

The Literary Value of Basho's Poetry

Oshima Hitoshi

Department of Japanese Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Fukuoka University
Fukuoka-shi, Sakurazaka 3 – 11 – 46 – 801, Japan
Email: pacharsky07@yahoo.co.jp

Abstract Although the poetical works of Basho, one of the most eminent haikai poets, have exercised influence on Western modern poetry whose most well-known example is Ezra Pound's imagism, they have been interpreted wrongly by the Westerners who put too much emphasis on zen spirit. Of course, there are exceptions such as Octavio Paz or Yves Bonnefoy, who made successful interpretations of them by purely literary reading; they tried to understand Basho as a poet, as a linguistic genius, instead of looking for a philosopher in him. Nevertheless, before Lee Oryong, a Korean literary critique, there was no structural analysis of them which could reveal their real universal value. It is thanks to him that the interpretation of Basho's entered a new phase. Following and advancing his analysis to a deeper level, we discover Basho's poetry as a synthesis of structural dynamics deriving from the opposition of two elements and keen sense of temporality coming from the unconscious in which life and death melt together. "*Umi-kurete/ Kamo-no koe/ Honokani shiroshi*" (*The Sea darkened/ Voices of wild ducks/ Vaguely white. . .*) is one of the best examples of such poetry that evokes the unconscious in which day and night, white and black, visible and audible, reality and dream, life and death. . . melt together. Basho's poetry is neither realistic nor surrealistic. It is one full of polysemy that derives from the language of the unconscious.

Key Words Zen Orientalism; structural dynamics polysemy; unconscious

1.

Basho(1644 – 94) is well known throughout the world to those who love poetry. His specialty known as hokku¹ is probably the shortest form of poems of the world, but it is not the briefness that is their most important feature. In this article, some of his poems will be analyzed as a step towards defining their importance as literature. For few in the world seem to appreciate their real literary value.

While many poets in the world have taken interest in his poems and some have even confessed they were influenced or inspired by them to create their own poems, they have not necessarily appreciated Basho's poetry; in most cases, they were attracted to the short form of poetry called hokku or haiku. Where they may seem to admire Basho, it is often because of his status as the greatest master of hokku in Japan. For example, Ezra Pound (1885 – 1972) is known as a modern poet influenced or inspired by hokku. He himself said that his *In a Station of Metro* (1913), well known

in the West as an exemplary work of Imagism, was inspired by hokku:

A Chinaman said long ago that if a man can't say what he has to say in twelve lines he had better keep quiet. The Japanese have evolved the still shorter form of the hokku.

“The fallen blossom flies back to its branch; A butterfly.”

That is the substance of a very well-known hokku. Victor Plarr tells me that once, when he was walking over snow with a Japanese naval officer, they came to a place where a cat had crossed the path, and the officer said, “Stop, I am making a poem.” Which poem was, roughly, as follows: “The footsteps of the cat upon the snow; (are like) plum-blossoms.”

The words “are like” would not occur in the original, but I add them for clarity.

The “one image poem” is a form of super-position, that is to say it is one idea set on top of another. I found it useful in getting out of the impasse in which I had been left by my metro emotion. I wrote a thirty-line poem, and destroyed it because it was what we call work “of second intensity.” Six months later I made a poem half that length; a year later I made the following hokku-like sentence:

“The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals, on a wet, black bough.” (468)

From the quote, we see that in Pound's case, it is not only the shortness of hokku but the super-position of images that interested him. The fact that he does not mention the Basho's name suggests that this master was not necessarily more important to him than other creators of hokku. Pound mentions two hokku [I don't think you need to pluralize Japanese nouns when used in English] that inspired him: “The fallen blossom flies back to its branch; A butterfly.” and “The footsteps of the cat upon the snow; (are like) plum-blossoms.” The first was composed by Arakida Moritake (1473 – 1549)² and the second by a Japanese naval officer. Pound must have made his encounter with Basho through Chamberlain's translation of Japanese poetry.³ It is, however, hokku in general as a form of poetical creation that inspired him.

To find Western appreciators of Basho's poetry, we have to wait until the latter half of the 20th century. Among them are Yves Bonnefoy (1923 –) and Octavio Paz (1914 – 98). These two internationally renowned poets have shown a solid appreciation of Basho's poems.

