

ESSAY 2 [in Lessons of Japan]:

AGAINST TRANSLATION-AND YET: SEESAWS, PIVOTS, AND PARENTHESES  
(TWO VOICES OF TRANSLATION DISCOURSE A PROPOS OF A HAIKU BY ISSA)  
(1993)

*To George Szanto:  
who went ahead first*

The translations confirm, brilliantly,... that it is impossible to translate.  
de Man, *The Resistance to Theory*.

Geschrieben steht: "Im Anfang war das Wort!"  
Hier stock ich schon! Wer hilft mir weiter fort?  
Ich muss es anders übersetzen,  
Wenn ich vom Geiste recht erleuchtet bin.  
Geschrieben steht: "Im Anfang war der *Sinn*."...  
...Auf einmal seh ich Rat  
Und schreib getrost: Im Anfang war die *Tat*!  
Goethe, *Faust I*

**0. Briefly on Voices, Translating, and Variants**

**0.1.**

tsuyu no yo wa  
tsuyu no yo nagara  
sari nagara  
(Kobayashi Issa)

The world of dew –  
And yet, and yet...  
A world of dew it is indeed  
(tr. Lewis Mackenzie)

The translation by the highly meritorious Lewis Mackenzie is for me not fully satisfactory as an English poem. ***How may one get to and/or justify an improved translation?*** Two discussions (at least) would be necessary for this: a very long and involved discussion of the micro-level, based on the discourse of rhythm and phonetics (the network of alliterative and assonant echoes), and a still complex but briefer discussion of the macro-level, based on a rapid traversing of syntactics in the direction of semantics. The final confluence of both these discourses would have to be found, as always, in the pragmatics between translator/s/ and reader/s/. I can here only deal with an approach to some points of the second discourse, drawn in part from some theoretical meditations but mainly by induction from my translating practice; yet, that very practice is constantly based on the sensual materiality of phonetics, on the sound of the poem, which will be invoked at crucial points.

Thus, two voices speak to each other in my head: the poet-practitioner's, remembering and re-traversing a translation; the (somewhat unsystematic) theoretician's, attempting to make sense of that traversing and make it memorable enough for future guidance (my own and perhaps in some respects a general one). They often interrupt each other, in parentheses and asides. You, the reader, are to judge whether this antiphony may be well-braided, whether this seesaw is pleasurable.

**0.2.** Preliminarily, I want to say (as any self-respecting translator would) that I don't possess – nor am I possessed by – any fixed rules for translating; I don't know how anybody should systematically regulate his/her translation process; I only know (at that, imperfectly) how I translate. In this essay I'm trying to find out more about it. This is a craft, i.e. an art at least as

much as a science; or, it is tropological, topological, and associational at least as much as conceptual, linear, and causally sequential. When I ask the question underlined in 0.1, I'm not speaking about the actual translation process. I speak about a critical a **posteriori** justification of a translation. The kami (Muse) may be the actual translator; but somebody (ideally, the translator-secretary to whom the kami dictated) must be able (as Milton almost said) to justify the ways of kami to people. Blind beliefs, even into a poetry kami, are dangerous.

**0.3.** My final preliminary move is to put forward a few terms which may somewhat illuminate the towering Babylonian obscurity of some discussions about variants and invariants in any textual interpretation, including translation. My position, which I can here only set out as a hypothesis to be justified by its yield (cf. Suvin "Weiss's"), is that there is a limit to interpretations (e.g. translations) but not to uses of a given text. I propose, rather gingerly, to distinguish between **variants** (V), **adaptations** (A), and **rewrites** (R). A **variant** would be a translation preserving the central structural features (invariants) of the text being translated; though just what are invariants in a text and will often remain open to dispute, I am not nihilistic enough to doubt that for given purposes a standpoint this can be ascertained. (For general epistemological and mnemotechnical reasons, I doubt that the number of invariants – whose determination is always a concrete pragmatic negotiation between a historical subject and a historical object – can be much larger than 7 or much smaller than 3.) **Any translation** is therefore a **variant**. There is no definitive, absolute or "fully faithful" (never mind "true") interpretation, not even when a poet translates herself: the creature is independent of the creator (indeed, in the wiser East Asian tradition, as discussed in Essay 1, creations happen either without or at least through, not by, creators). This is not to say that **for a given purpose and audience standpoint** some translation variant may not become a definitive one. We can therefore – IF we clearly foreground such a purpose for a given audience – still merrily go on evaluating and allotting degrees of "goodness" to a translation. Only the pretence at a-historical absoluteness will have been well lost.

An **adaptation** can be defined as a translation which uses only some central invariants of a text, but such as are sufficient to establish its "family likeness" to other members of that family. The intention of an adaptation is as a rule significantly different from that of the text being adapted, because the ideal audience has significantly changed. For example, I am arguing in Essay 5 that one of Arthur Waley's famous *Nô* translations is a clear and acknowledged adaptation, and ought therefore not to be dissected for philological blame; indeed, his *Tanikô* text borders on a **rewrite**, something which is no longer, strictly speaking, an interpretation but a use of some elements from the anterior structure as a semi-finished product – Brecht's "buying of brass" from a brass instruments' orchestra, or the medieval Romans' use of the Forum monuments for lintels of their huts – for a structure of a new kind, belonging to another "family." Only a few invariants of the original structure may be left (at least one must be left, or it is not even a rewrite), but they are used for a radically differing purpose.

For those who like – as I do – the elegance of abbreviated notation borrowed from mathematics (and without going into the post-Barthesian realization that **all** texts are pragmatic constructs for a given purpose of dissemination, which any student of theatre always knew! – cf. at least Taylor and Warren), this can be encapsulated as:

**If** a text has  $n$  defining invariants, **then** the range of invariants in the above cases will be:

$$V = n$$

$$n > A > 1$$

$$n-1 > R > 0$$

Surprisingly, this would seem to validate a basic logical distinction between interpretations and translations striving to be "faithful" (V) and those striving to be "free" (A and R) – but I suspect that we are here in a semantic trap caused by this monogamous and monotheistic terminology. One of the advantages of delving into East Asian cultures is to realize that their matrix is non-monotheistic, so that this whole problematic can be cheerfully downplayed in the case of, e.g., Issa. (It ought to be totally disregarded – but being a European poet painfully liberating himself from lay monotheism, I am unable to forget it in the present essay.)

## 1. The Syntactic Structure of Issa's Haiku

**1.0.** To begin with, the classical short Japanese verse forms (tanka and haiku), incorporating as they do the immemorial and all-pervasive rhythm of 5+7 (+5+7+...) breath-units, have the problem of avoiding monotony, which I believe to have been in good part responsible for the extinction of the longer *chôka* form. This avoidance is a matter of semantic variety, the "Western" student of poetry might be reasonably inclined to answer. But the history of the tanka and in particular of the haiku is in fact – at least until the 19th Century – one of a rather narrow semantic and thematic range delved into ever more deeply, with ever more subtle nuancing. While semantics, no doubt, necessarily remain of fundamental import, the syntactic disposition too grows quite important in such short forms. They play off against each other a basic – though sometimes breached – semantic tendency to division into two parts (**rensô**, "association [of semantic domains?]") vs. a prosodic division into five (tanka) resp. three (haiku) lines. (This is independent of calligraphic conventions, e.g. of the fact that the classical Japanese wrote the haiku predominantly in one vertical line, which is – to my mind mistakenly – taken by people such as the well-known translator and critic Hiroaki Sato<sup>1</sup> as an argument for writing modern, typed haiku in one line, including even English translations ["Haiku" 6] – which are thereby totally destroyed as poetry, see 4.1 below)

The particular haiku under discussion here is by the great Issa – the most plebeian and thus the most disputed of the "canonical" masters (cf. the strictures by Keene 364-69, and Miner, "Poetry" 428). It can be syntactico-semantically construed in two complementary ways, which are, simultaneously, divergent and yet overlapping.

