

## A NOTE ON THE NOTES

Appending notes to poems aims to satisfy an imagined hunger for information on a reader's part. In doing so, it runs certain risks and, when the notes go unread, it realizes the hazards that made those risks what they were. A book of poetry promises just that: poetry. Explanatory notes jammed among its pages tend to distract from the poetry itself because they demand a kind of reading that differs from the sort poetry requests. Poetry grants a reader license to tarry in uncertainty and offers aesthetic rewards, rhythms and visions, to those who agree to put off reading strictly for the more immediate pleasures of denotative and factually verifiable content. But what about all those indispensable notes rich in history that authoritatively bookend critical editions? This is not that kind of book.

Whatever other kind of book it may be, still, its difference is not so strong as to make it above the use of, or even inhospitable to notes, for it does have them. But *Alice, Iris, Red Horse* resists easy classification, being neither a standard book of poetry, more or less devoid of notes, nor a scholarly edition replete with commentary and cross-references. It relies on the porous borders of poetry, through which the generically unruly can slip. Once through, there is ample room for drifting textual forms to band together and reformat themselves with the denizen apparatus of other modes.

Faced with Gozo Yoshimasu's personal editorial challenge to exploit this freedom and explore the possibilities of a more active interplay between his poetry and the notes about his poetry, I did what I assumed anyone in my position would do: I set out in search of precedents. I had been troubled and fascinated for years by several passages from W. K. Wimsatt's famous essay on the intentional fallacy. Discussing Eliot's "Wasteland," and the accusations of allusiveness leveled against it by critics and casual readers alike, Wimsatt correctly diagnoses a misplaced curiosity, born of the poem's almost perpetually deferred meaning, that creates a demand for notes to enable a reader to trace Eliot in his reading and better get at his intent. Wimsatt concludes that, "whereas notes tend to seem to justify themselves as external indices to the author's intention, yet they ought to be judged like any other parts of a composition." And, "when so judged, their reality as parts of the poem, or their imaginative integration with the rest of the poem, may come into question."

To solve this problem I devised notes less notational and more poetic, notes that shared style and energy with the poetry they illuminated. Patching the broken contours between two orders of expression at odds with one another seemed a strange problem of translation. Then again, translation's problems seem perennially rich and strange in just this way. The translators had successfully concluded their search for commensurate sense between two languages. I needed to establish another proportionality. Any proportionality, I thought, requires the introduction of a constant to balance its variables. The constant I settled on, between poetic text and prose notes, was time.

I do not mean time in the usual, universal way. Instead I mean the relativity that we forget. In moving we mark time and we measure it watching others move. Language, too, moves; its pace varies from one speaker to the next, from one writer or one reader to the next. Products of language, poetry and prose depend crucially on time as the axis along which they unfold to the ears and eyes of the mind. Prose typically insists on the steady semantic arithmetic of tallying up

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words in sentence, then a paragraph, and so on down the page, to significance. Poetry, on the other hand, forces comparisons and equivalences among more dissimilar quanta of meaning, such as assonance, consonance, line breaks, rhymes, stresses, and tautologies. In the demanding economy of a poem where everything down to and including the tiniest typographic mark bears marked significance on several registers, these fluctuating features of language disrupt a reader's inference of passing time. It appears corrugated, reticulated, moving in dips, in bumps, and epicycles.

In Gozo Yoshimasu's poetry, the time that a reader establishes with the text runs especially roughly. Lines shrink into miniscule, break unexpectedly, and pick up again in different scripts. His is a symbolic practice that shuns stability. No received form of commentary could follow it without distraction. Here Wimsatt's conclusion returns. Then again, if instability can be matched with instability and the time signatures of the notes and the poetry synchronized, the broken imaginative circuit between the two can spark complete. Poetry is not founded on typographic novelty, but on the stirring variations of language that novelty comes to represent. The cumulative effect of these variations is the creative manipulation of time. I hesitate to declare the notes spread among the following pages poetry, although poetry exists in them.

– Derek Gromadzki

Notes to FIRE (TO ADONIS)

This poem its beginning  
a hallmark  
of Yoshimasu's hybridized  
title-dedication  
epigraphs

initially  
makes one  
feel not only something lost  
but lost oneself  
lost wandering  
in translation

How to reconcile knee-jerks  
and double-takes  
at a dedication

Yoshimasu's dedication  
dedicating  
the poem of another poet  
to yet another poet a third  
—but that is exactly

what  
is  
happening

Yoshimasu dedicates  
Saigyō's poem to Adonis  
Adunis  
أدونيس

Saigyō Hoshi  
(1118-90)

He became a wandering  
monk at twenty-two.

He lived when nobility  
in the Heian Era was  
overrun by a culture of war  
and warriors.

He spent his time mostly  
on mountains or writing of  
mountains.

Any of these details from  
Saigyō's life  
provides some context  
for Yoshimasu's poem  
intended to be taken  
as a spiritual wandering  
over mountains

and a search  
for connections  
between  
religion  
and the natural world.

Saigyō was an inspiration  
behind Bashō's journeys  
to the northern regions of  
Honshū

Yoshimasu  
relies on the  
technics  
of allusion

*bonkadori* 本  
歌  
取  
り  
or *bonzetsu* 本  
説

to fix his intertexts close  
to the surface of the poem  
as signs of exchange

Connectivity  
becomes a motif and calls  
attention  
to translation  
at a number of points

“Typhoon” the first word  
in the poem:  
**n** in bold script highlights  
Yoshimasu's unusual  
orthography

*Taijū* 台風  
the Japanese word  
for *typhoon* is  
drawn into the longer  
pronunciation

*taifūn*

This mysterious *n* suggests  
a cross-lingual matrix.

This Anglophonic *n*  
taps into a sprawling

etymological root system  
equally grounded in Greek  
*typhon* *whirlwind*  
in Arabic  
in Farsi  
in Hindi

*taifūn* *storm*  
and in Sinophone  
languages

in Chinese  
in Japanese as well as  
in Korean

태풍 *taepung*

The poem's linguistic  
connectivity converges on key  
moments of intertextual  
intersection

Yoshimasu  
quotes  
French

translations  
of two of Adonis's poems

“Vision” and “Pierre”  
from

*Aghânî Mihyâr al-dimashqî*  
translated as  
*Chants de Mihyar le Damascène*  
by

Anne Wade Minkowski

As the quotations appear  
in French  
amidst the Japanese original  
they remain in French here

The first poem  
“Vision”  
gives

Yoshimasu  
the line

“*drapé de feu*”  
describing a god

and Babelites  
who wait  
his arrival in ritual garb

Notes to FIRE (TO ADONIS)

Revêts-toi d'un masque de  
bois brûlé

ô Babel des incendies et des  
mystères

J'attends un dieu qui  
viendra

drapé de feu

paré de perles volées au  
poumon de la mer

aux coquillages

J'attends un dieu qui hésite  
fulmine, pleure, s'incline,  
rayonne

Ton visage, Mihyar

présage ce dieu à venir

*Fire* becomes a versatile  
symbol

Babel  
Adonis  
the divine  
the typhoon  
Mount Fuji

Yoshimasu's poem  
incorporates the first two  
lines of Adonis's poem,  
"Pierre:"

J'adore cette pierre paisible

J'ai vu mon visage dans ses  
veinures

But the third and final  
line—

*J'y ai vu ma poésie perdue*  
I saw my lost poetry—  
Yoshimasu  
leaves  
this line  
suggestively  
absent

Don this mask of burnt  
wood

oh Babel of Infernos and of  
mysteries

I wait for a god who will  
come

draped in fire  
decked in pearls stolen from  
the sea's lungs  
and shells

I await a god who hesitates  
who rages, weeps, bends,  
shines

Your face, Mihyar

Sign of the coming god

"Striped eye" in  
Yoshimasu's poem  
makes little sense  
as a translation of "*veinure*"  
*veining*  
*grain*  
as of wood.

Hirasawa's Japanese  
translation of the French  
translation of "Pierre"  
uses the Japanese

I adore this peaceful rock

I have seen my face amidst  
its grain

...the Japanese  
word 縞目  
*shimame*  
an unusual word  
for *stripes*  
combining  
characters for stripes 縞  
with one for eye 目  
English translations

of Adonis's poem  
typically  
emphasize  
the anthropomorphized  
features of the stone  
as well.

The translation here  
renders Hirasawa's word  
*hyperetymologically*  
with obsessive attention to its  
component characters.