Bonnefoy once confessed that Basho, since he “married the infinite to language” (Bonnefoy) was one of the poets who contributed significantly to his own conception of poetry. In Paz, who translated Basho's *Okuno hosomichi* together with Hayashiya Eikichi, the interpretation of Basho's poetry reached a depth that no other Westerners has ever made. Here is an interpretation of one of Basho's poems that he developed:

Un viejo estanque; salta una rana ; zas! Chapaletéo.

(An old pond; a frog has jumped fast! Sound of water.)

We are in front of an almost prosaic enunciation of facts: the pond, the frog's jumping, the sound of water. Nothing is less poetic; common words and an insignificant fact. Basho has given us simple notes as if to indicate a few realities unconnected to one another with his fingers, discovering the meaning of which is left to us. Yes, it is we, the reader, who have to recreate the poem. First, we find a passive element: the old pond and its silence. Then, comes the surprising jump of the frog that breaks the silence. Of the meeting of the two, a poetic illumination must come out, recapturing the silence that existed at the beginning. This time, the silence is full of meaning. Our consciousness spreads into waving successive associations like the water of the pond spreading in concentric circles. This small haiku is a world of resonances, echoes and correspondences (Basho, *Sendas de Oku* 32)⁴.

His analysis of the poem is brilliant. It leads us to discover a dialectics of silence expressed by Basho's genius of condensation.⁵ Free from orientalism, he could open a new horizon to appreciate Basho's poetics on a universal level.

2.

So far two major currents have made the evaluation of the literary value of Basho's poetry difficult. One is the religious or philosophical approach to it that spread among the Western intellectuals for more than half a century. They have been influenced by Reginald Blyth (1898 – 1964) and Daisetsu T. Suzuki (1870 – 1966). Blyth and Suzuki commonly considered Basho as a Zen mystic. It cannot be denied that Basho practiced Zen for some time, but to explain his poetry in terms of Zen will hinder us at a good understanding of it though there are still many who take this approach.⁶

The other current is an academic one based on the combination of the traditional Japanese philology⁷ with modern Western positivism. It is a method of interpretation commonly accepted among Japanese scholars still today; they consider it less risky from a 'scientific' point of view. Even though they recognize it is not the most literary way, they remain attached to it reasons of security.

Their procedure consists first in clarifying the meaning of each word of a poem, and then, in establishing its message in terms of the historical and literary context. Such a method looks infallible, but it fails just because it cannot cast light to the literary value of the poem. Very often, such interpretations are unsatisfactory to the common reader who just loves poetry.

This academic current was once harshly criticized. Lee Oryong (1933 –), a Korean literary critic, openly criticized the 'would-be scientific' method prevalent among Japanese scholars who study Basho or other haiku (is haiku better here than hokku?) poets. In his *Haiku de Nihon wo yomu (Reading Japan through haiku)*, he enumerated the 'faults' of Japanese academic approaches (7 – 20), the first of which is what he called 'haiku nationalism'. By this, he meant the ideological tendency of Japanese scholars to be convinced that other peoples than the Japanese would

never be able to understand haiku. He made fun of them saying that they like to preserve the monopoly right for haiku while they believe naively that they can appreciate poetry of other nations freely. He did not deny the necessity of knowing the particular codes belonging to traditional Japanese culture in order to understand haiku, but he made it clear that knowledge of such cultural codes is necessary for everyone to understand any kind of poetry of any nation.

The second fault of Japanese academics he criticized is a sort of empiricism whereby understanding of a poem necessitated experiencing the moment of creation of the author. He warned that reproducing the author's experience like a detective who tries to find out the murderer by collecting 'evidence' would be useless and even harmful to the appreciation of the poem because it might reduce our imagination and creativity, two key elements for understanding poetry.

Intentionism combined with biographism is another fault that Lee raised up. Just like Proust against Sainte-Beuve⁸, he condemned as sterile minute studies of the life of the author of a literary work in order to find out his or her intention at the moment of creation. To him, poetical creation could be reduced neither to the facts of the author's life nor to his or her consciousness. Lee could have said as Proust said: "A book (or a poem) is a product of another myself than what we usually manifest in our habits, our society, our vices. This another myself, if you like to understand it well, is at the deep bottom of ourselves, trying to recreate itself in us so that we can reach it" (L' Auteur 148).

