

HAIKU IN CROATIA

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“Once we truly feel haiku, we must be dedicated to it all our lives“.

—Vladimir Devidé¹

Croatia is Heaven for haiku poets! It is a “country of a thousand islands,” has the beautiful Adriatic Sea with a coastline 1777 kilometres long (third longest of all Mediterranean countries, after Greece and Italy). The largest part of Croatia lies across the Slavonic plain. Its gentle mountain slopes are covered in vineyards, making it a country of fine wines, as well. Croatia is also one of ten countries fed by the river Danube, connected thus with the North and Black Seas. These Croatian mountains, lakes, marshy fields and Nature parks have attracted the attentions of its haiku poets. Croatian villages keep safe the customs and traditions and there are projects in order to preserve the environment and traditional values. Croatia was the first country to have the European Stork Village at the offshoot of the river Sava, in the marshy fields (Lonjsko polje) of the river Lonja (The Čigoč village), where people care for the stork nests on the roofs of the old wooden houses with love.

IS CROATIAN AND SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN HAIKU A SPECIFIC KIND OF HAIKU?

What is often remarked upon, when considering the haiku of South-East Europe, is the rural way of life here. But in fact Croatian haiku poets, and those in neighbouring countries, write about both urban and rural experiences (rural not necessarily connoting backwardness), including the people and surrounding animals and plant life, all of which is adapting (all too quickly) to technological changes. This can be seen to be a strength as well as a weakness.

It is the personal choice of values that matters. Among others, alienation among people of this large area occurs to a lesser extent than in the crowded megacities of the more technologically developed West, with its higher standards of living. A sensibility towards Nature and events from everyday life are central, if somewhat distant from the unique and unrepeatability of the people living and writing haiku in its land of origination, Japan.

A deepened perception and moments of strong lucidity are the after-effects of the way people of this region live traditionally, if not identical with Shintoism and Zen-Buddhism. This modest way of life perhaps permits a terse eloquence, and a deference to asceticism, which accommodates haiku poetry well. As a matter of fact, we are talking about hundreds of open, sensible artistic souls, in Croatia and the countries nearby, who pursue literature, music and art without tangible benefit. They work out of pure enthusiasm, far from the professionalism of mainstream art. We might not exaggerate greatly if we say haiku, in Croatia and the surrounding region, may be a way to rebel against the materialistic and consumer behavior existing in society nowadays.

Historically, the South-East of Europe is an area of a number of different nations, languages, religions, alphabets, tradition and an old and very distinctive history of arts and cultures. Nearly all the great European nations, kingdoms and empires have conquered the area. In the last decade of the 20th Century the six countries that had been gathered together under the flag of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (as a consequence of World War II settlements, and under the leadership of Tito, 1892–1980) separated, and Croatia thereby became an independent country for the first time. The other independent countries formed were Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. The province of Kosovo has been independent since 2008.

CROATIAN HAIKU

Croatian haiku started during the communist regime while Croatia was a part of SFR Yugoslavia. Haiku was attacked and continually restrained not only by promoters of so-called mainstream literature, but promoters of politics as well. Today's Croatian haiku is the outcome of the stubborn and continuous work of Vladimir Devidé, who, despite many difficulties, published nineteen books about Japan and its culture, religion, arts and literature, thus bringing haiku to the notice of the region. He gave over one hundred performances, held discussions and was hosted by a number of radio and TV programmes, as well as being featured in a documentary movie. He writes: "The beginnings of Croatian haiku poetry were not easy at all. There were resistances, sometimes even very brutal. The public and the media, the literature guild did not accept haiku even as information, not to say as culture and artistic fact."²

Devidé (1925–2010), "the father of Croatian haiku," was a Zagreb-born and -educated intellectual *par excellence*, with a Ph.D. in Mathematics; an academic with a 40-year University career, writer, translator, haiku poet, Japanologist (the only one Croatia had for decades) and a world traveler, he lived the modest haiku way. An excellent orator, his speeches were adorned with humour and eloquence. Until his death in August 2010, this haiku master encouraged and motivated haiku poets in Croatia and throughout the former Yugoslavia, especially in Serbia. He wrote a number of reviews and essays on haiku and haiku collections, traveled and spoke at nearly all haiku festivals and meetings in Croatia during his lifetime, and led a very intensive correspondence with haikai worldwide. In 1990 he became a Prof. Emeritus at the University of Zagreb in Mathematics, one of many awards and honours. A member of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb (Extraordinary member 1973–1990 and a Full member 1990–2010), he also taught at universities in the United States and Australia. For his contributions to the popularization of Japanese culture he was awarded the prestigious Japanese Order of the Sacred Treasure—Konsantō Zuihōshō in 1983.³