**1.1.** The first way is to rearrange the three lines so as to point out that this poem not only thrives on the tension between bisection and trisection but it clearly foregrounds, nay flaunts, the bisection. A different layout can show this:

Tsuyu no yo wa tsuyu no yo  
nagara sari nagara

In fact, Issa here takes the structural master-tension of haiku as a model to replay on a smaller scale in each half of the little poem, creating double parallelisms in it. Though they are immediately evident, they may be seen even better in a yet less orthodox layout:

Tsuyu no yo	wa
tsuyu no yo	
nagara	sari
nagara	

This is a kind of *seesaw structure*, as in the children's playground device. More, it is a *system* of seesaws: there is an overall seesaw with the pivot a pause in the middle, between "yo" and "nagara," and there are on top of it two subsidiary seesawlets with the pivot in "wa" resp. "sari"

(both of them unsemanticized words, syntactic markers of which only the function can be, *mit Ach und Krach*, paraphrased!). Notice how Issa avoids monotony by subtle variation of breath-unit lengths: 9:0:8 in the overall division, 4:1:4 and 3:2:3 in the subsidiary divisions (it would be fun to plot this on a graph but I leave that pleasure to the gentle reader's imagination). This system is so sublimely (and shamelessly, cheekily) simple, it can be algorithmized:

If (tsuyu no yo) = A, (nagara) = B, (wa) and (sari) = p  
 then: **A wa A, B sari B**; and the notation for the poem would be:

A (p1) A/B (p2) B (breath units: 4:1:4 + 3:2:3)

This is what one might call an *inversely symmetrical* structure, in which the pivots are *specular* to each other, as are A and B.

So: *As for A it is A, (yet there is) B; and repeating this (but again there is) B.*

This little poem can thus (among other things) be read almost as a foregrounding of Gerard Hopkins's definition of verse as "speech wholly or partially repeating the same figure of sound" (189: Issa and Hopkins share a combination of detailed thusness [*haecceitas*] and outrageousness).

**1.2.** Yet given that "nagara" is – as all Japanese particles – postpositional, another strong reading of Issa's syntagmatic flow demands that breaks occur after it, and that therefore Issa's haiku be read either as two very asymmetrical units, each ending in "nagara," or – more reasonably – following the orthodox 5:7:5 scheme (which in a number of haiku became both prosodic and semantic, though I don't believe this is the case here):

Tsuyu no yo	wa
tsuyu no yo	nagara
sari	nagara
A	wa
A / B	
sari	B

The axis of symmetry or mirroring, around which this whole poem pivots as a door on a hinge, is the pause indicated by my slash. The poem can be written and read vertically (as it would have been written in Japanese – though of course usually as a single line, and if divided into several lines then these run vertical from right to left) as:

↓	A	↓	B
	wa		sari
	A		B

So: *While A is the case indeed, (yet notwithstanding, there is a non-A); and redoubling the notwithstanding (, there is a non-A).*

The part in parenthesis is an unsemanticized but forceful two-tier syntactic indication of reversal, a kind of "counter-ellipse" (if I may coin a term), which not only explains Mackenzie's attempt at the final line but almost enforces a pause – in Mackenzie the elliptical dots – in any self-respecting translation. Such a procedure of introducing into the translation a zero morpheme, as Benvenistean linguists would say (whether the pause be graphically represented by three dots, a dash, or indeed an open-ended colon), is a well-known expedient of English haiku translation practice, stemming from the need to render the impact of the Japanese a-

semantic **kireji** words (see 2.3 below) Or it might be better to widen the meaning of morpheme according to its root-sense of "shaping element" and call this pause, with its clear intensificatory (and here also adversative) effect, a shift from linguistic to paralinguistic morpheme that relies strongly on the context of a supposed voice, with its intonation etc. Still best it would be to call this, forsaking the prison-house of linguistics, a shift from the semantic to the syntactic signifying (here, of a single sememe). At any rate, the pause is in this poem a parallel or analogy to the original a-semantic Japanese lexemes discussed. And truly, if paradoxically, the a-semantic dots are so much more polysemic than almost any faithful (monosemic or at best bisemic) translation. (I shall attempt to – partially – break out of the reliance on dots by a shift or **priëm** almost as outrageous as Issa's technical tricks: the switch to another language.)

However, alongside its striving for polysemous sentimental expressivity, classical Japanese poetry often has a clear logical (and syntactic) structure, "what Japanese refer to as 'reasoning'," e.g. although/yet (Miner, *Introduction* 92). Issa's poem is a variant of this which I would call "absolutist," since it makes its point not by logical foregrounding but by logical implication (so much harder to refute). Its syntactic appositions, more current in the Japanese, read almost like a paradoxical anti-syllogism or (personal Amidist rather than public Zen) **koan**, and I have had to add "while" to make my point.

## 2. The Semantic Structure of Issa's Haiku

**2.1.** But of course, I am at least half-cheating: the "notwithstanding" and especially the "non-A" in 1.2 are already not only syntactics but also semantics. The "cheating" – better, polysemy – is actually in the original. In it almost every word is tricky, but in particular "nagara" and "sari." Of "nagara"'s main meanings at least two are the **coordinative** or parallel "at the same time as" and the **adversative** "although, however, notwithstanding" (both similar in some far-off ways to the English "while"). Bashô's haiku "tsuki hayashi/ kozue wa ame wo/ mochi nagara" ("the moon fleets fast,/ foliage atop the trees/ holding the rain," tr. Ueda, *Bashô* 163) uses it clearly in the first sense of "at the same time treetops are holding the rain," though usually a pretended coordinative use of a really adversative device is a normal stylistic trick of estranging emphasis. This can be found in Bashô's immediately following haiku "yase nagara/ wari naki kiku no/ tsubomi kana" ("emaciated/ yet somehow the chrysanthemums/ begin to bud," tr. Ueda, *ibidem* 165), where the "yet" means "yet in spite of all that." "Sari"'s main meaning (if this is still the right term) seems to be syntactic, denoting a referral to what has already been said, a posture of repetition. (True, very many Japanese lexemes have homophones – e.g., "yo" means "world," "night," "petal," and "stalk interval between bamboo nodes," so that "tsuyu no yo" is a standard poetico-theological pun involving a dewdrop on some plant [see the prose passage cited in 2.2], which is however in Issa's haiku quite recessive; thus, there is at least one homophone of "sari" that is fully semanticized, but not pertinent in this context.) "Sari nagara" together, finally, is what I called above a reduplication of "however, notwithstanding," emphasizing it by surplus phonetico-semantic mass as well as repetition; it can only be translated as a single sememe, and when put into **rômajî** script (i.e. Japanese in the Latin alphabet) it can be transliterated as one word (Keene does so when quoting this very haiku, 365; cf. also Shimazaki 121, in the Nô play *Takasago*).

