

Three Poems by Toshiko Hirata¹

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¹ This working paper is a part of our ongoing translation book project, *Reflections – Women writing women in Japanese poetry* edited and translated by Carol Hayes, Noriko Tanaka and Rina Kikuchi. This project is partially funded by Kakenhi (Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research) : Kiban –kenkyū (C) 15K01915.

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Introduction

Hirata Toshiko (b. 1955) is one of Japan's most celebrated contemporary poets. She writes not only free style poetry, but also haiku poetry, plays, short stories and essays.

Hirata was brought up in a number of areas of Western Japan included Shimane, Tottori and Yamaguchi, and graduated from Ritsumeikan University's College of Letters. She began writing poetry during high school and was awarded the 1983 Shichōsha New Poet's Award. The following year, her first collection *Rakkyō no ongaeshi* (*Rakkyō Onions Return the Favour*) published by Shichōsha was shortlisted for the Mr. H Award from Japan Poets Association and the Hanatsubaki Award for Contemporary Poetry. Her second collection *Atoranteisu wa mizukusai* (*Watery Atlantis is So Reserved!*), published by Shoshi Yamada in 1987, was shortlisted for the 18th Takami Jun Award.

She moved to Tokyo in 1990, where she published her third collection *Yogoto futuru onna* (*The Woman who Fattens Every Night*) in 1991 through Shichōsha. Her fourth collection *(O)moroi fūfu* (*The Amusing Yet Fragile Couple*) published by Shichōsha in 1993 was shortlisted for the Hagiwara Sakutarō Poetry Award. Her fifth collection *Tāminaru* (*Terminal*), published by Shichōsha in 1997, was nominated for the 28th Takami Jun Award. Although that nomination was unsuccessful, the following year in 1998, *Tāminaru* was awarded the Bansui Prize. In 2001, Hirata was again shortlisted for the Takami Jun Award for the third time for *Tegami, nochi ame* (*Letters, Later Rain*, 2000) published by Shichōsha.

From the late 1990s, Hirata became active in theatre and started to write plays, including *Gamu Nisan* (*Big Brother Gamu*, 1996), *Chimamire Non-chan* (*Blood Covered Non-chan*, 1998) and *Remon* (*Lemon*, 2004). *Remon* was nominated for the 2004 Kishida Prize for Drama.

As all these awards and nominations demonstrate, Hirata has achieved great success as a poet. However, this early success sometimes created its own problems. When Hirata was shortlisted for the 31st Takami Jun Award, she received a very damning review, which argued that she was successful “only because her name was so well-known” from a respected male critic.⁴ This almost caused Hirata to decide to give up writing poetry. However, fortuitously, it was at that very time in 2002, that she received an offer from Shicho-sha to produce a monthly poem for their poetry journal, *Gendaishi techō* (*Contemporary Poetry Journal*).⁵ She took up the offer and her collection *Shi-*

⁴ From the dialogue style article between Hirata Toshiko and Ito Hiromi, “Shi no aru jinsei (Life with poetry): Ito Hiromi × Hirata Toshiko”, *Gendaishi-techō*, vol.47 issue 9 (2004), pp.10-23 (p.17).

⁵ The details are explained in “Afterword” of *Shi-nanoka* (pp. 106-109).

nanoka (*Is it poetry?: A Poem on the Seventh Day*), which gathers together these poems, was awarded the 12th annual Hagiwara Sakutarō prize in 2004.

The three poems included in this Working Paper are all taken from *Shi-nanoka* (*Is it poetry?: A Poem on the Seventh Day*, Tokyo: Shichōsha, 2004). Hirata decided to make the seventh day of every month into ‘poetry writing day’ and this collection gathers together two years worth of those monthly poems.⁶ The first poem of the collection is entitled “Ichigatsu Nanoka” (The Seventh Day of the First Month), and the titles progress through “Nigatsu Nanoka” (The Seventh Day of the Second Month) and “Sangatsu Nanoka” (The Seventh Day of the Third Month), and so on. Even after she passes the Twelfth Month, she continues with “Jūsangatsu Nanoka” (The Seventh Day of the Thirteenth Month) and “Jūshigatsu Nanoka” (The Seventh Day of the Fourteenth Month), ending finally with “Nijūshigatsu Nanoka” (The Seventh Day of the Twenty-Fourth Month).