The second major  
intersection where different  
texts come together waits at  
the end  
of the poem

when  
Yoshimasu  
cites Saigyō's  
untitled poem preserved  
in the *Shin Kokin Wakashū*  
(ca. 1439) anthology.

Through the original  
through Romanization  
through translation  
the reader may work  
through  
the layers  
of Yoshimasu's  
translingual homophony  
centered

around the character 火  
*fire*  
that has remained  
in the English title.

Yoshimasu plays with  
two  
pronunciations  
of 火 *fire*  
in Japanese  
standard *hi*  
classical *ho*  
And it is this play that  
encourages the reader to

Notes to FIRE (TO ADONIS)

experience  
Japanese as a continuum  
of classical and modern  
modes  
both  
at the  
linguistic and literary levels.

And this translation  
similarly invites meditation  
on both

Japanese  
and  
English

as languages and literary  
bodies with historical depth  
nodes of connectivity through  
their evolutions

drawing words  
from Middle English  
as functional parallels to the  
older pronunciations

Yoshimasu employs  
around the word 火

in this translation the  
embedding of fossil words  
invites a variety of  
excavations

these include 𐍑(ǣ)r  
from ME *fier*  
for *fire*

and *bakke*  
from ME  
for *bat*

As in the “Naked Memo,”  
this translation preserves  
Yoshimasu’s  
homophonographic play.

The construction  
“someoak” allows  
words  
to emerge from the  
word *smoke*

a translation of the Japanese

*kemuri* from which  
Yoshimasu draws:

*ke* 毛 *hair*  
*mu* 無 *nothingness*  
*ri* 里 *village*

Other kanji characters  
appear in the translation for  
their aesthetic and semantic  
suggestiveness:

door = 戸  
door = 戸口

戸 means *door*  
and  
is homophonous for  
*and*

口 means *mouth*  
and connotes an entrance

Combined

戸口 *toguchi*  
means *porch*

Stacked vertically in the  
Japanese original, they also  
come to resemble the  
character 石 *ishi*  
meaning *rock*  
recalling Adonis’s “Pierre.”

This play continues in the  
line:

“I” has become the *eye* of the *aba*.

Here Yoshimasu vamps on  
Hirasawa’s word

*shimame* 縞目

The character  
pronounced *me*

in Japanese  
only suggests *I*

when Yoshimasu  
Romanizes it as *me*

then turns the characters  
upside down.

The original

目  
-to-  
*me*

conversion relies for its  
double entendre on the  
occurrence of *me*  
as a first-person  
pronoun in Romance  
languages.

For reference:

Tanabata  
(Qixi Festival in Chinese)  
the Star Festival of July 7,  
celebrates the once-a-year  
meeting in the sky of two  
divine lovers separated by  
the woman’s father.

The Quran references are  
variations on the lines:

*Have we not made the earth a  
resting place? And the mountains  
as stakes?*

78:6-7.

Odaima Muhammed  
Abdullah

is a scholar and  
translator living in Japan.

“Akiko-san” refers to poet

Yosano Akiko  
(1878-1942)

renowned for her work in  
modernizing *tanka* poetry, a  
possible parallel to Adonis’s  
efforts in Arabic poetry.

Notes to AT THE SIDES (CÔTÉS) OF POETRY

The text  
in small print  
 was added on February 5,  
 2012  
 during a morning spent in  
 the snow  
 on the shores  
 of Lake Red Castle.

**Akagi Ōnuma**

This lake is  
 located  
in  
 Gunma Prefecture not  
 far from the  
 birth  
 place of  
**Sakutarō Hagiwara**  
 famous poet  
 evoked  
 in the annotations  
 early in the poem.

This poem  
 appeared  
 in the daily

news  
 paper  
*Asabi*  
*shinbun*

as part of a  
 series of poems written by  
 twelve of Japan's most  
 prominent poets in  
 commemoration of the  
 one year anniversary of the

**March 11, 2011**

earthquake  
 tsunami  
 and  
 nuclear  
 meltdown.

Many proper  
 names

are  
 place names  
 from the  
 devastated  
 regions  
 of northeastern  
 Japan.

In particular  
 the **Ishikari River**

is  
 A place that has  
 impressed  
 Yoshimasu deeply.

Many years ago  
 he visited  
 the snowy banks  
 of the Ishikari  
 River

so impressed by the  
 desolate  
 landscape  
 there that he wrote the  
 poem

“Ishikari Sheets.”

Yoshimasu returned  
 there  
 after  
 the  
 earthquake  
 to read this poem.

In many places in  
 this poem  
 Yoshimasu  
 plays with the  
 associations  
 between words  
 and their sound  
 and **silence**  
 e.

For instance

in the comments that  
 accompanied this poem  
 in the online version  
 of

the  
*Asabi shinbun*  
 he commented that the  
 symbol

ツ

represents  
 the cessation of  
 sound  
 ——— a pause  
 or silence within the sound  
 of the poem itself.

When following the  
 sound **oo**  
 which sounds  
 a bit like a short

g  
 a  
 s  
 p this silence  
 might represent the  
 moment in which  
 a  
 tear  
 falls.

Interestingly Yoshimasu writes  
 many of the sounds in kanji  
 characters

relatively unusual in  
 contemporary Japanese

which typically uses kanji in  
 order to represent meaning  
 rather than phonetic action

The sound **oo**  
 is sometimes  
 written with  
 the character  
 meaning

*rabbit*

兎

Notes to AT THE SIDES (CÔTÉS) OF POETRY

and sometimes necessarily breaks in  
with certain sound- related connections. new  
the character idiosyncratic directions  
signifying in English  
*universe* However like crystals growing  
宇 in rendering this from  
thus poem in English smaller  
introducing molecular structures.  
another dimension other connections and  
of meaning patterns naturally form  
into the poem. with  
Translation growing grammar.  
no corrections to the

## Notes to NAMIE, OR THE BLUE DOOR

The *whistle* is a synonym for the *whisper* that appears in a subsequent line  
 it is something like an oracle or the intimation  
 (perhaps from the world of the dead)  
 of Gozo's vocation.

Since the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, Gozo like the Polish WWII survivor and Nobel Laureate poet Czeslaw Milosz

has felt a sense of survivor's guilt sharpen into intense literary obligation and necessity.

In Japanese, there is a preposition *wo* between the verb *to hear* and the object *whistle*  
 We say: "I hear *wo* an inaudible whistle."

Gozo treats this preposition specially...

1. adopting kanji for the otherwise simple usually-hiragana-written preposition *wo*
2. the kanji Gozo uses for *wo* suggests the shape of a whistling mouth and
3. *wo* makes a visual rhyme with *who* (which end-rhymes with

*Rbu*) and a phonetic rhyme with *Gogh*.

By spotlighting the multiple and simultaneous connotations of Japanese script, Gozo's poetry investigates the complexity of Japanese language and extends the limits of linguistic art.

In Japanese depending on the kanji *shi* can mean poetry can mean death can mean the subject *I* a history the will a man etc.

Here let there be emphasis on the sound of *shi* in the word *watakushi* which is a formal way of expressing *I*

The *white wolf* is a motif that began appearing in Gozo's poetry after the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami.

In kanji *white wolf* 白狼 looks almost identical to a tsunami's *white wave* 白浪  
 And the kanji for *wave*

浪 is *Nami* which we find in the name of the poem and the name of the town Namie whose residents experienced the trauma of the tsunami and subsequent radiation exposure.

This place Namie is the site of inspiration for Gozo's poem.

The words *Loup* and *Ryu* appearing in the same line suggest *loup-garou* = werewolf

The werewolf might be thought to be a metaphor for radiation released by the cracked Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant

OR

for the half-worldly, half-otherworldly nature of the "writing hand" of this composition.

With *U-ke-to*

– Gozo is deconstructing the name of the Uketo River which runs through Namie.  
 – Gozo is giving a strong staccato to each syllable *U Ke and To*

## Notes to NAMIE, OR THE BLUE DOOR

– Gozo adopts a kanji  
for which *U*  
is written as 宇  
meaning universe *Ke*  
is written as 毛  
meaning hair (implying female)  
and *To*  
is written as 戸  
meaning door.

This sort of paronomasia  
also characteristic  
of yakuza  
or punk  
slang  
is otherwise  
very unusual.

It would be about as  
strange to Japanese readers  
as, for French readers, the  
poems written by Villon in  
a lost underworld argot.