Thus, while a potentially good beginning, phonetics and syntax by themselves (the sound and phrase-construction relationships of parts of a verbal whole) or syntagmatics by themselves (the way a verbal whole flows through time) are obviously not sufficient. We need to go on with a semantic discussion: What do A and B above mean?

**2.2, with a digression on attachment and detachment:** I take it that there is a *semantic* seesaw and inversion at work here beside (and validating) the syntactic seesaw and inverted mirror. Simply (since all great poetry is what we have learned to understand as being simple, though as a rule it was not simple for its first readers: its richness is decipherable only after one or more generations of critical readers have reflected and written on it):

$$B = - A$$

where A = ("Buddhist") *evanescence*, B = ("Shinto") *persistence*.

Why is evanescence in the Japanese cultural context Buddhist (or better: best formulated in, and subsequently carrying echoes from, Buddhist texts) and persistence Shintoist (or better: best formulated in, and subsequently carrying echoes from, Shinto texts)? I could answer that this needs a long and intricate exfoliation, and I am quite unsure of my competence for it but I am quite sure it would burst the bounds of the present essay. Furthermore, all such analytic binaries necessarily simplify social history, and perhaps more gravely than usual in this particular case, for two reasons. One is that syncretic associationism is "a fundamental element of the Japanese tradition," and that probably its most intricate case are the more than millennial symbiotic meanderings of Shintoism and Buddhism; the other is that it is inevitably coloured by post-Meiji research which followed the political decision to split this symbiosis and adopt a Shinto redefined by the new state as its official ideology (see Grapard 8-9). However – rushing in where Bodhisattvas fear to tread – I shall here at least glance at what I'd like to offer as Issa's variant of "the double mood" in the *longue durée* of Japanese literature – "the coexistence of two sets of values and attitudes," e.g.: "a Buddhist negation of passions versus a humanistic affirmation of them" (Ueda, "Taxonomy" 97); "Shinto renewal and the Buddhist desire to escape from the world..." (Plutschow 152).

Simplifying (necessarily, but almost unbearably) the welter of Japanese Buddhist sects and nuances in more than 1,000 years, I suggest that the devout Issa would have had impressed upon him some central features of the Buddhist stance toward life, including poetry. One of them was traditionally a certain hesitance, if not strain, when faced with the materialist sensuality of art, seen as potentially deviant and misleading, thus socio-ethically transgressive (which, as argued in Essay 1, is mistranslated into European languages as sinful, thus in the following quote) unless its composition was carried out in the right spirit – e.g. of teaching the vanity of earthly attachments. One of the most salient formulations I found for these reflections reads:

One cannot live long in this world; life is more evanescent than the bubbles on the water or the dewdrops on a blade of grass. From the depths of my heart I wish to blot out the sins of my past life and to become a Buddha in times to come. **My** hatred of the world is unceasing. Please teach me to see the cherry blossoms in Spring and maple leaves in Fall without feeling their fragrance or enjoying their hues, and to look upon the morning dew or evening Moon knowing the transience of the world. (quoted in Plutschow 164; *ibidem* ff. and 177ff. there are many further examples)

True, the fairly obscure poet-priest quoted here went on to dedicate the above prayer to a famous Shinto shrine; but then the Shinto-Buddhist institutional complementarity and pragmatic symbiosis was an ancient, dynamic, and intricate one already in his far-off medieval time. Nonetheless, the native Shinto structures of thought had no love for simple one-way evanescence, they were concerned with repristination (Goethe's **stirb und werde**). "Japanese Buddhism formally required one to give up the illusions of this world in order to gain the eternal reality; this sacrifice was said to leave [the devout person] with no heart for the things of this

world"; while on the contrary "from [Shintoism] the Japanese derived a pleasure in their world, a sense of being really at home in it, that people of few other countries can know" (Miner, *Introduction* 106 and 13).

Now Issa was at that point of the late Edo period a deeply religious follower of the popular- and thus rather tolerant of people's everyday interests – Shinshû (True Pure Land) Buddhist sect. On the one hand, he could sometimes, in his poorer products, give forth conventional Buddhist opinion just as simplified as the passage quoted above. E.g.:

"Tsuyu chiru ya/ musai kono yo ni/ yô nashi to" (in Henderson 50; improvised translation: A dewdrop disappears:/ It's dirty, this world, in it/ I have no business.)

And in the very first prose section, which sets the tone of his most famous work, the *haibun* (mixed prose and haiku) poetic diary for 1819, *Ora ga haru*, Issa develops at some length the necessity for teaching and understanding the first and for him obviously the basic tenet of Buddhism – the transience (**mujô**) of all things (adding, characteristically, that he himself is still too caught up in the "dust of this world" – cf. Yuasa's generally free and not very useful version of *Ora ga haru*, 38). Issa's **haibun** volume is framed (at beginning and end) and shot through by explicit invocations of (Amidist) Buddhism. For another, more poetic example: haiku no. 104 in this volume reads:

"Hasu no ha ni/ kono yo no tsuyu wa/ nagarikeri" (Dombrady 68, Yuasa's one-sided adaptation 74; improvised translation: On the flower of the lotus/It is the dewdrop of this world/ That looks deformed.)

In orthodox Buddhism "any attachment to this world, even that of parents for their children, was a threat to salvation, was a 'darkness of the heart' (**kokoro no yami**)" (Miner, *Introduction* 14): the world is at best an illusory way-station and at worst a disgusting snare on the road to the liberation from the dangerous passions, in nirvana.

Yet the "tsuyu no yo" poem crowns Issa's relating the death of his favourite little daughter in this volume, in which his love for her is the central and most important motif. This earthly passion of his is presented as clearly stronger than (though not incompatible with) the recurrent religious frame. For historically, since the 13th Century it was "the peasantry that formed the nucleus of what came to be known as the True Sect of Pure Land Buddhism" (Varley 90), because peasants were by their class situation existentially (though probably not morally) in greatest need of salvation. Consubstantially with the Amidist believer, Issa is an observant Japanese peasant deeply attuned to, involved in, and in sympathy with the immemorial, Shinto-formulated cycle of rooted seasons and generations. In particular, he is deeply attached to his native soil and his home (the "ties of consanguineous...[and] territorial community," Kato 43; cf. Dombrady 45). And yet again, this in good part citified poet saw the village, in another seesaw, as "both the unbearable world of 'greed, evil and selfishness' and at the same time a promise of safety that he could rely on" (Kato *ibid.*).