He did not deny the value of the philological approach that covers inter-textual studies, but he cautioned that no reference to another literary text outside the text itself could advance the appreciation of that text's intrinsic value. He insisted on the independent meaning of each work of poetry even if literary contexts may influence the making of it. For example, he quoted one of Basho's poems: "Yuku-haruya/ Tori naki Uwo-no/ Me-wa namida" (Spring gone! / Birds cry and Fish/ Eyes are tears) (Basho, Basho bunshu 71) and said that this poem should not be interpreted in terms of Du Fu (712 - 770). As with many scholars, he knew that the poem was somehow inspired by this Chinese poet of whom Basho was fond (Lee Oryong 16)⁹.

Concerning his own interpretations of Basho's poems, we can appreciate not only his efforts to interpret them in terms of Western rhetorical devices which seemed to be universal to him, but also and especially his efforts to make a structural analyze of it. For example, the famous poem of the frog jumping into the old pond that we saw above is interpreted by Lee as a composition of irony because of the silence evoked by the sound of the water; and his structural analysis reveals the intrinsic literary value of the poem. Let us abbreviate his analysis in the following manner:

The poem: An old pond! / A frog is jumping/ the Sound of water, is of the same structure as Basho's another famous poem: Shizukasa-ya/ Iwa-ni shimiiru/ Semi-no koe (Silence! / Penetrating into the rock/ Voices of cicadas); at the place of the cicadas, the poet put the frog, and instead of "penetrating", "jumping". (...) The old pond evokes a timeless time far beyond our human time, just like the unchangeable rock; and the frog is represented as a limited

being living for a short time just like the cicadas. The only difference between the two poems lies in the uniting factors represented by the verbs “jumping” and “penetrating”. It is this “jumping” that introduces a dynamism into the poem, a dynamism of unifying two different times, two different spaces, two different sensations. (Basho, Basho bunshu 71)

To Lee, it is the structure that unites different components of the poem that determines the essence, and it is the components arranged in dichotomy that make up the structure.

3.

Lee Oryong's structural analysis of Basho's poems opened a new way to understand the poet's literary art. Indeed, if Basho's poetry has a depth that no other poets of Japan have reached, it is due to the structural force caused by the opposing elements in each of his works. Sometimes the elements even melt down into a synthesis on a further level by the mediation of a third element, which reminds us of the dialectic movement Octavio Paz remarked upon. That is the case of the poem of the old pond, in which the frog's jump works as the mediator, melting down the opposition of the pond and the frog. The jump must be instantaneous but dynamic, which breaks the static atmosphere caused by the oldness of the pond; thus, the pond as a wide plane and the frog as a dot, as well as the oldness of the pond as immutable timelessness and the frog as the mutable present get to a fusion with the sound of water representing the synthesis on a level beyond because the visual disappears giving way to the audible.

The same dialectic can be found in another other poem Lee analyzed: Silence! The cicadas' voices penetrating the rock. It is the penetration of the voices that makes up a fusion of the opposition of silence versus voices, the immutable and eternal rock and the cicadas representing the mutable present.

Now, perhaps needless to say, the immutable timelessness associates death and the present to life. These two poems send us back to the original state of the world where life and death were one and the same. Composed of so few words, they make a miniature of the immense universe.

We have to say however that not all of Basho's poems possess such depth or breadth and that other poets have also managed to create poems of high quality. Nevertheless, it is Basho who has always been considered the genius, more precisely, as the poet saint of Japan,¹⁰ which should not be regarded as mere hyperbole. His poems often do possess more dimensions, more depth and breadth.

Let us examine one of the poems of Yosa Buson (1716 – 84) in order to see in what way Basho's poems excel. Buson has been considered one of the best post-Basho poets. The following is one of his poems that begin with Samidare-ya:

Samidare-ya/ Taiga-wo mae-ni/ ie ni-ken. (Yosa Buson&Kobayashi Issa 91)
(Rain of May! / In front of a huge river/ two houses.)