In the same way  
Gozo re-ciphers the kanji  
for *Uketo River*  
to read as *Blue Door*.

*Violet Apron* is a motif  
honoring Takaaki  
Yoshimoto, a philosopher  
and a poet who died exactly  
one year after the March 16,  
2011 earthquake.

Gozo began transcribing  
Yoshimoto's poems  
every  
day  
as part of his  
“poetic obligation”  
as a poet who survived  
both  
the earthquake  
and the death of  
Yoshimoto.

These transcriptions are  
inserted  
like  
flower  
offerings  
into the mouths of Gozo's  
“Monsters”  
the large-scale  
palimpsests, the collage  
texts that he has been  
creating since the 2011  
disaster.

**April, 2012:**

Yoshimasu was invited to Paris for an event with Martinican writer, Patrick Chamoiseau, where Chamoiseau presented his meticulous, insightful reading of Yoshimasu's poetry.

Yoshimasu devoted most of the discussion to the effects of the Eastern Japan Earthquake of 2011. He was so moved by this exchange, that upon his return to Tokyo, set himself to reading Chamoiseau's works in Japanese translation.

**November, 2012:**

Yoshimasu reciprocated for the Paris event, inviting Chamoiseau to appear with him at the Institut Français in Tokyo. This event featured Yoshimasu's poem dedicated to Chamoiseau's "writing hand," translated simultaneously in French for Chamoiseau by Sekiguchi Ryōko.

Yoshimasu read "Mo Chuisle" slowly so that the French version would resonate as a close echo, meaning that Yoshimasu could feel Chamoiseau's visceral, affective responses to his poem at the moment it was first read aloud.

Reading the poem begins and ends with the title phrase. And though we learn its basic meaning at the beginning, we come to understand the full meaning of its sonic resonance only at the end.

The Gaelic phrase – pronounced *mō hush'lub* beginning with a lightly throaty Germanic *ch* like a softer Hebrew *ח* or the Arabic *خ* – literally means *my pulse* and functions as a term of endearment.

Yoshimasu's title glosses it with the Japanese phrase *wa-ga kodō* 我が鼓動

literally meaning *my pulse* but without the normal undertone of endearment.

This literality is embedded in the word *kokoro* 心.

In the lines about the tree standing in the speaker's *kokoro* the word would normally be translated as *heart*.

But the word does not quite correspond to the English *heart*.

It can suggest something like the *emotional center* as it does in English, though it does not designate the anatomical heart—indeed, in Japanese, the anatomical word for *heart* incorporates the character *kokoro*, but is semantically and phonically distinct: *shinzō* 心臓.

This character *kokoro* 心 is also present within the Japanese word for *center* *chūshin* 中心.

Phrases like *center of the book* 書物の中心 translated as *heart of the book* prolong the resonance of *kokoro*.

*Kokoro*, so often translated as *heart*.

The change from the more literal *center* of 中心 to *heart* as the insistence of the metaphor in Japanese *écriture*.

Several others of Yoshimasu's innovative constructions must remain in Japanese. The most prominent is 樹-間 which functions in several ways through the poem: as *tree, to stand*, or (tree) *bark*.

It parallels the Japanese word for *human* 人間 *ningen* a word rich in philosophical implications.

The word 樹-間 itself is Yoshimasu's own invention and combines a slightly literary character for *tree* 樹 with that for *space* or *between* 間  
-separated  
-or connected?  
-by a hyphen.

The Japanese concept of the human—embodied in the word 人間—as an entity based essentially on a relational *betweenness* 間柄 *aidagara* a being

constituted through a set of relations to others in constantly varying situations and environments.

Yoshimasu quotes extensively from Chamoiseau's writings

interweaving  
a foreign voice into his own  
speech

finding  
new affinities of  
sound and meaning.

These quotations all come from  
the Japanese translation by  
Tsukamoto Masanori of  
Chamoiseau's French text.

On several occasions, however, it  
proved more fruitful to follow  
Chamoiseau's original French text  
more closely than Tsukamoto's  
translation.

Take this passage that  
Yoshimasu quotes from the  
first line of page 134 of  
Chamoiseau's *Biblique des  
derniers gestes*:

彼らを古い時代の亡霊たち、  
最後の逃亡奴隷たちの目立た  
ない化身たち、ここでの生活  
になんの影響ももたらさない  
[社会の周辺]の人々と、私は  
みなしていたのである

Quoted passage underlined.

The part in brackets  
[社会の周辺]  
meaning

*the socially marginalized*  
is found in the middle of the  
corresponding French phrase.

The French original is:  
*Je les considérais comme spectres  
des temps anciens, obscurs  
avatars des derniers nègres  
marrons, marginaux sans  
conséquence sur l'existence d'ici*

Corresponding passages  
underlined.

The Japanese syntax  
externalizes a key word  
from Chamoiseau's line and  
hence from Yoshimasu's

quoted phrase.  
The Japanese translation  
more starkly highlights  
the figure of  
**escaped  
slaves**

逃  
亡  
奴  
隷

than the French colonial  
phrase *nègres  
marrons.*

The final translation therefore  
hybridizes the French and the  
Japanese in two ways:

**1st** reinserting the  
*marginaux*

**2nd** maintaining the  
more direct reference to  
slaves that was likely  
incorporated into the  
Japanese text as an  
explanatory measure:

*spirits from a past age, marginal,  
latter-day avatars of escaped  
slaves.*

In "Mo Chuisle"  
Yoshimasu transforms  
acoustic affinities into new  
semantic discoveries.

This could be called  
*translingual reconstructionism*  
(where the *-ism* suggests it  
the fraternal twin of  
deconstructionism).

One instance is when the  
m  
sound  
breaks  
out  
of the Japanese phoneme  
*mi* む

in the paragraph translated:  
water, water, ,, the mist's  
emphasis, water, water,  
moving along easily,  
Tsunami乃 victims, so  
easily, those 樹-間[trees]  
ar,ranged, "**baji**RU = basil,  
THAT RU = RUE =  
ROUTE", sounds of  
muddy footfalls, became  
visible.

In the Japanese the sound is in  
*mizu* water  
*Tsunami* michi  
*path* komichi  
*little* path  
*mina* everyone  
*mietekiteita*  
becoming  
*v*  
*i*  
*s*  
*i*  
*b*  
*l*  
*e*

The *m*  
affinities extend to  
include the visual match *w*  
allowing the likeness to be  
seen if not heard in English.

It is as if the sound has  
broken out of a single word,  
alighting here and there  
in the poetic mind  
on paper  
tracing out a path that leads  
to the devastation of the  
tsunami. And at the end is  
the tree, which looms out of  
*mietekiteita* *ki* = 樹 / tree.

These syllable-splitting  
reversals should not be  
mistaken for Dadaist

wordplay.  
They manifest Yoshimasu's  
experience during a  
post-3/11  
visit to Rikuzen Takata City  
in Iwate Prefecture.

**24<sup>th</sup> of February, 2012:**

In an interview with Akada  
Yasukazu in *Asabi Shimbun*  
Yoshimasu articulated this  
connection:

*Last year, I visited Rikuzen Takata  
City in Iwate Prefecture. The blue sign  
from a convenience store, tatami mats,  
New Year's Cards were scattered  
about. Bulldozers' giant hands were  
raking out the rubble. At that time,  
they were unnamable things, things you  
can neither film nor express. You  
simply have to hang your head. I heard  
their voice. [...] Paul Valéry called  
poetry a "hesitation between sound and  
meaning." Somewhere in the depths  
lurk the spirits of sounds. [...] The  
faint voices of the spirits I make into  
sound, I pursue the new meanings that  
emerge next to the sounds, blending  
sound with meaning. Until I reach that  
point, I have to stare at that desperate,  
desolate landscape time and again,  
circling the underworld. Smashing my  
own words to bits, I put forth totally  
new voices. Poetry is that labor done  
even when labeled unintelligible.*

Notes to NAKED MEMO

This translation of  
Yoshimasu Gōzō's  
“Naked Memo”  
“裸のメモ”

is more  
breaking ground  
than a ground  
breaking translation

It calls for more work  
work  
in teams  
to complete

On the first page the eyes  
could be those  
of the seamstress  
or the crimson boat

This translation ties them  
to the suggestion of a figure  
vague but definitely human

Preserving ambiguity would  
be ideal

The following  
line  
from the second page  
witnesses the length to  
which the translator must  
go in order to preserve it:

“.....I thought, whiz,  
purr ..... a voice, hair  
(air), could be herd.”