Such factors led Issa to what I have stenographically termed the "Buddhist" and "Shintoist" stances toward impermanence – retreating from the evil **versus** embracing (as well as mourning the passing of) the familiar safety of material phenomena; "in this sense [of life as a creative force] Shinto contrasts sharply with Buddhism, which takes a darkly pessimistic view of the world as a place of suffering and misery" (Varley 8):

Indeed, one could hardly imagine two more different approaches. Buddhism, with its stress on the sorrows of the earthly condition, its rejection of transitory

pleasures, its preoccupation with decay and death, and its offer of release by retirement from the world and a modification of the human consciousness, would appear in many ways to be the very antithesis of Shintoism, whose central themes are joyful acceptance of the natural world and gratitude for its bounty, coupled with a horror of illness and death.... Yet during most of Japan's history... the relationship between them has been one of peaceful coexistence – in the proper sense of the term. (Morris 106)

In a brief overview, where I'm forced to slight their actual blends and nuances, these stances can be seen as opposite poles on the same globe: in a Buddhist-derived approach we are well rid of this dirty world of painful passion, while in a Shinto-derived one we are to acknowledge perishability only with sadness and longing for, and an acutely increased sense for the preciousness of, the terminally threatened or lost people and things. "[A]ttachment even to one's child risks one's salvation": even rightly loving the most endearing things, people lose the chance of Nirvana; and yet such things "can be truly attractive, and the poet's dilemma is that he knows and feels the contradiction" (Miner, *Introduction* 104).

Nonetheless, "the Japanese sought harmony rather than conflict between the two religions" (Miner, *Introduction* 150), and some of the best Japanese poems have managed to stress the unity of the globe rather than the opposition of the poles. I'll cite here only one, by one of the tanka patron-saints of the haiku tradition, the great 12th-Century poet-priest Saigyô, because this Buddhist lover of the Moon and cherries provides the antidote to the dogmatic prose passage cited earlier:

Why should my heart  
still harbour  
this passion for cherry flowers,  
I who thought  
I had put all that behind me?  
(transl. Burton Watson, 39)

(Yet of course, Saigyô too was ambivalent about the transient world; another tanka of his reads: "If I've truly renounced it,/ I should show how I abhor/ this troubled world – / for my sake, cloud over/ moon of the autumn night!" – transl. B. Watson, 208.)

In sum, "Buddhism brought...a weight of moral law, directed at man, so heavy that it might overburden his heart....[E]ven a mother's love for her child was thought by the austere to be an obstacle to salvation....And yet, and yet – parents will love their children, men and women fall in love, and life is dear. Buddhism could be put aside as easily as Christianity, or its happier sides might be what men chose to look upon." (Miner, *Introduction* 150-51). A tanka by the appealing poetess Izumi Shikibu reads:

Rather than think  
That one's life is but the transient dew  
Soon formed and gone,  
Why not fully devote one's mind  
To the chrysanthemum and its long life?  
(transl. Earl Miner; in Miner ed. 123)

Therefore, it has often been argued that the specifically Japanese Buddhism became "strongly imbued with an [active behavior]... tied up with its this-worldliness" (Nakamura 367, and cf. the whole chapter "The Acceptance of Phenomenalism" 350ff.); that "[t]he Shinto animistic heritage clearly affected the way Japanese understood Buddhism" (Miner, *Poetics* 93). A long



tradition, which goes from translations of Bai Juyi through Saigyô's and Bashô's hesitations, maintained – usually with "lingering misgivings" (Ueda, *Bashô* 4) – that the Way of Poetry (**kadô**) could be reconciled with the Way of Buddhism (**butsudô**). And although Issa has in Japan often been blamed by orthodox Buddhists for his excessive "softness" or attachment (cf. Stryk xix), he is firmly in this poetically very fertile tradition.

**2.3.** I can here only hint at the intertextuality between the "tsuyu no yo" haiku and *Ora ga haru* as a whole (never mind other works by Issa or similar works by others), and I confess I delved into it more deeply only after I had done and discussed my translation in the following sections. Nonetheless, I was pleasantly surprised to find that **tout se tient**, that Issa seems to have built the whole *Ora ga haru* on a system of balances or seesaws (though I wouldn't go so far as to call it an "obvious and deliberate opposition between the sacred and the secular...", Yuasa 28). This supplies a historical framework for my point-like intuition. It is Issa's ripe attempt at happiness in old age; the very first haiku tries to strike such a balance and indicate the "middle" pivot: "Medetasa mo/ chûgurai nari/ ora ga haru" (improvised translation: "A middling happiness/ Is bestowed by/ My new Spring and New Year" – the beginning of year and of Spring being the same in the lunar calendar). In this vein, and here surely with full deliberation, the Amidist **framework** is in this volume balanced by attachment to his daughter as **centre and pivot**. The ubiquitous Japanese **topos** of the evanescent dewdrop-world (cf. Goff 68 on it and on its twin **yume no yo**, world as a dream) is used several times in Issa's volume. Yet when he reactualizes it, Issa simultaneously ("And yet, and yet...") refuses to hate this world, the blossoms and leaves with their colours, the famous small animals and insects on which many of his best haiku centre (cf. Appendix to this essay); and (of course, above all) he refuses to stop loving, and mourning for, his child. The height of his attachment is the extraordinary passage in the long descriptions of prose section 11, which is an apotheosis of little Satojo. Or, in fact, it is Issa's straightforward substitution for Amida's Western Paradise or Pure Land – at the rebirth into which the believer is met by Amida and 25 attendant Bodhisattvas in a Welcoming Ceremony which was the most popular icon of this religion (cf. Dombrady 104 and 108-11, Frédéric 197-200, and Varley 66-67) – of the Earthly Paradise of fatherly love:

...While I was caught up in this enchanting moment, I fancied that I might see her old enough to dance with long hair parted in the middle, which would give me much more joy than the "welcoming music" of the twenty-five Bodhisattvas....

At the same time, and conversely (a seesaw goes up and down, up and down), Issa's warm sympathy and delight in the small and weak forms of life fuses with a recognition of their inevitable lack of stay (the Buddhist **hakanasa**). In the "tsuyu no yo" haiku that then follows upon this passage, he sincerely finds refuge and a measure of peace in a desire for compassionate but cool Buddhahood. This is the inner reason for the "arrested balance" of this poem: its peculiar tensile strength, which carries out Bashô's desideratum for haiku of "a hammered sheet of gold," is a fusion of strong detachment and strong attachment (the latter being a ripely pondered and anguished denial of that no doubt desirable detachment: "Yet still, yet still...").

**2.4.** The two syntactic structures, skeletons or schemas underlined in 1.1 and 1.2 translate thus into a first semantic approximation of:

"As for the world as [= being in the nature of] (a) dew(drop), yes it is a world as (a) dew(drop); while recalling this, at the same time, however - - -" [or: "yet all the same - - -"]

And at the same time:

"It is the case that the world [is in the nature of] (a) dew(drop); yet while and notwithstanding that [the world is such,] nonetheless [it is also in some ways quite other]"

Remarkably (as all my clumsy fill-ins indicate), this is a verbless poem. While it is frequent for either the third or the first line in a haiku to be verbless, the oscillating dynamics of Issa's haiku repose (so far as I can see) entirely upon the feedback loop between two logically (in Aristotelian logic) contradictory but in Japanese cultural history richly complementary stances (standpoints, views, angles of vision). Again, this is Issa taking to furthest, exasperated limits a general tendency in Japanese arts and a particular haiku balance. In general, the principle of **ma** (very roughly, highly meaningful though apparently empty interval in music, painting or "between the lines," the concave to the convex of explicit expression) means in the traditionally short Japanese poetic forms something like ***capturing the suggestive drift that goes beyond the lines***. This is at its clearest in haiku, which rely almost overwhelmingly on it. The haiku further adds to the **ma** principle a dominant relationship and feedback tension between two semantic domains (**niku isshô** = two parts [make] one whole), which entails changing angles of vision. As discussed above, this haiku of Issa's certainly practices **niku isshô** with a vengeance. At the same time, it epitomizes a tradition stemming from the medieval tankas in which such suggestive, only partly conceptual resonances (**yojô**) were always present and at some periods elevated to "the supreme consideration of the poet" (Varley 88). As Kamo no Chômei, prominent medieval writer and poet, put it in his variant on a precept formulated (in Ki no Tsurayuki's canonic Preface to the *Kokinshû*) at the dawn of this poetic tradition :