The poem is easy to understand because of its visual character. The rain of May is a pervasive one, and there is a huge and probably slow and quiet river in front of which two tiny houses stand. The poem is composed of opposite elements, such as the rain that falls vertically and the river that runs horizontally, the rain with straight lines and the enormous river flowing as a wide open plane, and two tiny immutable houses set against the huge. Buson composed a picture of the scenery using contrasting elements but making a harmonious atmosphere between Nature and human life just as would a painter of Nanga.¹¹

Now, compare this poem to one by Basho that begins with the same *Samidare-ya* (Rain of May!).

Samidare-ya/ Shikishi hegitaru/ kabe-no ato. (Basho, Basho bunshu 110)
(Rain of May! / Colored papers torn off/ Traces of the wall.)

This poem looks more difficult to understand than that of Buson for it does not depict any scenery. The first phrase: *Samidare-ya*, is independent from the rest, and the second and the third combined together indicate the traces of the colored papers that used to be on the wall but are no longer. In Basho's poem, there is a temporal dimension that not found in Buson's.

Of course, there are movements in Buson's, too; for the rain falls, the river runs and the tiny houses must be lived in by people. But the movements are still timeless just like those in a motionless picture. Basho's has a dimension of time indicated indirectly by the traces of colored papers on the wall.

From a structural point of view, Buson's is composed of opposite elements but they are predestined to harmony because the poet-painter composed it to be so. As for Basho's, we cannot find scenic harmony between the opposite elements. Rain of May could tear out the colored papers and penetrate the wall. And knowing that the colored papers stuck on the wall symbolize the artistic and poetic activities¹², we see or hear the poet's lamenting. After all, the poem is of the same structure as another poem in *Okuno hosomichi*:

Natsu-kusa-ya/ Tsumamono-domo-ga/ Yume-no ato. (Basho, Basho bunshu 84)
(Grasses of summer! / The warriors/ Traces of their dreams.)

Both poems transmit a common message that Nature erases all, even human activities, historical or literary, that long for the permanent.

4.

Now, let us have a glance at the academic interpretation of the poem of the colored papers torn off the wall just analyzed above to show how far it can go and within what areas it is limited. As we said, the interpretation is made out of the combination of biographism and intentionism together with philology. It proceeds with a philological study of the text in order to reach the supposed 'intention' of the author at the mo-

ment of creation of the poem.

As the poem is found at the very last part of *Saga-nikki* (Saga Diary) which Basho wrote in 1691, scholars tend to interpret it in terms of the text below:

May the 4th

Could not sleep last night. Tired out, lay down all the day. The rain did not stop till afternoon.

Thinking of leaving this Rakushi-sha tomorrow, I gave myself the last chance to see the whole house that I was sure I would miss, walking from the entrance to the private room, one room after another. . .

Samidare-ya/ Shikishi hegitaru/ kabe-no ato. (Basho 110)

(Rain of May! / Colored papers torn off/ Traces of the wall.) (Yosa Buson&Kobayashi Issa 101)

They proceed to interpret the poem with the knowledge of *Rakushi-sha*, a country house of Basho's good friend and disciple Kyorai, where they spent days and nights exchanging ideas, composing poems together, and finally get to the conclusion that the poem is an expression of the poet's personal feeling for the house and his friend Kyorai.¹³ Thus, they reduce it to the personal history of the author.

But what they are implying is that so long as we do not know what *Rakushi-sha* was, who Kyorai was and what sort of relationship they had, we can never appreciate the poem. If this is the case, the poem must have a very limited value for only few people surrounding the author could really appreciate it. If so, what literary values could it have? A poem is always born out of a concrete and specific circumstance, it is true, but it gains literary value precisely because it goes beyond that. This academic approach based on biographism and intentionalism cannot clarify the true value of a literary work. In this, we agree with Proust and Lee Oryong.

One may argue that no poem can be totally independent from the rest of literary world. Again, it is true, but one poem is one poem so long as it is put as such in a book. The interpretation of the poem we have just seen depends totally on the text of *Saga-nikki*, but in fact, it is put independently in another book,¹⁴ which demands another interpretation.