Yoshimasu utilizes  
a type of wordplay  
known as *ateji*  
replacing the characters  
typically used for writing  
a word  
with homophonous  
graphically distinct  
characters a kind

of visually  
dissonant  
*homophonographic play*

He replaces the Japanese  
verb for *whisper*  
*sasayaku*

with the following  
characters  
separated by

*keitōten* Japanese commas:  
左、左、矢、苦  
literally

*left, left, arrow, suffering*

To suture  
the gap  
created by this compulsory  
choice

Means to create  
new forms of wordplay

Hence *whiz purr* for *whisper*  
and homophonic  
resonances of hair / air  
and  
*herd* in place of *beard*

Yoshimasu grafts  
Chinese derived *kanji*  
characters over casual forms

Caution:  
The parenthetical  
and bracketed  
insertions are Yoshimasu's  
own glosses

(sometimes deceptive sometimes  
playful sometimes simply saying  
the same thing different)

Finally left is  
a smattering of Japanese  
characters that  
could have been removed

を, ツ, 乃, の, ノ

The first pronounced frequently Romanized

を  
*ob*  
*wo*  
is  
a grammatical particle  
designating  
the word it follows  
as the recipient of  
the action that follows

Yoshimasu makes marked  
use of it and includes it  
in moments when it  
is unnecessary  
emphasizing the  
objectness of concepts

ツ is a borrowed suggestion  
ツ represents  
the cessation  
of sound

the final three  
characters  
are all pronounced  
乃 *no*  
の *no*  
ノ *no*

They appear in nonsensical  
pairings  
and are almost  
a dominant trope

They attain  
the feel  
of chant

at times an inane stutter  
visual dissonance between  
the *hiragana katakana* and  
*kanji* characters  
it recalls  
the diversity of the  
Japanese sign.

Notes to STONES SINGLE, OR IN HANDFULS

O nautilus spiral a  
thumbprint trace on a shell

Mnemonic touch I touch  
to trace me back

Dear memory  
remember me to the sea

And write where I've been  
in spindrift and salt

This *Memo* begins  
and ends at the sea

and it moves among Gozo's  
own experiences of the sea

as a traveler  
as a reader.

On his journeys in Japan  
and America that he writes  
of here, Gozo's physical  
movements are intertextual  
steps

steps taken  
wading

through vast literary waters  
spanning from Auden's  
own capacious explorations  
of the iconographic sea

in his  
*Enchafèd Flood*

to

Melville's grim sempiternal  
caveat about the sinister  
churnings of the sea in all  
its caprices –

its trespasses  
unforgiven against those  
who trespass against it.

The *Memo* begins with the  
storms and rains that feed  
the sea and foment its dead  
calm into violence.

As Gozo journeys  
and writes

he may try  
but he cannot  
write away  
the too recent  
memory of the sea  
and its deleterious assault  
on the Fukushima nuclear  
power plant in

March of 2011.

Moby Dick, the terrible  
white sea god rushing the  
Pequod's decks like an  
earthquake's waves to  
shore.

The distance between each  
comma in the Memo is a walk  
of miles. The commas are the  
signs of halts between his  
walks.

*Sung as a preface:*

the lyric is based on a well-  
known Japanese children's  
song, "Toryanse"  
"Pass Through."

Lafcadio Hearn's translation  
goes something like this:

*Toryanse, toryanse.*

*This narrow road, where  
does it go?*

*This narrow road is the  
Road of the God Tenjin.*

*I pray you, allow me to pass  
for a moment.*

*No one must pass who has  
no business to pass...*

Gozo has quoted a part of  
the song and has rearranged  
or changed the lyrics some.

Many pedestrians' traffic lights  
in Japan have adopted the  
melody of "Toryanse."

It has also played a certain role  
in one of Gozo's film works  
*gozoCiné.*

Crossings  
crossing paths  
crossing bridges  
these liminal transfers  
they have come to have  
no little metaphorical  
importance in Gozo's work.

Prunus Mume: a fruit  
perhaps a peach having  
as drupes do special  
significance  
in Chinese  
in Japanese tradition.

A crucial act of throwing  
or casting  
peaches

is found in a section of the  
origin of the country Japan  
in the *Kojiki*  
the oldest extant chronicle  
of Japan, dated  
to the 8<sup>th</sup> century C. E.

It tells of a god and a  
goddess, two of the deities  
who belong to the last  
generation of the gods that  
made the foundations of  
Japan.

The goddess, Izanami, is the  
goddess of death and birth.

The god Izanagi is her  
husband and older brother.

At Yomotsuhira Saka, on  
the way back from Yomi,  
the world of death where  
Izanami resides, Izanagi,  
headed toward *this world*,



Notes to STONES SINGLE, OR IN HANDFULS

and whither the hand  
searches behind one's back  
in the darkness...

these are  
all included  
in the meaning of

背  
手

*hai-  
shu*

In this conversation *grasping*  
*out into the darkness*  
the eyes will not  
the eyes cannot  
prevail.

To substitute the hands for  
the eye in looking for  
something in this case can  
be understood as an  
instinctive behavior, and  
therefore regressively pure,  
resembling the  
untrammelled purity of the  
deeds of gods and  
goddesses.

Children press objects to  
their lips before they  
speak them.

Gozo reaching out  
not by sight  
but  
by the very oral materiality  
of his Memos  
into time past and time to  
come for understanding.

The monk's story reads as  
an aphorism  
one that subtly decries  
the dangers of an artificial  
rationality  
of thinking in indices and  
indexical correspondences  
between what is given and  
what is made by experience.

This particular *Memo* serves  
as an epilogue to Gozo's  
collected

*Naked*  
*Memos*.

While it does leave much  
unsaid

– so much is so anfractuious and  
unsayable in speech in any way –

clues still whisper up and  
across its split sentences of  
invaluable worth to reading,  
to groping  
one's way  
through  
Gozo's  
work.



a kanji character that means  
*convex*.

Notes to BORROWING A MELODY FROM HEARTS OF  
THE THREE GRACES

This [ t e x t ] . . .

it's a poem

it's a performance script

it's comments on film

it's remembrances

quotes

and it's a response

a response

to the film

100 Children

Waiting for a Train

a film by Ignacio Agüero  
portraying the filmmaker  
Alicia Vega as she engages  
impoverished Chilean children  
in the art of filmmaking.

Vega uses the chapel of  
Lo Hermida as workshop  
space where the children,  
most of whom have never  
seen a film before, gather to  
screen, for example,  
Chaplin classics, and learn  
about film-craft.

The response was given as a talk  
following a screening of the film,  
as part of an ongoing series of  
discussions on film and poetry  
held at the Athénée Française in  
Tokyo, Japan.

Texts and transcripts from  
Yoshimasu's talks were  
collected in a book

<i>Film</i>	燃
<i>House</i>	え
<i>in</i>	あ
<i>Flames,</i>	が
	る
from which	映
this piece	画
was	小
taken	屋

Notes to A WHISTLE FROM THE OTHER SHORE

On "A Whistle from the Other Shore:"  
 The original title of the great Yasujirō Ozu film "Early Summer" is "Barley Fall."  
 In this case, "fall" refers not to autumn but to the time when barley is harvested— early summer.  
 "Barley Fall" is a seasonal haiku word for summer  
 English depicts the double l's in *fall* and *small* as images of barley stalks.  
 The Ozu movie takes place in Kamakura in early-mid May and the summer sea breeze is discernable.  
 The poem begins: four nostalgic images: barley the sky a bookmark and dogs and these set the stage for the poet's attempt to hear the voices of the dead — voices from the other shore —  
 which, though inaudible, register through an attentive tuning (in)to signs.  
 When Gozo mentions

"writing a poem of a whistle (from the other shore)" he is using the term 詠む yomu as the verb but literally means to read to chant outloud.  
 In its doubleness writing a poem is also "listening to the inaudible."  
 Parentheses have at least three roles in this poem.  
 They add referential information to phrases as in: (from the Other Shore).  
 They suggest ways of reading certain kanji, as in:  
 葉 (しおり)  
 =  
 Bookmark (Bookmark)  
 They even offer variant possibilities for reading kanji. For example, in the line:  
 上の空 (うわのそら)  
 the parenthetical phrase lets us know that the first phrase 上の reads as *uwa no sora* meaning

*absentminded deep in thought abstracted*  
 But Gozo inserts "ruby" (small letter furigana) above the character 上 so that we read it as "ue."  
 "Ue no sora" means "sky above."  
 We process two meanings at once as though hearing stacked chords in music: "deep in thought" and "sky above."  
 Throughout "A Whistle from the Other Shore," Gozo seems to be trying to recreate the breezy air of early summer in Kamakura west of Yokohama and to fuse it with the happiness he derives from re-visiting scenes in Ozu's "Early Summer."  
 The film itself has a happy-ending and no one suffers or dies (although one imagines the old couple remaining at the end will die soon).  
 The poem's emotional register, its expressive happiness, may be closely connected to a comfortable awareness of the constant nearness of death and the dead ...certainly when we watch

## Notes to A WHISTLE FROM THE OTHER SHORE

when we watch a film  
especially an old film  
we see the dead rise.

