

BOOK REVIEW by Atsuo Nakagawa:

James David Andrews.

Full Moon Is Rising:

*"Lost Haiku" of Matsuo Basho and
Travel Haiku of Matsuo Basho,
a New Rendering.*

Boston, Branden Press. 1976.
94 pages. \$7.30.

The reviewer is not interested in English haiku written in the conventional 5-7-5 pattern, because tens of thousands of them have so far been produced and yet they have some shortcomings as the English counterparts of Japanese ones as the reviewer states later. However those haiku printed in the above-mentioned book are the translations of the very haiku by Basho, the Father of haiku, and furthermore, the rendering by a competent haikuist, James David Andrews, author of *Five-Seven-Five* (1974) and *Six Hundred Ships* (1975) who has won many prizes in poetry contests, so the reviewer was tempted to read the book and found it an excellent book in the sense that the author has improved Nobuyuki Yuasa's original translations, and that his imaginary "lost haiku" are also very well written. Hence the reviewer thinks it worth reviewing here in Japan.

As its subtitle tells, this is a collection of Mr. Andrews's translations (or rather re-translations of Nobuyuki Yuasa's translations) of Basho's haiku in his travel sketches and the translator's own imaginary English haiku which, he believes, Basho himself would have written "if some of the *prose* jewels in Basho's narrative were transformed into haiku—especially in those places where Basho

could have given us a haiku but did not." Mr. Yuasa's translations are found in his Penguin book of translations: *Basho: The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches* (1st ed., 1966). Even the 'imaginary haiku' which Basho might have written, were composed by Mr. Andrews through reading the Penguin Classics book, not reading the original Basho.

The following comparison of Yuasa's versions and Andrews's would be enough to show how much the latter's versions have been improved or how terse, subtle and poignant they are:

Basho's original: *Samidare o atsumete hayashi mogami gawa.*

Yuasa's version: Gathering all the rains
Of May,
The River Mogami rushes down
In one violent stream.

Andrews's: Gathering May rains,
River Mogami speeds down:
one turbulent stream.

B.: *Natsu-kusa ya tsuwamono-domo ga yume no ato.*

Y.: A thicket of summer grass
Is all that remains
Of the dreams and ambitions
Of ancient warriors.

A.: Brief summer grasses:
of ancient warriors' dreams,
only this remains!

No wonder. Mr. Andrews "is wrestling in another person's sash" (*hito no fundoshi de sumo o toru*) as the Japanese saying goes. That is, he is making use of Mr. Yuasa's translations most of which are very conscientiously and accurately done. Indeed many of Andrews's are much better than Yuasa's and as haiku-like short poems excellent. But still we cannot help noticing in them something quite different from the original Basho as the reviewer mentions in his

Studies on English Haiku (Tokyo: Hokuseido, 1976)—that is, superfluous words, differences of length, rhythm, tone, sound, etc.

And what is worse, since they are the re-rendering of translations, if the original translations are wrongly done, so are Andrews's. for example:

B.: *Kusa-no-to mo sumi-kawaru yo zo hina no ie.*

Y.: Behind this door
Now buried in deep grass,
A different generation will celebrate
The Festival of Dolls.

A.: High grass at my door.
New generation will come;
Festival of Dolls.

As you see, Yuasa's translations is wrong in that "this" must be "that" since Basho meant by "Kusa-no-to" his former "Basho-an" in which he once lived, and not this "Oida-an" he is leaving. "Now" must be "once" by the same reason. "will celebrate" should be "would (have come to live and) be celebrating" since Basho supposed or hoped that a new family would have moved in and be celebrating the Festival of Dolls about the time he was leaving. Hence Andrews's re-rendering is misleading. Besides, in the latter's version, it would be a little too difficult for the reader to see the correlation between "New generation will come;" and "Festival of Dolls." The reader might not be sure whether or not it is the "new generation" that will celebrate the festival. The "Festival" might, he guesses, be held in the community, not in the house, by the community, and not by the new family alone.

Here is another example:

B.: *Shiro geshi ni hane mogu cho no katami kana.*

Y.: Fluttering butterfly
On a white poppy,
He would wrest his wings

For a token of love.

A.:

Butterfly, poppy:

He would tear off his own wings
As a gift of love.

Here the auxiliary verb "would" should be left out and "would wrest" must be replaced by "wrests" since Basho wrote down his feeling *allegorically* in the poem on parting from one of his favorite disciples, Tokoku, perhaps after *actually* seeing a white petal of a poppy drop when a white butterfly flew off the flower. It appeared to Basho as if one of the butterfly's wings fell, and he compared the incident to his actual feeling that he felt like leaving part of his precious belongings for a token of his affection toward the pupil. Furthermore, Andrews's first line "Butterfly, poppy:" does not seem to lead the reader to understanding the real relationship between the two which Basho meant. To the reviewer, Andrews's phrase seems to mean that they were just playing love-making or something. Their relationship we read from the simple two-word phrase seems too superficial or shallow for the deep correlation between the master and the disciple Basho is supposed to have expressed in the haiku. This is another bad example of excessive simplification coming from sticking to the 5-7-5 pattern.

Although we find some flaws as we have seen above, Mr. Andrews has improved many of Yuasa's translations most of which sound like prose. That is something of a deed because Basho's haiku are the models of haiku which countless haikuists and English ones too have been following for hundreds of years. If Mr. Andrews had read the original and re-written Yuasa's, his translations might have been far better and produced some ideal English versions as the reviewer is seeking or wishing to produce in his book on haiku. Besides, some of his "lost haiku" are excellent:

Before shrine altar,
silent moon shines on white sand:
sheen of autumn frost.

*

My mind is possessed:
dreams of moon over far isles.
Sell my house ... and go.