The same thing can be said of the poem of the frog jumping into the old pond. Separated from the rest, it can be interpreted in the way Lee Oryong or Octavio Paz did, but put together with another poem, it can be interpreted otherwise. In fact, Shiraishi Teizo (1932-99) gave a different interpretation to it, for he found it just beside another one that read:

Nagaki-hi-wo/ Saezuri-taranu/ Hibari kana.

(For a long day/ tirelessly singing/ Ah, skylarks!).

To Shiraishi, the poem of the frog was an expression of a joyful spring full of vitality and noise because put together with the other of the skylarks singing all day long, it could not mean otherwise (Shiraishi 203). Knowing that the poem is usually interpreted

ted as a supreme expression of silence, Shiraishi dared to interpret it differently because he knew that the meaning of a hokku depends on where it is put.

Concerning the poem of the frog, there is an interesting question: how many frogs were there? Lee Oryong poses this question for Japanese nouns do not change according to the number. The word *kawazu* which means frog can be singular or plural. Lee said most people, in or out of Japan, seem to have no doubt about it; they unanimously believe it is singular, but Lee asked who knows? Even if he did not dare to say that frog is plural, the question was opened.

Shiraishi dared to say that the frogs were numerous. He said if skylarks were singing from morning till night expressing the joy of spring, of life and of love, why should we think there was only one frog that jumped into the pond? Many frogs jumped into the water one after another, joyfully, he supposed. We see from this that the meaning of a hokku cannot be determined univocally. It depends a lot on the context in which the poem is found.

We should not forget that the literary value of each poem can be found in its structural force. It is on this that we would like to insist on treating, in this article, Basho's poetry. But we have to admit that sometimes, the structural force of one poem becomes stronger or weaker depending on the context in which it is found. An example of this is the case of the following poem also quoted above:

Natsu-kusa-ya/ Tsumamono-domo-ga/ Yume-no ato.
(Grasses of summer! / The warriors/ Traces of their dreams.)

This poem is found both in *Okuno Hosomichi* and *Sarumino*, two different books edited in the same year 1691. Put in a different context, the same poem varies in structural force. When the poem is in *Okuno Hosomichi*, it appears beside a poem composed by Sora¹⁵ and presents a double fold structure. On the other hand, in *Saumino* the poem has a simpler structure. Let us quote Sora's poem:

Uno-hana-ya/ Kanefusa miyuru/ Shiraga-kana. (Basho, Basho bunshu 84)
(Ah, Flower of Deutzia! / We see Kanefusa there/ His white hairs..) (Basho, Basho bunshu 71)

Put together with Basho's poem of the summer grasses, we see that the two poems corresponds to each other in a very coherent way. For each of its elements is presented in quite concrete form in contrast with the abstract character of the elements of the other poem. "Flower of Deutzia", a specific noun, corresponds to "grasses of summer" non-specific; "Kanefusa"¹⁶, a proper noun of the aged warrior who fought there centuries before at the place where Basho found himself, corresponds to "the warriors" non-specific, and "white hairs" of the old warrior corresponds to the abstract philosophical expression of "traces of their dreams". The whole poem having the same structure as the other presents a concrete version of the other.

The abstract and the concrete are presented by the two poems with the same structure. The structure itself of each of the poems does not alter because of their jux-

taposition, but the poems get more structural force mutually. The two with one structure make up a poem on a larger scale and of a stronger structure.

5.

It is often said that no poem out of its own language can be appreciated fully. However good the translation might be, it will necessarily lead to a betrayal of the original meaning as expressed in the Italian saying: *traduttore, traditore*. We would like however to insist that there is something important that can be transmitted even through translation. The transmittable is the structural dynamics of the work and so long as the translation transmits it, we can say it is an effective one. We have focused especially on the structural analysis of Basho's poems to show this. The structural force of a poem, maybe of other genres too, goes beyond the difference of cultures, languages, historical periods, etc.

All this seems to have something to do with the structure of the human mind and basic psychology. It seems that the works of our psyche go everywhere in the same manner at least when we find ourselves before the eternal drama of life and death. Attitudes toward death and life can vary according to cultures, but the fact that any individual of any ethnic group can appreciate an artistic psychological drama that develops under the tension between the opposite powers of life and death shows the universal character of human psychology. We get satisfaction when the tension of the drama melts down in harmony. We become deeply touched by a well-done tragedy because it represents the catastrophe of life and death. The higher the tension is, the more satisfaction or emotion we get. Sigmund Freud may have explained this mechanism in terms of *eros* and *thanatos*. An artistic work imitates that mechanism lying deep inside our psyche. Art consists in reproducing the dramatic reality, imitating it and displacing it to an unreal level. What is called *catharsis* is there.