Perhaps  
Gozo's dialogue early in the  
poem with

Miho Shimao

the famous author of the  
autobiographical novel

*Shi no Toge*

(d. 2007)

Perhaps this too is an  
attempt to raise the dead.

In Japan many superstitions  
surround whistling:

whistling as a means of  
connecting with the spirit  
world.

Gozo

uses forms of speech  
that personify things like  
the shadows of dogs  
and  
letters hand-written on signs.

Notes to KADENA

Kadena  
嘉手納  
is the name of a small town west of

Okinawa City.

Its dominant feature is (a)

U S

air base

—  
the largest military base in the Far East.

It **occupies** 83 percent of the space of

Kadena

and

**requires** its population of

14,000

to live

in a space a little over one square mile.

One third of

Okinawa Island

is taken and used by (the)

U S

Air Force.

Ampo Hill: a low overlook

made to provide

a sweeping view of

Kadena

Air Base.

The word *Ampo*

is an abbreviation of the

**Nichibei Anzen Hoshō Jōyaku**

the Japanese name of the

**Japanese-United States Mutual Security Treaty**

and it immediately evokes the Ampo Struggle in 1960

the

greatest

anti-

government

demonstration mounted

in

Japan's

modern

history.

It was in opposition to the

renewal of the treaty signed

with the

**San Francisco Peace**

**Treaty**

**of 1951**

The renewal was

accomplished despite

huge riots.

*Utaki*

*a small*

*simple*

*structure*

*that enshrines*

*a family's ancestral deities in*

Okinawa.

It is usually built in a

wooded area.

The word originally appears

to have meant

*a safe place.*

In the past a vestal

offered prayers

to it and chanted

the deity's song

during festivals.

*Clattering*

*Katakata*

an onomatopoeic word that

means

*clattering*

later on

Yoshimasu

morphs

the word into *katakana*

*striking a rock*

but it could as also mean

something like

*it may have been as*

*though the air struck*

*a rock.*

This poem is

mostly

written

in a

combination

of kanji and katakana

the syllabary that is

today

mainly used to express

foreign words and onomatopoeia

though before

and during the

**Second World War**

the combination

it was used

for official military

communications.

In the translation this is

shown by italicization.

*An Upturned Gem*

A phrase that appears in a

passage in

Book III of John Keats'

*Endymion*

describing

"... a youthful wight

Smiling beneath a coral

diadem, / Out-sparkling

sudden like an upturn'd gem,

Appear'd. . ."

Junzaburō Nishiwaki

1892-1984

famously used the phrase

in one of his own early

poems.

Notes to KADENA

<p>word for</p> <p>“Narrow snakes” may allude</p> <p>to the Emily Dickinson poem that begins</p> <p>“A narrow Fellow in the Grass / Occasionally rides — / You may have met Him — did you not / His notice sudden is —.”</p> <p>Saigyō 1118-1189</p> <p>A warrior turned Buddhist monk a constant traveler</p>	<p><i>Ayago</i></p> <p><i>song.</i></p>	<p>who was counted among the greatest poets in his lifetime and ever since.</p> <p>Stories legendary or otherwise</p> <p>began to circulate about him before his death</p> <p>less than a hundred years after he achieved nirvana</p> <p><i>The Tale of Saigyō</i> Saigyō Monogatari</p> <p>came into being.</p> <p>Among the poems grouped as <i>110 Tanka on Love</i></p>	<p>is</p> <p><i>Kokoro kara kokoro ni mono o omowasete mi o kurushimuru waga mi narikeri.</i></p> <p><i>Making my heart brood on things because of my heart I torture myself my own self.</i></p> <p><i>Tenmoku</i>      <i>Iron-glazed tea bowls</i></p> <p>that Japanese students of Zen brought back from</p> <p>Mt. Tiānmù in Zhè Jiāng during the Kamakura Period.</p>
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Notes to THE KEENING I LONG FOR

Gozo Yoshimasu wrote  
Koishii aigō

恋しい哀号

The Keening I Long For  
following his travels to  
Okinawa in the fall of 2002.

Among the place names he  
mentions in the poem  
Koza

the former name of  
Okinawa City  
Futenma  
in  
Ginowan City  
has been for decades the locus  
of the biggest contention and  
tension resulting from the  
presence of the

U S  
military in  
Japan

The larger matter of the  
U S  
rule of  
Okinawa

in fact dates from before the  
U S

**occupation** ended with the  
Peace Treaty in 1952

although  
Okinawa  
officially reverted to  
Japan  
in 1972.

Tuft-Spew-Section  
appears to be a place name  
but maybe  
not.

*kaitsubiri* *grebe*

TA from  
*yogoreta* *dirty, soiled*

The U S Marine Corps  
base in  
Futenma  
that Yoshimasu talks about in  
this poem  
takes up not just a quarter of  
the city's land area but its  
prime space  
hindering  
the movements of the people  
and blocking proper city  
planning.

A fleet of attack helicopters  
permanently stationed at  
the  
base creates noise that often  
necessitates suspension of  
teaching in schools in the  
city  
among them  
Okinawa International  
University

*kemono-jimuta* *beastly*

Shika-odori no Hajimari  
a children's story by  
Miyazawa Kenji:

The narrator  
dozing  
in the middle of a field

hears  
from the winds how the  
local deer dance started.

The farmer named Kajū  
once  
traveling through the same  
field

rests  
to  
eat

his lunch but too tired he  
can't  
finish the last horse-chestnut  
dumpling and

for the deer. He walks  
away but then he realizes  
he

had  
forgotten his towel.

Going back to the spot he  
finds a small herd of deer  
prancing in a circle.

As he watches  
closely he sees  
that they are  
eager to get  
the dumpling but are  
frightened by the  
mysterious white towel

lying  
by it. One deer after  
another timidly  
approaches the towel  
sniffs at it and each  
prances away to  
report to the other deer what  
he  
thinks it  
is.

In the Miyazawa story the  
first deer hazards  
that the towel is  
a living thing

*a pale-faced guard*  
*aojiro no banpé*

to protect  
the dumpling.

The latest round of upheavals  
involving

Futenma  
started with the rape of a  
teenage girl by a

U S  
marine in 1995.

The following spring Prime  
Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō  
whose uncle was killed in

Okinawa

began negotiations on the  
return or the removal of the  
Marine base with

U S  
Ambassador Walter Mondale.

Notes to THE KEENING I LONG FOR

Since then a succession of prime ministers have tried to work out a solution all in vain, ending most dramatically in Hatoyama Yukio's resignation as prime minister with tearful apologies to the

Okinawan

people in 2010 despite his pledge to solve the problem of (the)

U S

military base in

Futenma.

That was nearly eight years after Yoshimasu wrote

“The Keening I Long For.”

In this poem as in others Yoshimasu

plays with word associations made possible partly because of the abundance of homophones in Japanese and partly because a range of Chinese characters

pronounced the Japanese way are available for individual Japanese sounds.

Yoshimasu advances

these sound associations sometimes

through the deployment of the

Man'yō syllabary

万葉仮名

a set of

Chinese characters selected when Japan did not have an indigenous writing system to represent Japanese words using them

sometimes for the sound sometimes for the sense.

SU

nest

horobosu

destroy

To recreate most let alone

all aspects of Yoshimasu's

Se MaN TiC

Ort (h) O (graph) (I) c

and

T Y P O G R A P H I C

play in English by using the Roman alphabet alone is almost impossible.

The most that the translator can do is to suggest a semblance...

Or to ask Yoshimasu, with the likelihood that the poet may simply answer “I just don't remember.”