Hirata is famous for her use of wordplay and layering of meaning. The collection title *Shi-nanoka* provides a good example of this. In Japanese, this title ‘詩七日’ (shi-nanoka, “A Poem on the Seventh Day”) can also be a question ‘詩なのか’ (shi nano ka?, “Is it poetry?”). This is a rhetorical question directed at herself, as she tries to re-assess what a poem really is or should be, not only in terms of each individual poem, but also in the sense of poetry as a whole. Although Hirata kept asking herself this question, in the end she found that what she had created was nothing but poetry. The phrase ‘詩なのか’ (shi nano ka, “It is indeed poetry”) then adds a further layer of complexity, as it can also be used as the answer to that rhetorical question, conveying her realisation that this is in fact ‘poetry’.

A number of translations have been used by other translators, who have translated this problematic title of the collection as *Poetry Day Seven* or *Seven Days of Poetry*.⁷ However, we have chosen to use *Is It Poetry?: A Poem on the Seventh Day* in an attempt to carry both layers of meaning.

Another example of Hirata’s love of wordplay is demonstrated in her use of the word “michiyuki” in “The Seventh Day of the Twenty-Fourth Month”. The first layer is used for a man’s name, “Michiyuki”. A second layer adds the sense of “michiyuki” as a simple “journey”. A final layer conveys the journey taken by star-crossed lovers forced to walk a path to suicide and death. It is difficult to convey these layers in the English translation. If the translation fails to convey the

⁶ Hirata, Toshiko. “Afterword”, *Shi-nanoka* (p.106).

⁷ Hiroaki Sato uses *Poetry Day Seven*, in bibliographic notes that accompany his translations in the online *How2 Journal*, published by the Piper Centre for Creative Writing at Arizona State University. (https://www.asu.edu/pipercenter/how2journal/archive/online_archive/v2_3_2005/current/translation/toshiko.htm, accessed May 20, 2015). The J’Lit Books from Japan website uses *Seven Days of Poetry*, for their authorial entry on Hirata Toshiko. (<http://www.booksfromjapan.jp/authors/item/602-toshiko-hirata>, accessed May 20, 2015)

cultural connotations of ‘michiyuki’ as this star-crossed lovers journey to death, then the question “What on earth were their parents thinking giving them a name like that?” has no impact.

In our translation, we have tried to embed all these connotations, firstly by including both the romanised Japanese name and the English translation in line 20: “I knew two people called Michiyuki or ‘Journey’”. And then also; by including the explanatory phrase, a “love journey to death” in line 34: “That’s right, me, I’ve been asked to join a michiyuki love journey to death”. If we fail to evoke the sense of impending death that is associated with the term ‘michiyuki’, then the death depicted in the final two lines makes little sense.

‘There will now be some death, please take care’

‘There will now be no death, please take care’

“The Seventh Day of the Twenty-Fourth Month” provides another example of her skilful wordplay and her ability to work with the rhythm of the words in her poetry. For example,

To die? Not to die? *Shinu ka shinanu ka*

Not to die? To die ? *Shinanu ka shinu ka*

Another good example is Hirata’s use of the onomatopoeic repetition “paku-paku” of the goldfish’s mouth “popping open and shut” as the water in the basin is swashed around by the motion of the bus. This allows the reader to start to feel the rocking sway of the bus. Similarly, the repetition of:

Man Station *Otoko-eki*

Woman Station *Onna-eki*

Man Station *Otoko-eki*

Woman Station *Onna-eki*

is reminiscent of the clanging bump of a rocking train.

Hirata’s self-deprecating sense of humour and the surreal flavour of her work are apparent in both “The Seventh Day of the First Month” and “The Seventh Day of the Twenty-Fourth Month”. Surrealism lies concealed in the everyday, as for example, in the train announcements, ““There will now be some bumpiness, please take care”” which changes to ““There will now be some vomiting, please take care”” and to the final lines;

‘There will now be no bumpiness, please take care’

‘There will now be some death, please take care’

‘There will now be no death, please take care’

It is through the repetition of just such warnings that we all must progress through life’s journey.