Sjena penjača
oklijevajući, penje se
sjenom ljestvi

The climber's shadow
hesitatingly climbing
the ladder's shadow

Runner-up, 19th Itoen "Oh-I-Ocha" New Haiku Contest, Tokyo, Japan 2008

O BON festival:
milijuni zvijezda na nebu
svijeće na jezeru

O BON festival:
millions of stars in the sky,
candles on the lake

A Prize, 2009 Genkissu! Spirits up! World Wide Hekinan Haiku Contest, English haiku

Other well-known Croatian writers and poets have written and published haiku, as well:

Tomislav Marijan Bilosnić

Ni jedno drvo
ne zadržava vjetar
kad se osami . . .

Not a single tree
retains the wind
once secluded . . .

Honourable Mention, 12th Mainichi Haiku Contest 2008,

Kamena školjka.
Na vrh Velebita
duboko more.

A stone shell.
On the top of Velebit*
a deep sea.

Velebit, 2004 (*Croatian mountain)

Enes Kišević

u istoj košulji
dječak i vjetar šecu
uz more

in the same shirt
boy and wind take a walk
by a rough sea

A Special Prize, 2007 Genkissu! Spirits up! World Wide Hekinan Haiku Contest, English haiku.

Kod tolikog neba
ugušila se u oku—
mušica.

The whole sky
but drowned in my eye—
a gnat

Enes Kišević: *Zelene Piramide / Green Pyramids* (Prometej, Zagreb, 2008)

Luko Paljetak

Na razorenom
zvoniku još i dalje
pogledam na sat.

To the bombed
church tower I still look
at the clock.

48. tjedan/week, *Calendar/Rokovnik Spreuwwenagenda* (Nizozemska/The Netherlands, 2000)

U nebu vidim
nebo; u vodi vidim
vodu i nebo.

In the sky I see
the sky; in the water
the water and the sky.

Haiku, nestašna pesma by Nebojša Simin (Novi Sad, Serbia 2000)

Drago Štambuk

Čovjek.
Razapet između
neba i zemlje.

Man.
Crucified,
between sky and earth.

Nad bunarom list
što pada
u nebo

A leaf over the well
falling
into the sky.

Niotkud / From Nowhere (Ribun Publishing, Tokyo, May 2011)

Pajo Kanižaj

Tragovi ptica
sa svih strana svijeta
skreću u nebo.

Traces of birds
from all sides of the world
Turn aside to the sky.
From "Renga," *Vrabac/Sparrow* 5-6 (proljeće-ljeto 1994)

Anto Gardaš (1938-2004)

Zlatnim čavlima
ljetna noć pribijena
o golo nebo.

The summer night
nailed to a bare firmament
with golden nails.

3rd Prize, Kusamakura Haiu Competition, Kumamoto, 2000

Režući dinju
sjetih se da još nisam
nahranio psa.

Cutting a melon,
I found out I still hadn't
fed my dog.

Sjaj Mjesečine / The Moonlight Brightness (Matica Hrvatska, Osijek 2003)

Dragutin Tadijanović (1905-2007)

Zatvorena knjiga
Na stolu gdje pišem:
Šuti ko zemlja.

A closed book
On the desk where I write:
As silent as earth.

We all hope haiku will soon be on the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage, on the proposal of the eminent Japanese physicist and haiku poet Akito Arima with the backing of Herman von Rompuy, President of the European Council. (*Asahi Shimbun*, January 26, 2014).

Jadran Zalokar, a haiku poet with a Ph.D. in Philosophy writes: "Haiku is more than poetry, it is a spiritual way of ennobling life through the word of poetry . . . Through haiku, Croatian culture and arts are well known and recognized in the world. In the other fields of arts and culture it is only a very few individuals."⁴

Jadran Zalokar, Rijeka

protiv bure
nemoćni širi krila—
mali galeb

against the Bora
helplessly spreading its wings—
a small gull

Haiku 1 (9) (Varaždin, Spring 1979)

Pahulja snijega
začudan pogled
mladog goluba

a snowflake—
looking in surprise at
a younger pigeon

An Award, Genkissu! Spirits Up! Worldwide Hekinan Haiku Contest 2006.

