's ambivalence with respect to quality in translation, but I find that I may now be leaving myself open to the same charge. Having identified a number of formal issues with bearing on interpretation, could I choose the definitive translation of the *Hyakunin isshu* from among the three under consideration? Could I translate the collection myself and avoid any of those same issues? In the case of certain individual poems, I think I could. And personally, I would say that, in general, I prefer Carter's (minus the staggered lines) as a more literal rendition and MacMillan's (with its commentary) as a freer rendition of the entire collection. But while translators may have to exclude other approaches when producing their own versions of literary works, readers normally benefit from having available multiple translations of the same work, at least up to a certain unspecifiable maximum. In the case of post-1990 translations of the *Hyakunin isshu*, we do not yet seem to have reached such a maximum, nor have the translations themselves been examined thoroughly enough to provide a sufficiently objective basis for evaluation. Lineation stands as one promising avenue of exploration, as I hope I have shown, but lineation itself is no simple matter, and the way lies open for those willing to advance even farther along it.

Notes

- ¹ This general consensus has dissenters and has developed out of a continuing dialectical process of technical innovation and assimilation, as will be noted below in the discussion of Horton. Although some awkwardness is involved, I have adopted Horton's term "measure" to refer to *ku* when applied to the original versions of poems; "line" is used when referring to the English translations.
- ² Divergence increases further if the definition of "form" is expanded to include such elements as image order.
- ³ Since I will only be referring directly to Carter, I simply list the titles of the other

collections here, together with date of publication: Robert Brower and Earl Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, 1961; Geoffrey Bownas and Anthony Thwaite, *The Penguin Book of Japanese Verse*, 1964; Edwin A. Cranston, *A Waka Anthology: Volume One: The Gem-Glistening Cup*, 1983; Helen McCullough, *Kokin Wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Poetry*, 1985; Laurel Rasplica Rodd and Mary Catherine Henkenius, *Kokinshū: A Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern*, 1996; Edwin A. Cranston, *A Waka Anthology: Volume Two: Grasses of Remembrance*, 2006; Laurel Rasplica Rodd, *Shinkokinshū: New Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern*, 2015.

- ⁴ The place name "Ogura" is often omitted in Japanese and typically dropped in English—it does not appear in the titles of the English translations being considered here. *Hyakunin isshu* will be the form used throughout the remainder of this paper.
- ⁵ Both of the cited sources are recent PhD dissertations written in Japanese by nonnative speakers of the language. All of Mayer's entries are also included in Károlyi. Károlyi additionally lists a 1989 translation by James Kirkup (Károlyi 12) that Mayer states she has been unable to locate (Mayer 12, n. 9). Kirkup's translation, which was published in Japan (Károlyi 141; "Notes on Contributors"), is indeed quite difficult to find. Mayer provides annotations for the four translations Károlyi was unable to locate, one of which Mayer specifically excludes from consideration because it did not meet her selection criteria (Mayer 12).
- ⁶ The two dissertations cited contain useful details about a larger number of the translations, but neither is quite as illuminating for our purposes as Horton's article. Horton's intent is to describe general tendencies in the translation of Japanese waka since 1865, but since—as he notes—F. V. Dickins's translation of the *Hyakunin isshu* was "the first Japanese book translated in its entirety into English" (124), and since the *Hyakunin isshu* has itself been translated so often, the Tago Bay poem from that collection offers a convenient basis for historical comparison (it should be noted that Horton's analyses also refer to the older version of the Tago Bay poem as found in *Man'yōshū*). Horton's own translation of the *Hyakunin isshu* version of the poem is as follows:

tago-no-ura ni	Into Tago Bay
uchiidete mireba	I set out then see it:
shirotae no	white as mulberry cloth

fuji no takane ni on the lofty peak of Fuji
 yuki wa furitsutsu snow falls and falls! (122)