Another example is the final surrealist punch line of “The Seventh Day of the First Month” which reads “All unnoticed, the passengers are dog’s torsos”.

The sense of discomfort, disconnect from and even active dislike of what it is to be a woman that appears in “The Seventh Day of the First Month” is another characteristic of Hirata’s poetry. Her deconstruction of what it is to be a woman is closely tied to the complicated personal relationships within her family, particularly with her parents. This side of her work can be seen in her mother-daughter relationship poem, “The Seventh Day of the Thirteenth Month”.

はじめに

平田俊子（1955 年～）は、現在最も活躍している詩人のひとりである。その文学活動は、詩にとどまることなく、戯曲、小説、俳句、エッセイなど多岐にわたる。

平田は、島根、鳥取、山口などを転校しながら西日本で育ち、立命館大学文学部を卒業。高校時代から詩作を開始し、1983 年思潮社の現代詩新人賞を受賞。翌 1984 年には、H 氏賞と現代詩花椿賞の候補となった第一詩集『ラッキョウの恩返し』（思潮社）が出版された。

第二詩集『アトランティスは水くさい！』（書肆山田、1987 年）は高見順賞の候補にあがった。1990 年から東京で暮らし始め、第三詩集『夜ごとふとる女』（思潮社、1991 年）を出版。第四詩集『（お）もろい夫婦』（思潮社、1993 年）は、第 1 回萩原朔太郎賞の候補に挙がった。1997 年には、第五詩集『ターミナル』（思潮社）が第 28 回高見順賞の候補にあがるが落選。翌 1998 年に、同詩集で晩翠賞を受賞。この頃から演劇にも活動をひろげ、戯曲の執筆を開始。『ガム兄さん』（1996 年）や『血まみれのんちゃん』（1998 年）が上演され、『れもん』（2004 年）で岸田戯曲賞の候補に挙がった。

その後も、『手紙、のち雨』（思潮社、2000 年）が三度目の高見順賞候補に挙がるなど、華々しい詩人人生を歩んだ平田だが、だからこそその壁もあった。『手紙、のち雨』について「知名度だけが先行する」詩人だと酷評されたことに悩み、『現代詩手帖』に『詩七日』の連載をはじめめる前には、「詩をやめよう」と思いつめていたという⁸。しかし、二年間の連載を終え、『詩七日』（思潮社、2004 年）で第 12 回萩原朔太郎賞を受賞。2007 年度からは、同賞の選考委員をつとめている。現在は東京に在住し、立教大学文学部にて特任教授もつとめる。

本稿におさめた英訳は、『詩七日』に収録されている三篇である。この詩集は「毎月七日を『詩を書く日』と決め」た詩人が、毎月『現代詩手帖』に掲載した二年間分の 24 編の詩から成り立っている⁹。最初の詩が「一月七日」であり、「二月七日」「三月七日」とすすみ、12 月をすぎても、「十三月七日」「十四月七日」とつきすすみ、「二十四月七日」まで続く。

タイトルの『詩七日』は「しなのか」と読み、「これが詩なのか」からとったものだと「あとがき」にある。これは、自らが書く詩作品に対しての疑問「詩なのか？」であり、できあがった作品がやはり詩以外のなにものでもないという再認識「詩なのか」という納得の独り言でもあるのだろう。結局自分が書いているものは「詩でしかない」、つまり「詩なのか……（ため息）」という気持ちだと、平田は「あとがき」に記している¹⁰。

「一月七日」と「二十四月七日」には、平田詩の特徴であるユーモアのセンス、自虐的なユーモアとシュールな風景がある。「一月七日」にあらわれる女であることに対する違

⁸ 「詩のある人生：伊藤比呂美×平田俊子」（『現代詩手帖』2004 年 9 月号, pp.10-23）に言及がある（p.17）

⁹ 『詩七日』の「あとがき」（p.106）より。

¹⁰ 前掲 p.108

和感、あるいは嫌悪感も、平田詩の特徴であるといえよう。女であることに対する嫌悪感は、平田詩では、母親との関係となってあらわれることがある。その一端は、「十三月七日」にかいまみることができる。