THE BEGINNINGS OF HAIKU IN CROATIA

Haiku was transported and spread over the globe by travelers, immigrants, adventurers and researchers, as well as books and letters. Though it may be recognized in the poetry of great Croatian poets as early as the beginning of the 20th Century (Matoš, Vidrić, Prpić, Ujević, Cesarić), they were not actually writing haiku.

Anton Gustav Matoš (1873–1914)

An autumn eve
Behind wet fields the fog hides
houses and a tower: the wounded sun

Poems (1909)

Dobriša Cesarić (1902–1980)

. . . Autumn
my friend arrived in a wet cloak filling the whole room with the scent of rain

From “Autumn morning”

Devidé writes: “As far as I’m informed, the first text of some Croatian author writing about haiku was *About Classical Japanese Literature* by Ivan Focht in the magazine *Republica* (1952, No. 7-8, pages 709-714). Dubravko Ivančan published his first haiku in the magazine *Krugovi* No.3 in 1953 yet they were not declared as haiku.”⁵

In the year 1955, the publisher Lykos, Zagreb printed the first edition of *Japanese Poetry* (translated from German and French by Božo Kukulja), a book containing forty haiku written by old Japanese masters. The second edition was published in 1957. Boris Nazansky writes: “Despite a restricted volume of this collection, it contains almost all the important authors and all the diverse forms and types of Japanese lyrical poems; from archaic five-verse and the so called *Kumeuta* (poems with eleven to thirteen verses), *Nagauta* (long poem, contains 16-149 verses) and *Mijikauta* (short poem) or *tanka* (previously *waka*, a poem with five verses, dominating in the whole of Japanese poetry) all the way to modern *haikai* (a post classical type of short three-verse poem), modern forms of a free verse of romantic, futuristic and surrealistic direction, which clearly show the strong influence of European and American

poetry on modern Japanese poetry . . . As for the mid-fifties of the XX century in Croatia (and ex-Yugoslavia), this collection is important for it is a connection between the shy beginnings at the entrance of the fifties and further development of Croatian haiku.”⁶

In 1966, Dubravko Ivančan published his *Small Anthology of Japanese Haiku*, in *Republica* 7-8; in the same year Devidé published his extensive text *Japanese Haiku Poetry in Encyclopaedia Moderna* 3-4. In Split, Tonči Petrasov Marović published thirteen haiku in the magazine *Mogućnosti* 6. These haiku were from his collection *101 Haiku*.

Tonči Petrasov Marović (1934–1991)

Hommage à Bashō

Samo kamenčić
u vodu bacih — vas me
svijet zapljusnu

I threw a pebble
into the water only — the whole world
splashed on me

Njuši me pas.
Udahne li me jače,
odoh mu u njuh.

A dog sniffing at me.
If he inhales me deeper,
I'll end up in his flair.

Mogućnosti br.6 (Split 1961)

Dubravko Ivančan (1932–1982) is Croatia's most prolific haiku poet (he wrote about two thousand haiku poems) and its greatest haiku-master. In 1964 he published a haiku collection *Leptirova krila* (*The Wings of a Butterfly*) followed by *Zemljište sa šljukom* (*A Plot with pebbles*, 1966), *Svjetlucanja* (*Luminescences*, 1966), *Uvijek iznova raste pjenušavo stablo bijelog vodokoka* (*Always Growing Again the Foamy Tree of the White Fountain*, 1968), *Bijeli brod* (*A White Ship*, 1971), *More* (*The Sea*, 1974), *Život na selu* (*Life in the Country*, 1976), *Velegrad* (*Metropolis*, 1978), and *Zeleno nebo* (*Green Sky*, 1981).

Dubravko Ivančan (1931-1982)

Ova će kućica
s cvijećem u oknima
doći u nebo.

This house
with flowers in its windows
will depart to heaven.

Krugovi, br. 3 (Zagreb 1953)

Konji u kasu
potkove
okreću nebu!

Trotting horses
horseshoes
turned to the sky!

Zemljište sa šljunkom (1966)

In 1970 Vladimir Devidé published the first edition (of four in eleven thousand copies) of *Japanska haiku poezija i njen kulturnopovijesni okvir* (*The Japanese Haiku Poetry and Its Cultural and Historical Frame*) which became a haiku bible to many a haiku poet in SFR Yugoslavia.