It is only when many meanings are compressed into a single word, when the depths of feelings are exhausted yet not expressed, when an unseen world hovers in the atmosphere of the poem, when the mean and common are used to express the elegant, when a poetic conception of rare beauty is developed to the fullest extent in a style of surface simplicity – only then, when the conception is exalted to the highest degree and "the words are too few," will the poem, by expressing, one's feelings in this way, have the power of moving Heaven and Earth... (*Mumyôshô*, cited in Miner, *Introduction* 102; cf. Kenkô's famous, equally canonic passage: "Leaving something incomplete makes it interesting, and gives one the feeling there is room for growth," 70).

### 3. Some Practical Looks at Translation Theory: "Faithful" Translation? "Free" Translation?

How does one discuss a translation on the above basis?

**3.1.** First, Mackenzie's "The world of dew" (or better "This world of dew") is awful, I think. I irresistibly associate to a watery world, something like "the adventures of Alice in a dewdrop" (or, for Russian readers, the adventures of Yan Larry's Karik and Valya; or, for science-fiction readers, the adventures of James Blish's miniaturized humans in his story "Surface Tension"). I also associate it with seeing the macrocosm in the microcosm, a wet variant of William Blake's "To see the world in a grain of sand." That is not at all what Issa's poem is getting at: polytheists

don't foreground the micro/macrocasm metaphor in the way of Christian Middle Ages. To avoid this, "dew" must be put into the adjectival position, preceding "world." This has the further advantage of enforcing between the long vowel of "dew" and the semi-vowel beginning of "world" a pause, suitable for the reader's semantic focussing.

Second, "tsuyu" must, I believe, be translated as something like "*fleeting* dew." Dew is, of course, evanescent in our climate too (we would have problems only translating it into Inuit or perhaps Russian, where it may not evaporate but freeze, and the cosmology has to use a quite different metaphor). But still dew doesn't have in English the historical Japanese overtones, it's not for us a stock **epitheton ornans** of world, "this dew world." These (strongly Buddhist) overtones can be found in almost any writer of the 1,000 pre-modern years (and indeed after Issa, e.g. in Shiki's diary for 1899, see Miner ed. 202). To give just the first example that comes my way, here's the learned Fujiwara Kiyosuke's 12th-Century variation (the latter part of a tanka in his *Fukurozôshi – The Book of Folded Pages*), put into the mouth of the deity Kannon: "The world is but a dew[drop]/ On top of a morning glory" (Plutschow 176; the morning-glory flower [**asagao**] is itself a symbol of transience often associated with dewdrops, and Issa notes that his little daughter dies "together with the fading of the asagao"). Obversely, to translate it as a "dew-y" world would mean "fresh," "innocent," and similar sentimental stuff: Rousseau rather than Dôgen. So I must (paradoxically) strengthen or undergird the dew's frailty, recall the fleetingness of the dew. (Another instance of Japanese homophony, the adverbial use of "tsuyu" in the meaning of "fully, absolutely," may strengthen my case.)

A line reading "This dew world" is too abrupt anyway. Now I don't necessarily believe (I used to) that English haiku must have 5+7+5 syllables. My disbelief has two good reasons, each of which would be sufficient: 1/ an English syllable is NOT a Japanese **onji** or **ji-on** (mora, sound or breath unit; cf. Henderson 14-15) – e.g., "hakkô" (= publication) would be 2 English syllables but 4 **onji** (the first "k" or glottal stop and the macron or vowel prolongation count as an extra breath-unit each; if I'm allowed an anecdote: when I was teaching German to the Japanese, "Puppe" was invariably pronounced as "Pu-pö-pe," three **onji**); 2/ an English poem is NOT a Japanese poem – a fact a number of haiku theoreticians quite amazingly fail to take into account (and this is not simply a matter of very different semantics: in English, the logic of rhythm is quite different, the phonetics richer and more difficult, etc.). Nonetheless, the line "This dew world" is too short because the two necessary stresses (I still believe an English haiku should ideally have 2+3+2 stresses) are not buttressed by sufficient unstressed phonetic mass – if you wish, the syllable count is too low – without some addition, some spacing to give rhythmical relief to the harsh stresses.

All of this amounts to a procedure of explicating (amplifying, teasing out presuppositions and transforming them into positions, cf. Ducrot and Angenot) the original, and could be defended as orthodox "equivalent" or *faithful translation*.

**3.2.** Most important, there seems to be no literal translation possible for "B = B." Lewis Mackenzie has "And yet, and yet...". In its antithetic terseness, the "nagara sari-nagara" implies volumes. E.g. (and just for a beginning): "there is another side, a complement, to this well-known, and correct, cliché [of 'dewdrop world']"; "there is another side or aspect that balances it." In fact, the B=B holds A=A in an *arrested* and indeed also a **mise en abyme** balance – the syntax, the parallelism, vouches for the former, the semantics of "nagara sari-nagara" for the latter. The seesaw is locked into a tense or vibrating horizontal position, reaffirmed by the reduplication. Or: the mirrored inversion, the right-hand vertical in 1.2, is in its fugitive and implicit but still strongly suggestive way – enlisting the reader's oriented speculations – just as

powerful as the orthodox left-hand version. It is advisable to explicate such antithesis in the time-honoured Japanese fashion of equating syntax and semantics (which is in haiku done by all the **kireji**, "cutting words," or better, pause morphemes and intonation markers – most frequently **kana** and **ya**, but also **keri**, **nu**, **ran**, **tsu**, **zu**... – see the haikus 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11 in the Appendix). In that sense it would only be going a bit (but not too much) farther to say "But still it lasts –."

This procedure may still be defended as being in the grey zone, or on the borderline, between faithful translation and adaptation. One could call it a *free translation*. Both so-called free and faithful translations I would – following the doubting of any univocally fixed sense that informs 0.3 – call variants.

**3.3.** However, my conclusion would be that in poetry there is no such thing as an "exact" (in the meaning of one-to-one) translation ("exact" is a scientific synonym for the theological-cum-romantic "faithful"). The line between "faithful" and "free" translation is thin, permeable, constantly transgressed. In Eco's terms, poetry is not translated from one dictionary to another (that is an optical illusion) but from one encyclopedia to another: and *the target encyclopedia is always a contemporary one!*

And yet, the question remains: Even if there may be no exact translation, is there *inexact* (faithless) translation? If yes, what is it?