ITA

tsubuyateita was mumbling.

Hagoromo

Feather Robe

is

the most frequently staged play in the nō repertoire.

A fisherman named Hakuryō White Dragon

one day finds a feathery robe hanging on a pine tree on the beach. He

takes it as a rare find but discovers soon enough

that it belongs to a heavenly maiden who

has flown down to

bathe in the sea. At first he refuses to

return it to the maiden but when she

says she won't

be able to fly back to heaven without

it he relents and

says he will give it back to her if she

dances in the sky for him. She

does and as she does so gradually

flies away.

KU<sup>(only)</sup>

ibiku

reverberate.

Notes to WALKING ALL BY MYSELF

“Walking”  
is from  
Yoshimasu’s book  
*Yuki no Shima aruwa*  
*Emily no Yūrei*  
*Snowy Island or Emily’s Ghost*  
The book won the  
Education Minister’s prize  
in 1999.

*Af(b)unrupar*  
an Ainu word  
that refers  
to a dent  
or entrance  
that is said to lead to the  
netherworld.

There are a number of such  
holes on hillsides on the  
northernmost island of Japan,  
Hokkaidō—  
one of the better-known  
examples being in  
Noboribetsu northeast of  
Muroran.

The title here includes a  
note citing Emily  
Dickinson’s poem 274 that  
begins

The only Ghost I ever saw  
Was dressed in Meclin – so –  
He had no sandal on his foot –  
And stepped like flakes of snow –

*Terrifying* the word  
reappears  
toward  
the end

of Dickinson’s poem.

Zaō volcanic mountain  
1,841 meters high  
5,523 feet high  
that straddles Yamagata  
and Miyagi  
prefectures.

The deity Zaō Gongen is  
enshrined  
at the top.

Its old name  
was  
Wasurezu no Yama  
Mount Never-Forget  
Today it’s a famous ski resort.

*Mount Moon* *Gassan*  
a volcanic mountain  
1,984 meters high  
5,950 feet high

Tsuki-yomi-no-mikoto  
the deity of the moon  
is enshrined at its summit.

Bashō wrote:  
“On the fifth day we paid our  
respects to Gongen. It is not  
known which period the Great  
Teacher Nōjo, who  
established this shrine, comes  
from. The *Engi-shiki* says it is a  
shrine of Ushū Sato-yama.  
Did the scribe mistake the  
character *kuro* for *sato* and call  
it *sato-yama*? Did he abbreviate  
Ushū Kuro-yama and call it  
Haguro-yama? I’m told that  
the *Fudoki* says that the name  
Dewa derives from the birds’  
feathers used as an annual  
tribute from this province.  
Along with Gassan and  
Yudono, it makes up “the  
three mountains.”

“I turned my Being”  
from Emily Dickinson  
Poem 351.  
The poem has four stanzas.  
The second stanza in its  
entirety reads as follows:

I turned my Being round and round  
And paused at every pound  
To ask the Owner’s name—  
For doubt, that I should know the Sound—

“Many cloud peaks”  
from Bashō’s

N  
a  
r  
r  
o  
w  
R o a d

The original hokku  
called haiku today  
is

*Kumo no mine ikutsu*  
*kuzurete tsuki no yama*

Literally it means

*How many cloud peaks need*  
*to collapse before Mount*  
*Moon reveals itself?*

“At me – The sea withdrew –”  
from  
Emily Dickinson’s  
Poem 520.

When published in 1891 it was  
given the title

“By the Sea”

The poem begins:

I started Early – Took my Dog –  
And visited the Sea –  
The Mermaids in the Basement  
Came out to look at me –

And Frigates – in the Upper Floor  
Extended Hempen Hands –  
Presuming Me to be a Mouse –  
Aground – upon the sands –

But no Man moved Me – till the Tide  
Went past my simple Shoe –  
And past my Apron – and my Belt  
And past my Bodice – too –

Notes to WALKING ALL BY MYSELF

Orikuchi Shinobu  
 also known as  
 Nobuo  
 1887-1953  
 a famous poet  
 and ethnographic  
 interpreter of Japanese literature.

The tanka already partially cited  
 reads in its entirety

*Kudzu no bana fumishidakarete, iro  
 atarashi. Kono yamamichi o ikishi hito  
 ari.*

夏の花踏みしだかれて、  
 色あたらし。  
 この山道を行きし人あり

*Kudzu flowers trampled upon, their color  
 fresh. Someone has taken this mountain  
 path.*

It is included in  
*Umiyama no Aida*  
*Between Sea and Mountain*  
 Orikuchi  
 is one of the few tanka poets  
 who experimented with the use  
 of punctuation spacing and  
 lineation in tanka.

Yoshimasu has written a whole  
 book describing his travels  
 following the steps Orikuchi  
 took in ethnographic  
 explorations:

*Shōgai wa Yume no Nakamichi*  
*Life Is Midway in a Dream.*

“Old AINU’s Crane”  
 the  
 title  
 poem  
 opens  
 thus:

Hey, where are you going!  
 —Stopping his tiller a  
 grandfather admonished me.  
 The grandfather must have been  
 the ancient old AINU  
 who in my  
 dream last night mimicked the  
 figure of a crane whose tail, the  
 way he walks, is beautiful

and includes the line  
 The ancient old AINU’s crane  
 whose way of walking is beautiful.

The AINU are an ethnic  
 group who originally  
 populated much of the  
 northern part of Japan. A  
 recent investigation has  
 shown that the Kennewick  
 Man, found in Washington  
 State and thought to be  
 8,000 years old, is most  
 closely related to the AINU.

“Be its Mattress straight —”  
 from Emily Dickinson’s  
 poem 8  
 2  
 9.

The poem, to which Emily  
 gave the title “Country  
 Burial,” reads in its entirety:

**Ample make this Bed –  
 Make this bed with Awe –  
 In it wait till Judgment  
 break Excellent and Fair.**

**Be it’s Mattress straight –  
 Be it’s Pillow round –  
 Let no Sunrise’ yellow noise  
 Interrupt this Ground –**

In the title poem to his  
1998 collection

*Yuki no Shima aruwa Emily*  
*no Yūrei* 雪  
*Snowy Island* の  
*or* 島

*Emily's* あ  
*Ghost* る

Yoshimasu は  
superimposes エ  
two visits to Iki Island ミ  
リ

His own 一  
and that of the great の  
folklorist Orikuchi 幽  
靈

Shinobu Orikuchi's 1927  
essay *Yuki no Shima*

雪  
の  
島

Emily's Ghost refers to  
Emily Dickinson's poem  
that begins

"The only Ghost I ever saw  
Was dressed in Meclin — so..."

In his notes to the poem  
Yoshimasu makes both  
references clear.

He quotes passages from  
Orikuchi's essay and the  
first two stanzas from  
Dickinson's poem with a  
Japanese translation.

*Rotary tiller*  
*a plowing machine*

usually the size of a somewhat  
large lawnmower.

The association of cranes with  
the Ainu probably comes from  
the fact that the Japanese  
habitat for the tanchōzuru, the  
red-crowned crane, is now  
limited to eastern Hokkaidō  
and Hokkaidō has been  
strongly associated with the  
Ainu.

*This fall why do I feel so old...*  
*Kono aki wa nande toshiyoru kumo ni*  
*tori...*

From one of Bashō's  
last haiku composed in the  
final year of his life  
the 7th year of Genroku  
1694.

### world-stay (night)

Yoshimasu employs  
*Man'yō-gana* for  
*night* for  
*yoru* and

*stay up late*  
*fukashi.*

To translate the three  
characters for *fukashi* would  
be meaningless.

Though the translation of  
the two characters for *yoru*  
as given is forced and  
meaningless too.

*Man'yō-gana* mostly  
represents sounds, not  
meanings.

Iki an island in  
Tsushima Strait  
north of Saga  
was called in ancient times

*Heaven's Single Pillar*

*Ame no hitotsu-bashira*

天一柱

It rises out of the ocean in  
isolation.

The name Iki  
壹  
岐  
was once pronounced *yuki*  
as the two Chinese  
characters 由  
吉

*Man'yō-gana* given to it in  
*Man'yōshū* suggest.

The old name, which is  
homophonous with *snow*, is  
something Orikuchi confirmed in  
a way through an elderly,  
knowledgeable gentleman with a  
long white beard he found  
himself next to onboard a boat  
taking them both to Iki.