「二十四月七日」には、もうひとつの平田詩の特徴である言葉遊びがふんだんに使われている。また、ここに英訳した三篇のどの詩にも、言葉のリズム遊びがいきている。「死ぬか 死なぬか／死なぬか 死ぬか」と、金魚の「ぱくぱく」と、バスのゆれ。これらが詩中で繰り返し繰り返され、いつのまにか読者のからだもゆれだすのではないだろうか。同様に、「男の駅／女の駅／男の駅／女の駅」の繰り返しは、がたんごとんとゆれる電車のゆれに共鳴している。そしてゆられてゆくうちに、「いつしかお客は犬のトルソー」になっているというシュールな「オチ」。

日常のなかにひそむシュールさは、「二十四月七日」の「この先、ゆれますのでご注意ください」という聞きなれたアナウンスにもあらわれる。「この先、ゆれますのでご注意ください」が「この先、吐きますのでご注意ください」になり、「この先、ゆれませぬのでご注意ください／この先、死にますのでご注意ください／この先、死にませぬのでご注意ください」になってゆく。詩中の「わたし」だけではなくわたしたちはみな、「死にますのでご注意ください。死にませぬのでご注意ください」こう繰り返しながら、人生という旅をつづけるのかもしれない。

シリアスなのか、ちゃかしているのかわからないような絶妙なバランスが、平田詩の醍醐味だ。そして、それは言葉遊び、音遊びから生まれている。しかし、この肝心の言葉遊びの部分を英語でいかすことは難しい。日本語だからなせる技という場合が多いからだ。たとえば、「二十四月七日」の「みちゆき」がそうだ。英語には「みちゆき」という男の名前も存在しなければ、「みちゆき」という言葉から駆け落ちや心中を連想することも不可能だ。つまり、「親は何を考えて」「みちゆき」などという縁起でもない名前を息子につけたのか、という詩中で投げかけられる問いを、英語訳の読者に理解してもらうことは困難ということになる。この問いが理解できなければ、「みちゆき」という名の男たちがみちゆきをしなかったことと思われる理由、「子どもはなかなか親の期待どおりには／いきませんもの」というブラックユーモアもいきないことになり、この詩のおもしろさが死んでしまう。

本稿では、「みちゆき」はローマ字表記で“michiyuki”として、行をすすむにつれ、この“michiyuki”は男の子につけられる名前であると同時に“journey”（旅、旅路）を意味し、その“journey”は通常の「旅」というだけではなく“love journey to death”（愛する者同士が死にむかう旅）を意味するものだということが徐々に伝わるよう工夫した。“michiyuki”という言葉が「死」につながるということを英訳でも伝えられなければ、上述のブラックユーモアも、最後の二行「この先、死にますのでご注意ください。／この先、死にませぬのでご注意ください」へのつながりも失われてしまう。説明的であるかもしれないが、説明しなければこの詩のおもしろさを英訳で伝えることは不可能だと考えた。

同様に、『詩七日』というタイトルに込められた二重の意味も、英訳でいかすことは非常に困難である。これまでの訳には、『Poetry Day Seven』や『Seven Days of Poetry』がみ

られるが¹¹、「詩七日（詩なのか）」に込められた二重の意味を英訳でも伝えるべきだとの判断から、説明的でくどいとも思われるが『Is It Poetry? : A Poem on the Seventh Day』とした。

なお、原詩はすべて『詩七日』（東京：思潮社 2004 年）による。

R.K.