#### **4. Further Practical Looks at Translation Theory: What Is "Fidelity?" What Creative Falsification?**

**4.1.** Any translation I can think of after Mackenzie's has to build on his strong points and cannibalize them: stealing is the sincerest flattery in culture. He sensitively noted the semantically nice English-language nuance between the definite and indefinite article, but his ear was unsatisfactory. His translation sounds as if Issa were a somewhat skeptical philosopher, closer to the *Dao de jing* than to Basho.

By the way, some other well-known translations are in the same unsatisfactory vein, only more so.

E.g.:

The world of dew is	The world of dew
The world of dew	Is the world of dew,
A world of dew...and yet,	And yet...

(Bownas and Thwaite 122; Yuasa 104); and these are among the best translations. Hiroaki Sato's

"The world of dew is, yes, a world of dew, but even so" (Sato and Watson, eds., 399)

is, as usual, very correct, but his mania for translating haiku into a single English line makes this, as usual, totally unpoetic – just a prose line.<sup>2</sup>

Of course such (let me call it) "conceptual" translating is right as far as it goes: but it does not go nearly far enough; as every half-truth, it is the most complete untruth. In analog terms, Mackenzie might be at 75%; in digital terms, he is at 0 not 1. The apparently small touch of adding "fleeting" (but nothing is really small in poetry, and especially in haiku!) might (I hope) remedy this.

For, nonetheless, 75% shouldn't just be thrown out. Mackenzie has nicely shifted the subject-identifying and emphasizing particle, the determiner "wa" (usually literally translated into the clumsy but most nearly approximative "as for") partly into the interplay of articles and partly into the addition of "indeed." My further addition, I trust, suddenly effects a phonetic and rhythmic valorization of this shift; and whatever is in verse not justified by phonetico-rhythmic means is unjustified. So I think I have a translation of the A=A part that – strengthening the nuance between the definite and indefinite article – ties it into the phonetically nice agglomeration of dentals and nasals, also of short and long [i]s (etc.), and that can do:

This fleeting-dew world	Tsuyu no yo wa
A fleeting-dew world, indeed	tsuyu no yo

The comma (small pause) before "indeed" is my not quite satisfactory attempt at suggesting the further seesaw between the two meanings approximated to at the end of section 2.

However, just as I didn't like Mackenzie's proposal for the tricky B=B part, I don't like my first try, "But still it lasts": the "but still" sounds a bit too negative (arising out of the polysemic nature of "still," which has among other things a temporal and a causal main meaning, and not quite forgetting the connotative associations to "unmoving"). If I'm not totally mistaken about Issa's rich balance, the central stance of this small but not little poem cannot plump either for evanescence or for permanence, it can be neither exclusively "Buddhist" nor "Shintoist" "But *while* it lasts..." is more neutral (or, better, ambiguous, di-semic, two-sided or two-faced), less one-sided.

Yet at this point I have to face a further, and perhaps final, important problem of translation: one translates not only from language to language but also from epoch to asynchronous epoch (Bloch), from one possible world to another.

**4.2. A digression on season-words:** The above is one of the reasons for my objection to the "season-words" (**kigo** or **kidai** – roughly: overt inclusion of a repertory of elements taken as directly referring to a season) being treated and enforced as indispensable in 20th-Century English (or for that matter, 20th-Century Japanese) haiku. This is not a very new discussion: it was ongoing when in the 1910s Ogiwara Seisensui, no mean **haijin** (haiku-poet – and by the way, editor and biographer of Issa), and his *Sôun*-magazine group proclaimed the superfluity of season-words (**kidai muyôron**) for Japanese haiku. Nonetheless, in my direct experience it is not only a majority of the general public but also a large and powerful wing of the **haijin** community that still believes in and enforces an obligatory use of season-words.

My reason for refusing this is simple: Bashô (and Issa) wandered on foot through Japan and lived in a hut permeable to outer air. To the contrary, I don't know which season I'm living in. That is, I've seen on TV that Fall is coming. My forebrain knows it but my hindbrain (or whatever you call the part whose collaboration is indispensable for writing poetry), my kami doesn't know it. How could it? I use either heating or air-conditioning; I walk less than a mile per day; I almost always write and read by electric light. Etc. Now I'm not putting any value-judgements on this state of affairs. Maybe it means we are alienated from nature, and our haiku

(including our translations) will necessarily be worse than Bashô's or Issa's. Maybe, on the contrary, it means that there is no pure "nature" (17th or 19th-Century Japan already differed quite considerably from medieval or Stone Age Japan), and obversely that there always is a certain kind of nature which nostalgic **passéistes** proclaim as unnatural in comparison to the former epoch's concept of nature. I myself believe the second alternative. But whatever we may believe, we cannot write poetry by fiat from past ages. If season-words come "naturally" (according to OUR, quite different nature), fine. If not, they are fake (i.e. – mere conceptualized ideas): and the kami is put to instant flight by ideological fakery. To make season-words a **requirement** of modern haiku (English or Japanese), and to say that a poem answering to all parameters of a haiku but lacking a season-word should not be called a haiku but, say, a **senryu** – a comment I've frequently heard as a poet –, seems to me idealistic in the bad sense of that term: ahistorical and immaterial.

As the eminent cultural historian Tsurumi Shunsuke politely phrased it (in a book whose outline was, in the good old times of well-subsidized education, held as a series of visiting lectures at McGill University), there is a "disjunction between pollution and *The Book of Seasons*" (130) – the popular 19th-Century handbook by Tokizawa Bakin which gave guidelines for the composition of haiku, classifying poetic subjects for it. As world politics and economics intermesh more and more closely, this "disjunction" is most clearly foregrounded for haiku written (in huge numbers!) outside Japan. A curious footnote to World War 2 ideology is that "[h]ow to apply *The Book of Seasons* to life in the occupied territories in the South Sea islands was a matter of controversy among the haiku poets of the war years": e.g., one **haijin**, a former minister and at the time advisor to Japanese military administration of Singapore, "argued that each place in the world has its own book of seasons" (Tsurumi 132)...

All of this means that Issa will most probably write better about snails and insects than any modern. But any modern will certainly write better about pesticides and their spoor than Issa: for the simple reason Issa didn't know of them. Are we to say snails are within nature but pesticides are not? Where do our ecological troubles then stem from, if there are no pesticides within nature? You mean, they **ought not** to be there. Fine; I probably agree. But poetry must begin by speaking about what is there; then it also (more or less implicitly) passes judgement on what is there. It cannot shut its eyes to anything: not even to pesticides. Or are you saying there are some poetic and some "unpoetic," some high and some low, themes or subjects? Really, almost 200 years after Wordsworth and Hugo, and 80 years after the *Sôun* group; three or four epistemic epochs later? (And after flowers have begun to be sold from hothouses, year round, on Tokyo streets?)

**4.3.** Back from this digression, I hope not a fruitless one: It may now be seen why a translation in the 20th Century is necessarily a 20th-Century translation. ***This is not a tautology***: it is the beginning of all translatory wisdom. Prometheus shoots at Zeus with rockets today (Zeus still has a superior technology, from Hephaistos's R&D labs, buried deep under that mountain). "The inscription of discourse is the transcription of the world" (Ricoeur 42). How could we "transcribe" any other world except that of our psychophysical experience?