THE FIRST HAIKU COLLECTIONS

In 1971 Zvonko Petrović published his first haiku collection *Trenuci nezaboravka* (*The Moments of Unforgetfulness*), adding in 1973 *Tragom vaših koraka* (*Following the Traces of Your Steps*) and in 1987 *Kažiprstom u trenutak pogleda* (*With Forefinger Into a Moment of a Glance*).

Zvonko Petrović (1925-2009)

Stablo jabuke
krava ispod krošanja
pase lattice

Apple tree—
a cow under the branches
grazes on the petals

Haiku World, An International Poetry Almanac (ed. William J. Higginson, 1996)

More
čamac ispod
čamca

The sea . . .
a boat below
the boat

An Award, 1st International Ashiya Haiku Festa 2000

Moric Danon published his first haiku collection *Poetske sličice* (*Poetical Images*, 1973) and in 1974 a collection *Moja haiku poezija* (*My Haiku Poetry*). *Haiku o ljubavi* (*Haiku About Love*) was published in 1978, along with *Tisuću haiku* (*A Thousand Haiku*). Veseljko Vidović published *Preko uma obruč* (*A Hoop Over the Mind*, 1973) and *Ocvjetana zemlja* (*Land After Flowering*, 1977).

Veseljko Vidović

Plava kadulja
Na plećima kamena
Sunča se

A blue sage
On the back of the stone
Sunbathing

Haiku No. 1 (Varaždin, Spring 1977)

In 1977 haiku master Zvonko Petrović, a professor at The Faculty of Organization and Informatics in Varaždin, was among the founders of the magazine *Haiku*. Prof. Željko Funda writes: “The first quarterly magazine in ex-Yugoslavia was started by three enthusiasts, Vladimir Devidé, Zvonko Petrović and Željko Funda (the only one living). There were printed 14 numbers with about 800 pages of text. The literature public of the ex-country was acquainted with the best Japanese, American and European haiku poets. Haiku was a great shift in the history of haiku in the countries of ex-Yugoslavia, especially in Croatia and Serbia, where there is still written very good haiku.”⁷ *Haiku* was printed periodically under the editorship of Dubravko Marjanović (Sipar d.o.o., Zagreb), Višnja McMaster and Đurđa Vukelić Rožić (Association of Croatian Haiku Poets, Zagreb). On the editorial board of this magazine, among others, were Zdravko Kurnik, Boris Nazanky and Duško Matas.

Željko Funda

list — a leaf
pokriva rupu patching a hole
u mojoj cipeli. in my shoe.
Special Award, World Haiku Festival Oku no Hosomichi 300 Anniversary, haiku in English 1989

latice trešnje cherry petals
padaju falling
u riječi into words
Sakura Award, Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival, Canada 2008

Zdravko Kurnik (1937–2010)

Logorska vatra — Campfire at sunset —
riječi preskakuju words keep jumping over
plameni jezik the flaming tongue
Ito-En, 1997, Počasno priznanje /Honorary Mention

Nakon odmora After repose
sjena pastira izlazi the shepherd's shadows leave
iz sjene hrasta the oak's shadow
Suruga Baika Literary Festival, Nagrada / An Award 2002

Boris Nazansky

kaplje ljetna noć dripping summer night
mjesečina se vrti moonlight rotates
u mlinskom kolu in the mill's wheel
2nd Prize, Melnik Poetry Evenings, International haiku contest Bulgaria 2009

zimsko popodne winter afternoon
između nas dvoje tek only the breath of hot tea
dah toplog čaja between you and me
3rd Prize, Concours 2007 de Haiku sur le The Association pour la Promotion du Haiku,
Seichamps. France

Dubravko Marijanović

ljubavnici — date under a cherry —
na autu odvoze the lovers leave with petals
latice trešnje still on their car
Honourable Mention, Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival, Canada 2008

mala su sunca little suns are
i zrele bobice imele even the ripest toe berries
u mjesečini in the moonlight
Zbornik samoborskih haiku susreta / Samobor Haiku Meeting Miscellany 2007

In 1979 Tomislav Marijan Bilosnić published his first collection *Zario ruku u srce* (*Plunging An Arm Into his Heart*), followed by *Potez mača* (*Move of the Sword*, 1984), and *Iž* (1986). Franjo Krizmanić released *Duga nad gradom* (*A Rainbow Above the Town*, 1979), *Prodavač ogledala* (*The Mirror Salesman*, 1981), and *Slijepi pjesnik* (*A Blind Poet*, 1985). Tonči Petrasov Marović added *Suprotiva* (the title of a prayer against the Turks by Marulić (1450–1524), 1981).