We have tried to show that Basho's poetry is universal. It has genuine literary value because it represents the cognitive categories belonging to every human being such as dynamic/static, alive/dead, special/temporal, and makes an extremely condensed solution to the conflicts caused by them. In this sense precisely, it reminds us of the work of a dream Freud explained in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899). Like a dream, Basho's poetry expresses our unconscious in a condensed and displaced way. That is why it can liberate us from anxiety and stress. His concentration of mind must have freed language from the everyday use, letting it touch the bottom of the mind.

Hokku, the form of poetry he adopted comprised of only 17 syllables, must have facilitated the condensation of different levels of concepts and perceptions. But not every hokku composer could realize what Basho did. His genius must lie in a sort of courage to break with everyday use of language; he jumped into the old pond of our mind just like his frog.

In a very short poem such as hokku, it is almost impossible to compose a sentence with a subject and a predicate. If Basho excelled over other poets, it is because he tried harder to be free from grammar and logic in order to keep the primitive stage of human language in mind. If his poems go beyond the division of subject/object and

self/the other, it should not be understood in terms of Zen Buddhism or Taoist philosophy with which he is known to have been familiar. We have to consider him as a poet above all and see that he concentrated himself in choosing words and combining them at a subconscious level. He tried to exhaust the possibilities of human language as a symbolic system.

If to many of us, language is a tool to use, it was not so to him. Language must have been regarded by him as something given before his or others' existence. In other words, language was his master, not the reverse. He could have said like Arthur Rimbaud (1854 – 91): *Je est un autre* (I is another).¹⁷ To Basho as well as the French poet, poetry must go beyond ego.

Understanding Basho in this way is not really new. As a lover of Rimbaud, Bonnefoy understood him more or less in a similar way. "About pines, we have to learn from pines; about bamboos, from bamboos" (Nose Asaji 432), said Basho to one of his disciples, Doho.¹⁸ By "learning", he meant "assimilation" over the gap between subject and object. A poetical spirit such as Bonnefoy might have seized the notion of "learning" in Basho's sense.

To see the condensation work in Basho's poetry, let us examine the following poem:

Umi-kurete/ Kamo-no koe/ Honokani shiroshi. (Basho, Basho bunshu 228)
(The Sea darkened/ Voices of wild ducks/ Vaguely white. . .)¹⁹

First of all, we have to say the poem is not composed in obedience to the established rule of hokku. Instead of 5 – 7 – 5 syllables, it is composed of 5 – 5 – 7. The poet must have been motivated by a necessity. Basho dared an adventure beyond the limit of hokku.

The literal meaning of the first phrase: *Umi-kurete*, is "the Sea has darkened", but the word "kurete" usually means "the Sun goes down". The first condensation is there; the Sea and the Sun get melted and the whole world has become dark.

Another condensation appears in the second and the third phrases: *Kamo-no koe/ Honokani shiroshi*. As the world is dark, one cannot see anything clearly. Therefore, came the audible "voices of wild ducks". And yet, one tries hard to distinguish the origin of the voices. Then, the visible "vaguely white" appears. This time, the audible gets melted with the visible, which creates a dreamlike effect (Maria Jeus De Prada Vicente and Oshima Hitoshi 102 – 107).²⁰

Seeing Basho's condensation at work, some may be tempted, wrongly, to associate him with surrealism. As Rimbaud was not a surrealist, neither was Basho. The only thing we can say of the poem quoted above is that he reproduced a world or a stage of mind in which different senses get melted and that the real and the unreal cannot be distinguished from each other. It is a dizzying expression of existential anxiety because of the darkness of death invading the light of life. That is why, when we read it, we feel a sort of relief. For we can see the bottom of ourselves, not directly but through an artistic work. Art is our best consolation.