Yes but if we've got this far, why stop here? What is "fidelity"? Fidelity to whom or what? To the author or to the reader (of one's own times)? It has often been said (e.g. in Burnshaw's stimulating anthology), but it bears repeating: a translator of poetry is (also) a poet; or he is nothing at all (well – maybe a philological annotator for a future poet). Often, she is a poet who has no independent thematic inspiration (or faculty of reacting to contemporary stimuli, if you like the scientific and dislike the usual theological language – which latter is, however, not so

unfit for talking about the kami). We can find in any translation a Gadamerian overlap or fusion between, on the one hand, the horizon of the original time and language and, on the other hand, the horizon of the translator's time and language. (It may be well camouflaged-but even the choice of what to translate gives the camouflage away.) Further, Gadamer's much too neat picture gets even more heavily skewed towards synchrony by the fact that our understanding of the original is also a contemporary understanding (e.g., an English 20th-Century image of Issa as "an 18th-Century Japanese"). Our times are both in us and in the so-called "originals": even if we spend half a lifetime learning Japanese Edo-culture semantics and similar contexts. Strictly speaking, we can never be the originals. I cannot ever be Issa – or even an admiring contemporary of Issa. Many great translators have spent their lives trying to do just such an impossible impersonation, to slip into **la peau d'autrui**. Their illusion may have been psychologically necessary and immensely fruitful: I would not begrudge them any such prop for their difficult and usually materially unrewarded labours. But it IS an illusion. History is real. (Also, reality may be historical.)

Most good translators have known this. Robert Lowell wrote: "I have tried to write alive English and to do what my authors might have done if they were writing their poems now and in America" (xi). He is here consciously echoing Dryden's "Dedication" to the translation of the *Aeneid*: "I have endeavoured to make Virgil speak such English as he would have himself spoken, if he had been born in England, and in this present age" (2: 228). Such examples could be almost indefinitely multiplied (cf. v. Koppenfels 145 and *passim*).

So, to repeat, fidelity to my (somewhat uncertain) reconstruction of Issa or fidelity to my quite certain (as certain as I'm of anything) feeling what is possible to say to (believable, **vraisemblable** for) today's reader? I'm not sure I have an answer for everybody, or even for all occasions when I myself am translating. But I'd tend to say: fidelity to the author **as long as it is compatible with fidelity to the reader** – and no longer. The latter is my hegemonic convergence point. If I do not reach the reader, I cannot transmit (any idea I might have of) the author. Thus, I'd rephrase "Savory's paradox": "A translation should read like an original work. – and – A translation should read like a translation." (Savory 50), as "A translation should read like an original work constantly and strongly reminiscent of an earlier work." The theory of various anamorphic genres and approaches, such as – besides play stagings – parody and pastiche (see Essays 3, 5, and 6 in this book), would seem to me the family home for a theory of translation.

Now today I – meaning not my private civic persona but myself as my own "ideal reader" – cannot make sense of Issa's neat balances. (In academic language: my ideal addressee or model reader has after all the earthquakes of the last 200 years a different standpoint, stance or **Haltung**, so that my intention is necessarily in part – but not totally – different from Issa's [cf. Hönig and Kussmaul; also Ueda, *Bashō* 11: "In the final analysis, translation is a form of literary criticism..."].) Probably, my culture is less balanced than his: but I am (we are) what I (we) have been made into. "But while it lasts..." can be mentally completed with "it's rock-solid." This is not the only possible complement to the three-dot ellipse; but it is, I feel, one of the three or four most probable or strongest possible complements. This is too much of a certainty for me. It is **almost** but not quite the exact nuance. I need something that says something almost identical but just one nuance less surely (one certainty-sememe less, if you wish).

I cast about for a long time and couldn't find that. (Of course, translation problems are centrally problems of ellipse resolution: how much of the **non-dit** must I fill in for my reader, who is a different type of reader than Issa's reader? This is, by the way, also why I must know everything I possibly can about Issa's original ideal and real readers: not to translate for her but to know where to deviate from him.)

Then I (my kami) remembered the Italian proverb (it's bad Italian but it's authentic as well as antithetic): **finchè dura niente paura**, "While it lasts, never fear." This may be read as the skeptic flip side of persistence: "as long as it may last, however long or short that may turn out to be, all is OK and we may enjoy it." Sure, it may seem (nay, doubtless it is) commercially or popularly counterproductive to mix up Italian into an English translation from Japanese. It may necessitate a footnote; no big deal 70 years after *The Waste Land*, perhaps, but not yet quite at home in translation practice (I don't quite know why – a prejudice; at least Nabokov, no mean ally, was in favour of it, cf. Störig XXVIII). But my kami (or do you want to call it "Unconscious"? – it seems so much less elegant to me) was inflexible: perhaps he or she remembered Brecht's discussion of how to adapt Shakespeare: reading sememes *in* the play and *into* the play ("[aus dem Stück] herausgelesen und hineingelesen," Brecht 16: 888). More immediately, my kami might have remembered Brecht's poem to the Theatre Union worker-actors (ah, if Brecht's workers would only be around to read my translations!):

...Aber selbst wenn  
 Euer Zuschauer, der Arbeiter, zögerte, dann müsstet ihr  
 Nicht hinter ihm herlaufen, sondern ihm vorangehen  
 Rasch vorangehen, mit weiten Schritten, seiner endlichen Kraft  
 Unbedingt vertrauend.  
 (Brecht 17: 1057)  
 (But even if  
 Your spectator, the worker, were to hesitate, you'd have to  
 Avoid running after him, rather walk in front  
  
 Walk quickly, with long steps, with absolute confidence  
 In her final strength.  
 -- improvised transl. DS)

**Ma finchè dura** it has to be. (Anyway, its skepticism fits in nicely with Brecht's utopian "final strength" – which however has in German also the anti-romantic meaning of "finite [or bounded] strength." Skeptical utopianism – not at all a bad combination in/for our times. If you therefore wish to treat the final line as this translator's adaptation to his own furthest horizons, I'll eagerly agree with you. But I'll also claim it is in some ways very compatible with Issa's balance of evanescence and permanence: perhaps it is even our, lay version of that balance?)

**4.4.** Once this overriding need was settled, I began seeing good reasons for it. It is easy to get to this just by exploiting the ambiguity of "**while**" in English: "But while it lasts" (adopted in 4.1 instead of "But still it lasts"): "while" is itself a seesaw between durative and limitative. And when I got there, it grew pleasingly polysemic (multi-meaning-ful). E.g. (to do an Empson pruned by Eco): It may not last very long, but yet while it lasts it's OK. Can we expect more? Reasonably? Today? In the age of massive wars against the human body (cancer, AIDS, high explosives, ads...), the human senses (which, as the Chinese and Japanese knew, include the mind)? Can't we ("and yet, and yet...") still make the best of it while it lasts? Mustn't we *carpere diem*? At least for a (this) while? (An almost final parenthesis: I've always somehow, without any apparent cognitive basis – before I wrote Essay 1 in this book – felt that the ancient Hellenes and particularly Romans had the European **ethos** nearest to the Japanese one; and I've always been happy when I could get a Latin echo into a Japanese translation.) True, the while may turn out to be brief (as a lifetime?). But yet it does last (just as a lifetime – or, in Buddhist view, as a brief kalpa of 144 billion years)