Franjo Krizmanić (1915-1989)

Crvene trešnje
Zriju u boji djedove
Kovačke vatre.

Red cherries
Ripening in the colour of
Grandpa blacksmith's fire

Haiku br. 3 (Ljeto 1996)

1986 – 1988: THE FIRST HAIKU RECITAL IN CROATIA

The Klovićevi dvori gallery in Zagreb hosted the first haiku recital in Croatia in 1986. In the museum area of the Klovićevi dvori was an exhibition of Japanese arts “Kyôto—the Flower of Japanese Culture.” Accompanying this exhibition was an evening of haiku poetry featuring eight poets, with a memorial reading of Dubravko Ivančan’s work as well.

In Pazin, in Istria, a second haiku recital was held on April 29, 1987 as “A Blossoming Bough,” wherein Vladimir Devidé, Tomislav Marijan Bilosnić and Boris Palčić Caskin read their haiku in Croatian and Mrs. Yasuo Hondo Devidé recited them in Japanese.⁸

René Matoušek’s haiku collection *Žegar* was first presented in Obrovac on 17 March, 1988. Though living and working in Dalmatia, when the war broke out in Croatia in 1991 and Vukovar came under an attack, René returned to his home town to work as a doctor in a hospital. Vukovar fell. On the day after its fall, 19 November, he was arrested at his family home. On the 20th he was tortured and killed.

Croatian authors have played an important role in the development of haiku outside the borders of their country, as well. In the Serbian town Odžaci the haiku library “Matsuo Basho” was installed, with Croat Tomislav Marijan Bilosnić its first editor.

René Matoušek (1958–1988)

Cijedi se Dunav
domaćici iz torbe.
Šaranov rep.

Danube dripping
from a housewife’s bag.
The tail of a carp.

Čamac u zoru.
Napuštena sandala
plovi Dunavom.

Boating at dawn—
an abandoned sandal floats
down the Danube.

INTERNATIONAL AWARDS OF CROATIAN HAIJIN

Since 1989 Croatian haiku poets have competed in international contests, primarily with their haiku translated into English. That year Željko Funda was awarded a Special Prize at The World Haiku Competition in Japan, on the occasion of 300th anniversary of the Bashō’s

Oku no Hosomichi (The Narrow Road to the Deep North). Marinko Španović, Boško Vitas, Darko Plažanin and Željko Kidrić were awarded and commended for their haiku at the same contest. In 1990, Darko Plažanin won an International Haiku Competition and traveled to Japan to the 5th Festival of Culture of Japan.

Darko Plažanin (1957-2009)

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| nakon oluje | after the storm |
| dječak briše nebo | a boy wiping the sky |
| sa stolova | from the tables |

Grand Prix, Ehime Prefecture Grand Prix 1990, National Cultural Festival, Japan;
Haiku World, An International Poetry Almanac (ed. William J. Higginson, 1996)

| | |
|----------------|------------------------|
| svaka pahulja | each snowflakes |
| svojim putem | flies its own way into |
| u istu bjelinu | the same whiteness |

An Award, International Ashiya Haiku Competition 2001

Later in the year 1991, in the second Ito-En haiku contest, three authors from Croatia (Vladimir Devidé, Tomislav Maretić and Zvonko Petrović) were awarded with the first Encouraging Awards and a year later Devidé and Petrović received Honourable Mentions.

Zvonko Petrović was highly commended in the Ito-En contests four years in a row, and for this exceptional success he received a letter of thanks from the Croatian ambassador in Tokyo, as a promoter of the Republic of Croatia in the world.