Given the way Orikuchi wrote  
about it, however, the *snow*  
association may well have  
been prompted by the name  
of one of the rocky outcrops  
that surround the island one  
called

*Kanashiro-se*  
金白礁  
*Gold-White-Reef*

which in the evening light was  
covered with powdery snow.

The word is *iki*  
also homophonous with *live*  
*living.*

*We stand and part,*  
opens one of the  
*Hyakunin isshu,*  
*Tachivakare Inaba no yama no*  
*mine ni ouru matsu to shi kikaba*  
*ima kaeri komu.* The poem by  
Ariwara no Yukihira  
818-893

in essence says *We part and*  
*I go to Inaba but I'll return if I*  
*bear you will wait for me.*

Notes to TO THE HOUSE OF DUMB MUTES

The translator (1) notes that this multi-vocal text was created in the process of multiple levels of revision.

Yoshimasu went back to a first draft added new alternative phrases using / slashes commas and quotations gathered from around him.

The result is a... complicated multi-layered text that evokes multiple scenes at once — a trip to Scotland a trip to

Frank Lloyd Wright's studio in Wisconsin as well as a scene in

the Musashino Plains of Tokyo.

Japanese tends to use very few pronouns, especially in poetry.

**This text is no exception using only an occasional w e o r a n I**

Therefore it is often ambiguous who is doing the action in any particular moment.

In the Japanese this ambiguity is not much of an issue especially since we understand there are in a sense

multiple Yoshimasu Yoshimasu in this poem each of which describes a particular scene.

English however forces us to include a subject in each sentence.

As a result (1) have usually chosen whenever there is some ambiguity to use the pluralizing we in order to emphasize the multiplicity of voices in the text.

The quote from *Macbeth* comes from Act 5 Scene 5 the famous scene in which a messenger announces that *the woods seem to move*

thus letting the audience know Lady Macbeth's prophecy comes true.

In the Japanese Yoshimasu includes the original English *in italics* along with a Japanese translation by Sawamura Torajirō (1885-1945).

Notes to THE LOVE TREE

The setting  
for this poem

is a trip  
the poet made  
to an archaeological  
site

in northern Japan where  
lacquer implements  
were produced during  
the Jōmon period.

14,000–300 BCE

The love tree is what  
Yoshimasu calls the  
lacquer  
tree whose sap  
is used  
to make the lacquer finish.

In response to  
questions

the poet explains that  
the attempt to embrace  
the tree is not only because  
the **tree has never  
embraced its own mother**  
but because the poet  
himself bears the traumatic  
**memory**

of his mother's refusal  
to openly show  
affection. The kiss  
of the lacquer tree is  
also the sensation of the lips  
touching the rim  
of the lacquer soup  
bowl while eating  
and the tree's open  
wound

is the opening of the bowl  
**deep red** is the color of  
lacquer  
but Yoshimasu also

has in mind the color  
red in the paintings of Paul  
Klee.

Yoshimasu  
was reading the diaries  
of Paul Klee  
at the time he wrote this poem  
and images of Klee's paintings are  
an important element in all of the  
poems in the collection to which  
this one belongs...

*Naked Memos*

The goddess of the grottos  
represents the women  
of ancient times who made  
the lacquer  
implements.

Perhaps the goddess  
represents Yoshimasu's own  
mother

**too.**

I have kept  
characters used as markers  
for reading and  
performance in  
the original with their  
possible translations or  
interpretations appearing  
after in *italics*

here text  
itself becomes  
the site of  
performance.

Both notation  
for reading and the  
embodiment of  
performance in the form  
of graphic image and  
symbolic elements  
which ultimately

can only  
be reduced to themselves.  
The poem  
overflows

its own boundaries both  
into performative  
ritual

and other genres such  
as Yoshimasu's  
exploration of film  
in which the poet  
translates

his multilayered poetic  
montage into one of  
visual image  
and **sound.**

**T h e r e i s a f i l m  
o f t h i s p o e m**

The poem here  
reaches back into  
prehistory  
where Yoshimasu attempts  
to reinvent Japanese in its  
classical form

the Manyogana  
in which Chinese characters  
were used  
purely for  
their phonetic values.

The character 尾  
o is used  
here to denote  
the direct object  
particle instead of  
the modern を.

The translator keeps those  
characters  
which act as markers or  
signs  
in the translation  
and generally  
attempts  
to reproduce the  
**graphic/visual** effects  
of the poem.

Notes to AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE FIRECRACKER HOUSE

	静 薄	お嬢さん	frost.....
	か い	o-jou-san	<i>shimo</i> .....
	に ヴ	=	Shimo.....
Standing	病 エ	young lady	a play
on the thin veil	い ー	Miss	on words
of the dunes	を ル	girl	and kanji
quietly	待 の	.	霜 <i>shimo</i> : frost
awaiting	っ 丘	.	志茂 Shimo: place name
our illness	て に	mademoiselle ?	吐穂の季節
	いた		Toho..... Toho..... 吐 穂
	る ち	月の桂	is manufactured a word –
		<i>Katsura</i>	incongruous characters:
Our illness?	The illness?	tree of the moon...	吐 <i>vomit expel</i> 穂 <i>head of grain</i>
	Just illness?	Chinese legend had it that	to mean disbelief
		<i>katsura</i> trees	translated simply as <i>harvest</i> .
		Judas trees	
Going with our illness as	our illness as	grew on the moon.	
the overall voice of this	voice of this		
work seems	seems		
first person	person		
plural alone	alone	青梅	秋川 Akikawa
and		Ao-ume green plum	place name including
together at the same time		Japanese apricot	a river and town
		the same characters are used	in western Tokyo near Ome
		for Ome a city in western	
		Tokyo	泥(ズン)
宇			Finally
宙			Zoon
船		わたしたち	the character means mud
に		our	mired in mud
は	The spaceship	の奥の細道	used here phonetically zun
縹		Narrow road	zoom
子	has no satin shoes	to the interior	zloom
の		referencing the prose and	.
靴		verse travel diary of the late	.
が		17 <sup>th</sup> century Japanese poet	.
な		Matsuo Basho	
い		also translated	手拭 <i>Tenugui</i> is
		<i>Narrow Road</i>	a thin Japanese hand towel
		to	usually with a graphic
		<i>the Deep North</i>	decoration.
	縹子の靴		Refrain from calling it a
	<i>shusu(satin) no kutsu</i>	蒼ざめた卵	bandana.
	a play on words with the	Azulados Ovos	心の奥
English shoes shoes no	shoes no	Portuguese	Deep mind
kutsu shoes of shoes	shoes of shoes	pale	within my heart my mind
satin shoes	shoes	blue	my inner heart and mind.
		eggs	

Notes to AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE FIRECRACKER HOUSE

On our way to the deep  
mind of a sublime poetic  
imagination

目の奥  
Within my eyes at the back  
of my eyes deep within my  
eyes

A bit hoarse but not braying

東洋者街  
Liberdade Oriental Town  
the entrance to the town  
is marked by a large red *torii*  
gate

夢の奥  
deep within my dream

*emi* えみ  
smile *emi* 笑み  
fine crack *emi* 小亀裂  
small turtle

阿羅わ  
Ah Ra Wa  
the cycle of an arhat

さくら  
Sakura cherry tree  
also a shill a decoy or a false  
customer aimed at  
generating artificial demand  
for a vendor

杏林大学  
Kyorin University  
a school in western Tokyo  
that began as  
a sanitarium  
for tuberculosis patients

胡歌  
Song  
of  
the Northern Barbarians

The term refers to nomadic  
peoples from the north of  
China

I was first struck by the  
quietness and complexity of  
the opening scene

I was next struck by the  
completeness and  
coherence of Gozo's poetic  
vision as it has evolved over  
the years

it was perhaps more  
obvious because I had just  
finished re-reading and  
translating some of his  
earlier works, including his  
1970 masterpiece

The  
Ancient  
Astronomical  
Observatory

The opening lines are  
representative of the  
youthful power like the  
improvisational jazz that  
accompanied the dramatic  
smoky poetry readings of  
those days

the  
world

began with a  
sparkling murder!

This morning  
in the snow  
screaming:

"A star is the key! A  
star is the key!"

Dreaming:  
murder.

Thinking:  
murder.

Singing:

"Yesterday was black  
hair chandelier.

Yesterday was black  
hair chandelier."