This procedure is a reversal of the original, anamorphic in relation to, but not hopelessly far from, it. It is not simply a variant translation of but an *adaptation* of the original. (Yet anyway, the very significant original is itself a first variant or version: the demand for "the feel of the original" being, in the words of the poet and scholar John Hollander, either "a request for some as yet unspecified version or a demand for the impossible" [in Brower ed. 231].)<sup>3</sup>

Thus, "every text is a draft" (Borges 1136). Or, what Derrida calls (in a wrong quibble, I think) "unreadability" – i.e., the absence of "a meaning that can be transmitted as such, in its own unequivocal, translatable identity" – "does not arrest reading, does not leave it paralyzed...: rather it starts reading and writing and translation moving again" (116). My modest proposal is thus not a classical version, it is an e-version of Issa's primal draft. It is *not* a full rewrite either. It is not a sub-version, an overthrow of Issa. As Paul de Man has nicely educed out of Walter Benjamin:

**Übersetzen** [translation] is associated with another word that Benjamin constantly uses, the word **überleben**, to live beyond your own death in a sense. The translation belongs not to the life of the original, the original is already dead, but the translation belongs to the afterlife of the original, thus assuming and confirming the death of the original. (85)

The only way to continue the life of a dead artefact or entity is to give it a second birth, to reincarnate it. The only way really to understand "is not merely to repeat..., it is to generate a new event beginning from the text in which the initial event has been objectified" (Ricoeur 75). We are obviously back at the theological terms (not because I'm religious but because it's the vocabulary by means of which some not quite clear matters of macro- and micro-nature have been most insistently analyzed in human history so far): I can imagine a reincarnated Issa in today's climate, having had our (my) experiences, writing this.

## 5. So, finally (for now):

**5.1.** Is there, then, "inexact" translation? In other words, what are the limits of allowable translation, the boundaries at which a translation is no longer acceptable *as a translation*? The answer is, in my opinion, twofold – as implied in 0.3. It can be illustrated by Chesterton's witty quip: "If you feel free to draw a camel without his [sic] hump, you may find that you are not free to draw a camel" (quoted in Henderson 69).

There are strict limits to the translation I called a variant: it must reactualize in its target sociolect all (or almost all) the central structural parameters of the original; e.g. Tieck's translation of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. There are somewhat looser but still clear limits to the translation I called an adaptation (such as, I hope, this translation by Suvin of Issa): it must reactualize some (many, most?) of the central structural parameters or invariants of the original; e.g. Brecht's adaptation of *Coriolanus* (cf. Suvin, *To Brecht*). All such translations must draw in a hump.

But there are very loose limits for – at an extreme, there is only one anchoring parameter in – a rewrite: the camel may become a camelopard (also an animal with four legs and living in Africa). Charles Marowitz's *Hamlet* lasts ca. 30 minutes, Edward Bond's *Lear* has Cordelia coming to power and turning into a despotic dictator. We then simply have to judge whether Marowitz or Bond were wise to try and ride a camelopard, to measure themselves with

Shakespeare (which I take leave to doubt: though I may be as unwise as a poet when trying to measure myself with Issa; Brecht was usually cannier than that).

Further, we have also to decide on a nominating strategy: Should we call these efforts translations? Does my outrageous third line "mean" this is not a translation? Maybe it should be called, say, "lanstration"? Well, perhaps. But if an ass's head instead of a human's is a translation, then again this one is such too: "Bottom, thou art translated," as the *Midsummer Night's Dream* tells us.

**5.2.** In a book of translations/ adaptations, from this whole essay--which may be looked at as a kind of variant on Krings's title: **Was im Kopfe eines Übersetzers vorgeht** ("what was going on in the head of a translator") – only the following would appear:

"This fleeting-dew world A fleeting-dew world, indeed <b>Ma finchè dura...</b> *	Tsuyu no yo wa tsuyu no yo nagara sari nagara
(Suvin)	(Issa)

\*/ But still, as long as it may last... (from the Italian, **Finchè dura niente paura**)."

This, and some more attempts, can be found in the following Appendix.

## Notes

1. See e.g. *One Hundred Frogs* 136-41. As Professor Ueda's book amply demonstrates through the reception of Bashô in Japan from the beginnings until today, the "calligraphic" haiku too was frequently thought of, by commentators and practitioners alike, as having three "phrases"; thus, Sato's argument is both poetically and philologically incorrect.

2. I have no pretence to compiling a full list of translations of Issa's "tsuyu no yo" haiku, but three more examples should not be withheld from the reader. First, the early Victorian-Edwardian one by Chamberlain (accompanied by a judicious and precise gloss I wish I had space to reproduce):

Granted this dewdrop world is but  
A dewdrop world, – this granted yet... .. (198)

The second translation attempts to be laconic, and unwittingly becomes a counterproject: "World of dew?/ Perhaps, and yet..." (Stryk xxii). A real tin-ear horror is the anonymous one (quoted in Etiemble 39): "Life is like morning dew /I know it is so /But, yet...".

3. I proceed to doubt the notion of "original/ity" much more radically in Essay 3 about parody and pastiche.

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**POEMS (3-appendix): D. Suvin, HAIKU MORE OR LESS FREELY FROM ISSA**  
 (with acknowledgement of stimulation & debt to Lewis Mackenzie & many others)

Quails keep the time  
 Of the clouds' quick scudding:  
 Look how they scamper!

O snail slither on  
 slowly slowly up the slope  
 of Mountain Fuji.

Far-off peaks fragment  
 Feeding eye facettes & fed:  
 Dragonfly flies straight

Happy holiday!  
 Our two cups of sake clink  
 Congratulations.

The fleeting-dew world  
 A fleeting-dew world indeed  
**Ma finchè dura...**

O mother gone from me  
 I remember the seaside  
 Yes that seaside day.

O Fall wind!  
 As the span of years lengthens  
 Nearer to Nirvana.

Never mind people:  
 In this country even scarecrows  
 Turn crooked, every one!

Not knowing the trunk  
 Bears on it marks for cutting  
 Birds build.

Autumn wind –  
 In its whistle there wavers  
 The mountain-shadow

Crisp-cold morning  
 Last year's pine stands taller  
 My hands are cracked

Winds of Autumn:  
 I go trudging on and on,  
 To which of the hells?

On the tide, are you  
 Also seeking happiness,  
 Promiscuous birds?

Kuina naku  
 hyôshi ni kumo ga  
 isogu zo yo

Katatsumuri  
 sorosoro nobore  
 Fuji no yama

Tô yama no  
 me dama ni utsuru  
 tombo kana

Medetô to  
 iu mo futari no  
 zôni kana

Tsuyu no yo wa  
 tsuyu no yo nagara  
 sari nagara

Naki-haha ya  
 umi miru tabi ni  
 miru tabi ni

Akikaze ya  
 hotoke ni chikaki  
 toshi no hodo

Hito wa iza  
 sugu na kakashi mo  
 nakari keru

Kiru ki to wa  
 shirade ya tori no  
 su wo tsukuru

Akikaze ya  
 hyoro hyoro yama no  
 kagebôshi

Asa samu ya  
 matsu wa kyonen no  
 matsu naredo

Aki no kaze  
 ware wa mairu wa  
 dono jigoku

Nanjira mo  
 fuku wo matsu ka yo  
 ukine tori