Tomislav Maretić

| | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| logorska vatra | the camper's fire |
| nečujno podgrijava | noiselessly warming up |
| tavu mjeseca | the pan of the Moon |

Merit Award, Ito-En International Haiku Contest, Tokyo, 2001

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| zimski vjetar- | winter wind- |
| od zanjihane svjetiljke | from the swaying lamp |
| miče se ulica | the street is moving |

Azami No. 38, 1996

During the years 1991-1993, awards were received from the international contest in Honolulu, Hawaii, by Marijan Čekolj, Rujana Matuka, Hasan Džnić, Tomislav Maretić, Nediljko Boban and Ivan Kovačević. Višnja McMater won an award in the New Zealand Haiku Society Haiku Contest. In 1993, as calculated by mathematician Vladimir Devidé, at the world's largest haiku festival, Ito-En haiku contest in Japan, Croatian haiku poets were placed in the third position (as per the number of awards and commendations), following the authors from Japan and the USA. This statistical phenomenon was often repeated in the future. In 1997 three Croatian poets received Tokusen, the Second Award at the same competition (on 1997 the jury decided to give 6 Tokusen awards). They were won by Vladimir Devidé, Nediljko Boban and Stjepan Rožić.

Nediljko Boban

Svjetlo na trnju.
Požtjela fotografija moje bake
u molitveniku

Light on the thorns.
My granny's yellowed photo
in the black prayer book.

2nd Prize, 7th Kusamakura Haiku contest 2002

Posljednji pjev.
Ptica na kamenjaru
sahranjuje sunce.

The last song.
A bird on the rocks
Burying the Sun.

World Anthology (ed. Alain Kervern), Canada 1998

Stjepan Rožić

crna ploča noći
čeka ispisivanje
ljetnih zvukova

blackboard of the night
waiting for the summer sounds
to be written down

Tokusen, Ito-En 1997

uzlijeće svraka
sjena joj ispala iz kandži
na snijeg

a magpie takes off
its shadow fell from its claws
to the snowy ground

An Award, 15th HIA Haiku Contest 2013

In 1991 Koko Katō published *Four Seasons, Haiku Anthology Classified by Season Words in English and Japanese*, containing work by eleven Croatian authors.

HAIKU IN THE TOWN OF SAMOBOR

The town of Samobor is an important haiku source in Croatia. The Croatian Haiku Society was founded there in 1992, and in 1993 the magazine *Vrabac/Sparrow* was inaugurated. Its founders were Marijan Čekolj, Darko Plažanin, Milan Žegarac Peharnik, Nediljko Boban and Marinko Španović, with Devidé and other prominent haijins at their side.⁹

Marijan Čekolj

bačeni kamen
pada u dubinu neba
na jezeru

a tossed stone
falling into the depth of the sky
within the lake

Mainichi Daily News, Tokyo, 1993

rano proljeće
ogromna šuma
sva u jednom pupoljku!

early spring
immense forest —
all in one bud!

An Award, The 10th HIA Haiku Contest 2008

Marinko Španović (1955–2011)

| | |
|--|---|
| u vojnoj luci Mliječna staza vesla između dva razarača | in the military port the Milky Way is paddling between two destroyers |
|--|---|

A Prize, 2007 Genkissu! Spirits up! World Wide Hekinan Haiku Contest, English haiku

| | |
|--|--|
| proljetni dažd poklopac skakuće nad uzavrelim grahom | spring rain: the lid is hopping over boiling beans |
|--|--|

1983 World Haiku Contest, Japan; *The Voice of Things* (McGraw-Hill)

In the same year, Darko Plažanin and Milan Žegarac Peharnik founded the Samobor Haiku Meeting, with the help and support of the Public Open University Samobor, the Town of Samobor's Library and the Matrix Croatica's Samobor branch.

Milan Žegarac Peharnik

| | |
|--|--|
| sako jutro spoznov se čudi kokoš nad jajcem. | each morning a hen marvelling above her egg. |
|--|--|

An Award from *Kaj*, Sv. Ivan Zelina 1996

| | |
|--|--|
| cug vu travi za ježicom pušeju drobni ježeki | a train in the grass puffing after their mother tiny hedgehogs |
|--|--|

3rd Prize, Kajkavian dialect, Dubravko Ivančan Haiku Days, Krapina, Croatia 1999

These meetings of haiku poets are held annually to this day, and the festival has taken on an international character. Each year a bilingual joint haiku collection (Croatian and English) is produced. These meetings today bear the name of the late Darko Plažanin who was the editor and organizer until his death at age 50 in 2009. The editor of this important annual collection is now Ivo Markulin.

