

## Research Note: Shiki and Buson—A Case of Déjà-ku?

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The phenomenon of “déjà-ku”—or inadvertent copying of another’s work, or unwitting plagiarism—in haiku has always fascinated me, and I have had that awkward experience myself. I enjoyed John Stevenson’s account in *Frogpond* 34:2. It was especially interesting that John used the example of Shiki’s

*yuku ware ni todomaru nare ni aki futatsu*

I am going  
you’re staying  
two autumns for us

to cap his piece. For many years I had believed that this haiku itself was a case of déjà-ku on Shiki’s part.

In his *An Introduction to Haiku* (hardcover edition, 1958, 105) Harold Henderson attributes this haiku to Buson:

PARTING

For me who go  
for you who stay—  
two autumns.

and gives the identical *rōmaji* text as that for the Shiki poem (in kanji, 行く我にとどまる汝に秋二つ). The attribution of the “two autumns” haiku to Buson was picked up by Harold Stewart in *A Net of Fireflies* (1960, 84), Robert Hass in *Essential Haiku* (1994, 81), and X. J. Kennedy for his college textbook *Introduction to Poetry* (at least by the 7th edition, 1995, 73; Henderson cited as translator). Later, other researchers attributed the haiku to Buson as well.

Intrigued, I went searching for this haiku among Buson’s works. I don’t have access to the major collections of Buson’s work in Japanese, nor the language skills to read them, but I discovered that no such poem appears in the principal collections of Buson translations by scholars working from the Japanese sources: Yuki Sawa and Edith Marcombe Shiffert’s *Haiku Master Buson* (1978 and 2007), Makoto Ueda’s *The Path of Flowering Thorn* (1998), Takafumi Saito and William R. Nelson’s *1020 Haiku in Translation* (2006), or Leon Zolbrod’s *Reluctant Genius: The Life and Work of Buson, a Japanese Master of Haiku and Painting*, serialized in *Modern Haiku* in the 1990s.

I have to conclude that this is not a case of déjà-ku at all. Apparently Henderson got a wire crossed somewhere and included this haiku in his chapter on Buson when he intended it for the one on Shiki. Some later researchers uncritically picked up Henderson's work, "retranslated" the haiku, and propagated the error.

If this conclusion of mine is wrong, of course, I would be very interested in seeing additional evidence.

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Then, a note sent to the *Frogpond* editors on Oct. 5, 2012, was published in the Re:Readings section of *Frogpond* 36:1, 118 as follows:

Paging through Steve Addiss's new book, *The Art of Haiku*, I discovered (Chapter 8, note 6) a reference to a translation by R. H. Blyth of the "two autumns" haiku. For my "Research Note: Shiki and Buson—A Case of Déjà-ku?" in *Frogpond* 35:1, I had searched Blyth's works but missed this reference. In his *Haiku*, Vol. 4, page xxx, Blyth translates the haiku:

I go;  
Thou stayest:  
Two autumns

and comments, "the whole of life is given here, our meetings, our partings, the world of nature we each live in, different yet the same." His translation, from about 1951, predates that by Henderson (1958), so our suggestion that Henderson "got a wire crossed somewhere" is clearly wrong, and evidence seems to point to Buson as the original author of this text. Shiki's version (the Japanese text is identical) is presented in English by Blyth (*History of Haiku*, Vol. 2 [1964], 97) like this:

I going,  
You remaining,  
Two autumns.

with the note, "This was written in the 2nd year of Meiji, upon parting from Sōseki on the 19th of October, at Matsuyama, when leaving for Tōkyō. It is a kind of existentialism."

I'm back to thinking this may be a case of déjà-ku on Shiki's part—or possibly a deliberate recycling of Master Buson's haiku on a similar occasion, parting from a good friend.

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Finally, on a visit to the Shiki Museum in Matsuyama, Japan, in September 2014, I asked the research staff about this haiku. With some animation they told me that the haiku was definitely a Shiki original and that it was known that Blyth had misattributed it in his *Haiku* vol. 4, but had it

right in his *History of Haiku*, vol. 2. I am now convinced that the verse is Shiki's, but hope that someday someone with access to the complete haiku of Buson can conform whether he wrote such a haiku.

—CT, 21 January 2015