- ⁷ The word is used in Horton’s article no fewer than nine times in this sense—ten if the abstract is included. The *Hyakunin isshu* translators whose work Horton refers to include Dickins, MacCauley, Porter, Yasuda, Rexroth, Honda, Carter, and MacMillan. Various other versions of the Tago Bay poem as rendered by other translators are also analyzed.
- ⁸ See Horton for a brief overview of the one-line-translation controversy involving Hiroaki Sato, Earl Miner, and William R. LaFleur (174; 194, n. 124). I earlier called the use of modern Japanese pronunciation in transliteration a commonly accepted convention—and so it is—but Horton feels compelled to argue for it from a distinctly non-literalist point of view (181). It is a compromise he obviously favors making.
- ⁹ Horton’s description of this approach (180) is oversimplified, and the number increases when multiple sentences are involved.
- ¹⁰ Horton seems to think that Carter may be making a concession to advocates of single-line translation (181).
- ¹¹ Mostow’s sources for his commentaries are in fact all from the 1980s, with the exception of one from 1969 (139). This is hardly “new” from the Japanese perspective.
- ¹² For *shokugire*, the examples are Poems 12 and 19; for *nikugire*, Poems 2 and 9; for *sankugire*, Poem 23 (explained in-text); and for *shikugire*, Poems 11 and 14 (Mostow 13).
- ¹³ Despite the single-sentence block format used in the text, the example on the back cover of the translation indents the first and third lines (it also places the poem in single quotation marks and omits the period). MacMillan’s preferred format would not yet seem to have overcome current mainstream expectations.
- ¹⁴ Rather ironically, in two cases in the commentary where MacMillan explicitly translates *Hyakunin isshu* poems “literally,” the result is a four-line translation (176) and a three-line translation (186). Apparently, even five-line translations are not be taken as literal. Image order in MacMillan’s translations typically gives precedence to English syntax rather than attempting correspondence with the placement of the image in the Japanese measure.
- ¹⁵ There is some disagreement among Japanese commentators over whether the

verb at the end of the second measure is in final form (*shūshikei*), which would constitute *kugire*, or is in continuative form (*ren’yōkei*), in which case the sentence has not been concluded and there can be no *kugire*.

- ¹⁶ The 2007 source excludes two poems Suzuki had previously classified as “equivalent” (*junzuru*) to *kugire*.
- ¹⁷ In the case of Mostow, two of these quasi-*kugire* breaks are irregular: one involves a period coming just before an end-line conjunction (Poem 8); the other contains a question mark followed by a dash so that the sentence can continue grammatically (Poem 29).
- ¹⁸ MacMillan is in general very sparing with his use of exclamation points—a subject that itself might repay deeper analysis.
- ¹⁹ MacMillan’s commentary on this poem indicates that he is following an interpretation according to which the poet’s sleeves turn color because of excessive crying (200). The translation, however, appears to me to say that the poet’s tears have washed the color from his sleeves. Perhaps more care should have been taken here. The note also says that the new color is red, but that implication is hardly evident in the translation.
- ²⁰ The repetition in Carter’s first line also misrepresents the language of the original, which does not contain two separate repetitions.

Works Cited

- Carter, Stephen D. *Traditional Japanese Poetry: An Anthology*. Stanford UP, 1991. For “One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets,” see pp. 203-38.
- Horton, H. Mack. “Making It Old: Premodern Japanese Poetry in English Translation.” *Asia Pacific Translation and Cultural Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2018, pp. 110-204, doi.org/10.1080/23306343.2018.1500980.
- Károlyi, Orsolya カーロイ・オルシヨヤ. *Fujiwara no Teika ni yoru Hyakunin isshu saikaishaku-ron: eiyaku o tōshite miru Teika no kaishaku* 藤原定家による『百人一首』再解釈論—英訳を通して見る定家の解釈 [Fujiwara Teika’s reinterpretation of the *Hyakunin isshu*. Teika’s reinterpretation through the English translations of the *Hyakunin isshu*]. 2018. Doshisha Women’s College of Liberal Arts, PhD dissertation. *National Institute of Informatics*, idnii.ac.jp/1346/00001640.
- MacMillan, Peter. *One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each: A Treasury of Classical Japanese Verse*. Penguin Classics, 2018.

- Mayer, Ingrid Helga マイエル・イングリッド・ヘルガ. *Hyakunin isshu no Ei-Dokuban o tōshite miru waka no hon'yaku* 『百人一首』の英独語版を通して見る和歌の翻訳 [The translation of waka poetry as viewed through English and German editions of the *Hyakunin isshu*] 2016. Hokkaido University, PhD dissertation. *Hokkaido University Collection of Scholarly and Academic Papers*, hdl.handle.net/2115/61577.
- Mostow, Joshua S. *Pictures of the Heart: The Hyakunin Isshu in Word and Image*. U of Hawai'i P, 1996.
- “Notes on Contributors.” *Poetry Durham*, Durham University Department of English Studies, reed.dur.ac.uk/xtf/PoetryDurham/. Originally published in *Poetry Durham*, no. 22, 1989, p. 32.
- Shirane, Haruo. *Classical Japanese: A Grammar*. Columbia UP, 2005.
- Suzuki Hideo 鈴木 日出男. *Hyakunin isshu* 百人一首. Chikuma Bunko, 1990.
- Suzuki Hideo 鈴木 日出男, et al. *Genshoku Ogura hyakunin isshu* 原色 小倉百人一首 [The Ogura hyakunin isshu in full color]. Bun'eidō, 2007.