¹¹ 『Poetry Day Seven』は Hiroaki Sato による訳。『Seven Days of Poetry』は日本文学を紹介するウェブページ J'Lit Books from Japan の現代作家についてのページに掲載された訳（<http://www.booksfromjapan.jp/authors/item/602-toshiko-hirata> 2015 年 5 月現在）。

一月七日

旅に出よう

詩を書くためにだけ旅に出よう

そう決めたのに一回目から早くも挫折

夕暮れどきの丸ノ内線に

臆面もなく腰掛けている

中吊りの 女性雑誌の広告は

横書きのピンクの文字が目立つ

わたしとの接点何もなく

じっと見ていると

自分が男になった気分

男になろう

旅に出るのが難しいなら

詩を書くためにだけ男になろう

そう決めたわたしの耳に

「寂しいから犬のトルソーを買ったの」という細い声

そうか 寂しいとき女はトルソーを買うのか

買ったトルソーを抱いて寝るのか

トルソー＝首及び四肢を欠く胴体だけの塑像（広辞苑）

そんなものを買うのが喜びなのか

男のからだも女のからだも

丸ノ内線は等しく運ぶ

けれどもゆれを感じる場所は

ひとりずつ

微妙に違っている

The Seventh of the First Month

I'll go on a journey

I'll go on a journey just to write poetry

I'd made my decision, but I failed from the very first step

It's early evening on the Marunouchi line

I sit without a shred of guilt

Hanging adverts from woman's magazines

The pink horizontal letters catch my eye

They mean nothing to me

Staring at them

I feel I've become a man

I'll become a man then

If it's so hard to leave on a journey

I'll become a man just so I can write poetry

Just as I decided, I heard a delicate voice

'I was so lonely I bought a dog's torso'

So that's it when they're lonely women buy torsos

then they embrace the torso they've bought when they sleep

a torso = the soft clay trunk of the body independent of the neck or limbs (Kōjien dictionary)

So buying a thing like that gives them pleasure!