Notes

1. Actually, the word “haiku” is not adequate for Basho's poems. For haiku is a modernized term for hokku. “Hokku” originally meant a short poem that initiated a chain of poems called “Renku” composed by a group of poets. See Inui Hiroyuki and Shiraishi Teizo, *Renku Nyumon* (Izumi Shoin 2001).
2. The original of the poem quoted here is “Rakka e-ni/ kaeru-to mireba/ kocho-kana” (A fallen flower on a bough/ Has it come back? / No, 'twas a butterfly.). The author Arakida Moritake is considered the Father of haikai poetry, out of which the genre hokku we know was born.
3. He must have read B. H. Chamberlain's *The classical poetry of the Japanese* (1888) or *Japanese poetry* (1910), or even “Bashō and the Japanese Poetical Epigram.” In *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, 2(1902).
4. Octavio Paz. ‘La poesia de Basho’ 1954. Ed, Matsuo Basho. *Sendas de Oku*. (Seix Barral, 1981)32. Translation from Spanish to English belongs to the author of this article.
5. Maria Jesus De Prada Vicente refers to Lacanian concept of metaphor, another expression of Freudian concept of “condensation”. She explains Basho's poetry in this term. See Maria Jesus De Prada Vicente, *Nihon Bungaku no Honshitsu to Unmei* (Fukuoka: Kyushu University Press, 2004) 141 – 144; and Maria Jesus De Prada Vicente, *Yuragi to Zure no Nihon-Bungakushi* (Kyoto: Mineruva Shobo, 2005)102 – 107.
6. Blyth introduced haiku to Westerners in his four volumes of Haiku (The Hokuseido Press, 1949 – 1952) and Daisetsu Suzuki introduced Zen to the West in numerous works written in English, among which *Zen and Japanese Culture* (Pantheon Books, 1959) explains Basho's poetry as a representative expression of Zen culture. This vision has been widely supported by Westerners; from the Beatniks to Martin Heidegger, the German philosopher. The same vision is found in Fernando Rodriguez Izquierdo, *El Jaiku Japonés* (Madrid: Hiperion, 1972) 67 – 68 or Roger Munier, *Haiku* (Paris: Fayard, 1978) 16 – 17.
7. It is in the 18th century with Ogyu Sorai that the philological interpretation method was formed in Japan.
8. See Marcel Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954) 157 – 158.
9. Basho sometimes mentions the name of Du Fu or quotes a passage of his poems in his writings, for example, in *Okuno hosomichi*.
10. In Japanese, hai-sei; hai means haiku or haikai, sei a saint.
11. Nanga, which literarily means Southern paintings, is a school which flourished in the late Edo period among artists who considered themselves intellectuals. They all admired traditional Chinese culture and the taste is reflected in this poem by Buson.
12. In Edo period, it was a custom among the poets to write a poem on a colored paper and stick it on a wall. Some men of letters liked to stick many pieces of colored paper on a wall just to decorate the interior of a house.
13. Mukai Kyorai (1651 – 1704) was one of the editors of *Saru-mino*, an anthology of his hokku master, Basho.
14. Actually, it is put as an independent poem in *Zo-dan-shu* edited by Takarai Kikaku in 1691.
15. Kawai Sora (1649 – 1710) was one of Basho's disciples. He traveled together with his master to the North of which this wrote *Okuno Hosomichi*.
16. Mashio Kanefusa was an aged vassal of Minamoto-no Yoshitsune who fought and was killed in the battlefield near Hiraizumi in the Tohoku region in the 12th century. Visiting the place, Basho remembered the battle that took place there about 500 years ago.
17. This famous phrase is found in Rimbaud's letter to Georges Izambard, dated on May the 13th, 1871. See Arthur Rimbaud, *Oeuvres* (Pocket Classiques, 1990) 77.
18. Hattori Doho. *San-zoshi* (1776) in Nose Asaji. *San-zoshi Koshaku* (Meicho kanko-kai; 1970)

19. The poem was originally in *Kasshi ginko* (1684). See *Basho ku-shu* (Iwanami, 1962) 228.
 20. To see the details of the analysis of the poem, see Maria Jesus De Prada Vicente and Oshima Hitoshi. *Yuragi to zure no Nihon-bungakushi* (Minerva, 2005).

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