Gozo said he said  
"Firecracker House" it was  
inspired by Poe's  
"Fall of the House of Usher"  
that the poem was written  
in Brazil

after immersion in:  
the tastes smells sounds  
the language.....

in maybe a state of sensory  
overload like  
the character in Poe's  
story.

It was it was this hyper-  
aesthesia amplified the news  
that shocked Japan:

the  
killing  
cannibalization  
necrophilia  
of young girls  
in western Tokyo the horror  
the horror took place near

Ome

on the Akikawa River  
an area where Gozo hunted  
fossils as a boy.

It wasn't until over  
15 years  
after

"Firecracker House"

first  
appeared in print that he  
was able to talk about—  
he *had to* talk about—

its genesis.

## Notes to LAMY STATION

More than anyone else  
I know Gozo lives on the  
road

He constantly moves  
in search of visions

He strains his  
                  eyes he strains  
his ears He finds  
                                  traces

of our shared mythology  
in the everyday  
and the extraordinary

He is naturally drawn

                  to edges to islands  
                  to fissures and cracks  
to the pressure points of the  
                                  planet

Places where one  
environment encroaches  
on another where one  
language kills another

Places where dead  
and dying languages live  
in place names and words  
whose meanings have been  
forgotten

Places like Hokkaido  
Okinawa the high desert  
of New Mexico

My first encounter with  
the poet  
                  was  
during a sojourn

A sojourn he took  
to the American Midwest where  
he performed one of his powerful  
poetry readings at Oakland  
University in the late 70s

It must have been early  
spring since I recall  
the grass showing through  
the footprints in the snow

I wonder if he ever wrote  
about my old junker with  
the bashed-in windshield

Output takes many forms

                  Poetry of course  
as well as travel sketches  
and essays photography  
and visual arts in various  
media more recently  
                                  video

                  a newer outlet for Gozo  
                  which he calls *gozoCiné*

All these  
different ways of modeling  
the consciousness of  
experience

I have always known him  
                  to have a study  
overflowing  
                  with the most amazing  
                  books  
from around the world

But sitting at his desk and  
writing poetry?

It strains the imagination

                  No rather it is  
when walking the streets

*Is that a red lantern?*

                  taking a train

                  boarding  
                  a ferry

                  or

the outer islands where  
creation takes place

*I'll drop you off at Windsor  
Station*

*Should we take the tunnel or the  
bridge?*

In a series of interviews  
published recently in the  
*Asabi* newspaper Gozo  
describes the creative  
process that has driven his  
work over the years

                  He seeks inspiration by  
                  placing himself outside of  
the day-to-day by stepping  
                  out into the world

Especially in foreign  
countries

*language will dry up  
and splinter*

Creativity can only begin  
when  
                  *the spring is completely dry*

Several decades before  
making that remark to a  
journalist

he had made the  
                  perfect  
                  escape  
from the tyranny  
of language

standing in the twilight  
at Lamy Station

the poet an empty vessel  
an artesian well channeling  
pure water from the source  
at

                  the edge of the  
desert lies a sparkling sea.

Notes to ISHIKARI SHEETS

石狩  
Ishikari A place name  
in Hokkaido  
derived from the  
Ainu  
language for  
*winding river*  
its roots may lie in  
the cosmic vision of the  
Ainu people

From Ishikari City's  
website:

Ishikari City is located to the  
north of Sapporo the capital  
city of Hokkaido Hokkaido's  
mother river the Ishikari River  
and the Sea of Japan have  
abundances of salmon and  
herring which are symbols of  
the cultural history of this  
region

the name  
brings to mind the  
northern frontier  
the homeland of the Ainu

people whose language lives  
in place names and customs  
and the Milky Way in the  
untamed northern sky

the stage is set for one of  
the great Yoshimasian  
journeys

神窓 Kamimado

*window of the gods*

A special feature of Ainu  
dwellings

The Goddess of Sericulture  
Oshirasama a household  
deity common in northern  
Japan associated with  
agriculture and silkworm  
production

According to the  
Encyclopedia of Shinto

The object of Oshirasama  
worship generally consists  
of a pair of sticks of  
mulberry occasionally  
bamboo about 30 cm long  
with male and female faces  
or a horse's head carved or  
painted in ink on one end  
...Japanese kachina dolls?

奥地

Oku-chi *hinterland*  
the *interior*  
the *back country*

Here translated as  
the *steppes*  
somewhere on the steppes  
of China

何処か奥地の子の姿、

Figure of a child  
a child  
from the steppes

望来の丘

The hill at Morai

A place  
name  
of Ainu origin  
A town

at the mouth of the Ishikari  
River

phonetically the name  
is said to mean

*quiet death*

*i* turned to stone refers to  
Isis, Egyptian goddess

浅市

Asa-ichi A name  
of Ainu origin

City *Cabriolet* The first  
generation Honda City

Honda Jazz in Europe  
a subcompact hatchback  
aimed mainly at the  
Japanese domestic market

the Cabriolet came out in  
1984 A dramatic element  
when the poet reads the  
work

BLACK! /  
OLD! /  
CITY! /

CABRIOLET!

牛頭馬頭観音

Gozu / Mezu  
*Ox / horse-*  
*headed*

Kannon bodhisattva  
Kannon bodhisattva  
Kannon bodhisattva

Gods

and goddesses of  
mercy  
and compassion  
in many forms  
protectors in the different  
realms of karmic rebirth

the ancient byways of Japan  
are still marked by  
manifestations of  
bodhisattva for the horses  
and oxen who died on the  
road while laboring for  
mankind

胡沙

Kosa

an Ainu ritual  
to sweep away ill spirits

知津

Chitsu

a place name  
of Ainu origin

Notes to ISHIKARI SHEETS

雛の丘  
Galinhas Colinas  
Portuguese  
*hill of chickens*

Foam of oars  
石鹸  
Japanese characters for soap  
with the reading *shabon*  
Portuguese *sabão*

Sea lion mulberries  
海獣(とど)、どどめ  
Sea monster  
read *todo*  
sea  
lion

*do-do-me* mulberries  
in the Kanto area dialect  
*to-do*  
*do-do-me*

Yamamoto Inn  
An actual inn in  
Ishikari

一休さんと森女  
Ikkyu san and Shinjo

One of the great love  
stories of medieval Japan  
Ikkyu (1394-1481) was a  
Zen master vagabond poet  
and connoisseur of the  
physical realm

at the age of 77 he fell in  
love with Shinjo (Lady  
Mori) a blind musician 50  
years his junior

they are said to have been  
happy together until he died  
some 11 years later.

*The Mother Hanging  
from the Sky*  
An early poem by Yoshimasu  
Gozo

珍、渦、..... 中国の一角獣  
、.....  
Uzu uzu chugoku no  
ikkaku-ju  
Strange a whirlpool .....  
a Chinese unicorn .....

濡れ縁  
Nure-en  
the open-air  
area under  
the extended eaves  
a key feature of Japanese  
and Chinese architecture

*The veranda*  
The first character means  
wet and is echoed  
throughout the poem wet  
mountain

聚富 Shipp  
A place  
A name  
of Ainu origin  
A play on the English *ship*  
箱 (box) + ship (Shipp)  
= ark

Ishis The Egyptian goddess  
Isis  
sister to wife of Osiris

Kropokkuru  
Nymphs  
and  
gnomes  
in the belief of the people  
of Northern Japan

Weaver a girl a reference  
to a Gozo poem  
of the same name that  
refers to

the Yubari Mine  
in central Hokkaido  
a place closely associated  
with Japan's coal mining industry  
and the site of several mining  
disasters  
most recently in 1985

Du Fu  
(Tu Fu 712-770)  
Was a Chinese poet of the  
Tang Dynasty

Fussa an Ainu ritual  
Also a wordplay on the city  
Fusa near the Yokota Airbase  
outside of Tokyo and where  
the poet grew up

*The Babe of Anori*  
A poem by Seihaku Irako  
(1877-1946)

正利冠川  
Masarikappu River  
A place  
A name of Ainu origin  
Only the river name remains

Go-shoe-you refers  
to the archaic name for  
a Japanese pepper tree  
*kawabajikami* or *sansho*  
a play on words from the  
nonstandard archaic form  
shusu = shoes

Here the standard archaic  
goshuyu = go-shoe-you

Kobai Caramel  
a nostalgia-filled sweet of  
post-war Japan  
sometimes packaged with  
baseball trading cards

女坑夫さん Female miner  
The poem is translating it-  
self by this point.