Men's bodies women's bodies

The Marunouchi line carries all equally

But how each body feels the rocking

Is individual

Is subtly different

男の駅

女の駅

男の駅

女の駅

電車は順に停車する

男の駅

女の駅

男の駅

女の駅

車体は次第に赤みを帯びる

男の駅

女の駅

男の駅

女の駅

いつしかお客は犬のトルソー

Man Station

Woman Station

Man Station

Woman Station

The train stops in turn

Man Station

Woman Station

Man Station

Woman Station

The carriages gradually become tinged with red

Man Station

Woman Station

Man Station

Woman Station

All unnoticed, the passengers are dog's torsos

十三月七日

七十をいくつか過ぎた人のために
化粧品を買いに行く
シミとシワをきれいに隠してくれる
液体のファンデーションを

初めて会った頃
この人はまだ二十代だった
あまり幸せではない結婚をして
不機嫌な顔で
赤ん坊のおしめを替えていた

三十代のこの人も
楽しそうには見えなかった
カタカタカタとミシンを踏んでは
わけのわからないものを作っていた

四十代のこの人は
娘の日記をこっそり読んで
娘にきた手紙を勝手に開けた
娘が幸せにならないよう呪いをかけた
呪いは実によく効いたので
娘は毎日頭痛で悩んだ

五十代のこの人を知らない
わたしは遠く家を出たから

The Seventh of the Thirteenth Month

I go to buy makeup

For a woman a few years over seventy

Liquid foundation

To hide her wrinkles and blemishes

When I first met her

She was only in her twenties

Rather unhappily married

Changing her baby's nappy

With a grumpy face

Even in her thirties

She didn't look happy

Clank, clack, clank, her foot to the sewing pedal

Endlessly producing weird things

In her forties, this woman

Secretly read her daughter's diary

Opened letters addressed to her daughter without asking

Placed a curse on her daughter to stop her ever being happy

The curse was so effective

Her daughter suffered terrible headaches day after day

I know nothing of her fifties

Because I moved far from home

六十代のこの人も知らない
一度も帰らなかったから

二十数年ぶりに会ったこの人は
七十をいくつか過ぎていて
母というより老人だった
自分の母が
老人になる日がくるとは思わなかったので
ちょっと驚いた

四十代になったわたしは
この人の書いた買い物メモを読み
この人宛ての請求書を勝手に開けて
支払いをすませる

七十を過ぎたこの人のために
化粧品を買いに行く
四十代の頃のこの人を
まだ許してはいないのに

シミやシワをきれいに隠す
液体のファンデーション
わたしはそれで
自分のところを
隠そうとしているのかもしれない

I know nothing of her sixties either

Because I never once went home

Meeting up with her after more than twenty years

She was a few years over seventy

Less a mother and more an old woman

I was a bit shocked

Because I'd never thought about the day

When my own mother would become an old woman

Now in my forties, I

Read the shopping lists she's written

Open the bills addressed to her without asking

Then make the payments

I go to buy makeup

For this woman over seventy

Though I still haven't forgiven

Her for her forties

The liquid foundation

Beautifully hides her wrinkles and blemishes

Maybe I'm using it

To try and hide

My inner self

二十四月七日

「この先、ゆれますのでご注意ください」

のどかな声がバスのなかを泳ぐ

それは困ります、運転手さん

わたしは洗面器を抱えています

洗面器のなかには金魚が一匹

バスがゆれると水をひきつれて

金魚が飛び出してしまいます

「この先、ゆれますのでご注意下さい」

ゆらすのはあなた

それともバス自身ですか

風邪の予防には注射をします

ゆれを防ぐ注射はないのですか

実はわたくし乗り物に酔います

この先、吐きますのでご注意下さい

エチケット袋なんて持ってません

洗面器ならありますけど

金魚が泳いでいますから使うわけにはいきません

ゲロまみれの金魚なんて

あなた見たくないでしょう？

The Seventh of the Twenty-Fourth Month

‘There will now be some bumpiness, please take care’

The calm voice swam through the bus

That will be a problem, driver

I’m holding a washing basin

In the basin is a goldfish

If the bus sways, drawing the water along

The goldfish will jump out

‘There will now be some bumpiness, please take care’

It’s you making it bumpy

Or is it the bus doing it?

We have an injection for flu prevention

Is there any injection to prevent bumpiness?

To tell the truth I suffer from motion sickness

‘There will now be some vomiting, please take care’

I don’t have anything like those sick bags

Though I do have a washing basin

But because it has a goldfish swimming in it, I can’t use that

A goldfish covered in spew

You don’t want see that, do you?

ちゆきって名前の知り合いが二人いました

ひとりは小学校の若い教師で

ひとりは高校の文芸部の先輩でした

親は何を考えてそんな名前をつけたのでしょうかね

二人はその後道行きをしたかしら

たぶんしなかったと思いますよ

子どもはなかなか親の期待どおりには

いきませんもの

この金魚の名前もみちゆきっていうんですよ

ほら、口をぱくぱくさせて

何ていってるのでしょうかね

死ぬか 死なぬか

死なぬか 死ぬか

わたしにはそう聞こえます

ええ、道行きを持ちかけられてるんです、わたし

「この先、ゆれますのでご注意ください」

洗面器から金魚が飛び出し

バスの窓からわたしが飛び出す

それも道行きになるのでしょうか

全身打撲で

死ぬか 死なぬか

死なぬか 死ぬか

ずいぶん元気な道行きだあね

この先、ゆれませんのでご注意ください

この先、死にますのでご注意ください

この先、死にませんのでご注意ください

I knew two people called Michiyuki or 'Journey'
One was a young teacher at my primary school
The other was a senior in my writing club at high school
What on earth were their parents thinking giving them a name like that?
I wonder whether either of them actually went on a journey.
No, they probably didn't
Children don't tend to follow their parents expectations
Do they?

This goldfish is called Michiyuki too, you know.
Look, his mouth is popping open and shut
What's he saying, do you think?
To die? Not to die?
Not to die? To die?
That's what it sounds like to me
That's right, me, I've been asked to join a michiyuki love journey to death

'There will now be some bumpiness, please take care'
The goldfish leaps out of the washing basin
I leap out of the bus window
Can this be called a love journey to death too?
The cause of death is excessive bruising
To die? Not to die?
Not to die? To die?
What an energetic michiyuki!

'There will now be no bumpiness, please take care'
'There will now be some death, please take care'
'There will now be no death, please take care'

Translators' Notes for 'The Seventh of the Twenty-Fourth Month'

Michiyuki: In Japanese the word 'Michiyuki' means both a simple journey and the suicidal journey to death taken by star-crossed lovers, so often portrayed in Jooruri and Kabuki Theatre. Hirata plays with the layered meaning of this word, using it as both a boy's name and just such a suicidal journey.

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