Ivo Markulin

| | |
|---|--|
| tiho odlaze kapi s ledenica prema cvjetanju | drops from the icicles quietly trickling towards vernal blooming |
|---|--|

3rd Prize, 7th Kusamakura Haiku contest 2002

| | |
|--|--|
| ftiček i župnik na sprevodu saki svoje žvrgoli | a bird and the priest each chirping his own at the funeral |
|--|--|

3rd Prize, 9th Haiku Day Dubravko Ivančan, 2006 (Kajkavian dialect)

In 1995 Marijan Čekolj published *an Anthology Haiku iz rata/War Haiku* (Hrvatsko haiku Društvo/Croatian Haiku Society, Samobor), which became a well-known book among haiku poets in Croatia and abroad.

HAIKU IN DALMACIJA

The first poets' haiku colony in Dalmatia was founded in Milna, on the island of Brach, in 1996. It moved to Podstrana and at times was organized at the Observatory on Mosor, with the Association "A Starry Village Mosor." In 2001 Zlatko Juras prepared and illustrated a joint collection *Haiku in Dalmatia*, the editing signed by Danica Bartulović, with the works by authors from all the Dalmatian haiku meetings, both in Croatian and the Chakavian dialect.¹⁰

Zlatko Juras

dva ježa pa hrid
pa opet dva ježa pa hrid
dnom lekulaju

two sea urchins
then again two sea urchins and a cliff
swaying on the sea bottom

Haiku br. 3, Summer 1996

noću na rivi
zadrijemao prosjak
ispružene ruke

on the shore at night
the beggar dozing
with outstretched hand

Zbornik Samoborskih haiku susreta / Samobor Haiku Meeting Miscellany 2001

Danica Bartulović

hrabri val
još samo pedalj
i eto ga na obali

just a span . . .
the wave will skip the shore
carried by the sirocco

Mainichi Shimbun 26.12.2011.

lovčev puni mjesec
u duplji orahova stable
puh

Hunter's moon
in the hollow walnut tree
a dormouse

Asahi Shimbun 18.10.2013.

In 1996 William J. Higginson published *Haiku World, A International Poetry Almanac*, which included haiku by twenty authors from Croatia. And finally, after more than three decades of bringing haiku and the culture and arts of Japan to Croatia and the region, academician Vladimir Devidé published his *Anthology of Croatian Haiku Poetry*, published by Naklada P.I.P. (Pavičić, Zagreb). This book contains over 1,100 haiku by eighty poets writing in Croatian. The publisher, Josip Pavičić, was among the first literary critics who favoured haiku in Croatia. In this anthology, the author mentioned the fifty international awards received by Croatian haiku until 1996. Today, eighteen years later, this number is closer to five hundred awards, and surely, there is no Croatian art or literature division with such success.

HAIKU IN THE TOWN OF LUDBREG

A haiku poet, aphorist, the bee-keeper, poet and a great enthusiast, teacher, Zdenko Oreč-Gavran, with the assistance of many of his townsfolk, founded the Ludbreg Haiku Meetings in June of 1997. Painter Rudi Stopar illustrated a number of haiku that were accepted for publishing and held a number of haiga exhibitions.

Zdenko Oreč

Ljetni pljusak.
Pod stablo padaju cvjetovi
na suho.

Summer downpour.
Under the tree-crown the blossoms
falling onto the dry.

2nd Prize, 3rd Kusamakura Haiku Contest, Kumamoto, Japan 1998

Dostavno vozilo
radi u snijegu–
miris kruha.

A delivery van
working in the snow–
the smell of bread.

2nd Prize, 4th Kusamakura Haiku Contest, Kumamoto, Japan 1999

Rudi Stopar

Rdeč frak
Pikapolonica
črni madeži

Red tail-coat
A lady-bird
Black stains

2nd Prize, 3rd Kusamakura Haiku Contest, Kumamoto, Japan 1998

vezano konopcima
ulovljeno među jarbole
gasi se sunce

tied up with ropes
caught between the masts
the setting sun

1st Prize, *Diogen pro cultura* haiku contest, Summer 2012

Today Boris Nazansky and Željko Funda are the editors of the annual haiku collection, the meeting held in organization of the Open University of Ludbreg. Željko Funda sponsors the “Grashevina”*** award. The Ludbreg Haiku Calendar also ran for eight years, with Boris Nazansky as editor-in-chief.

HAIKU DAY “DUBRAVKO IVANČAN,” KRAPINA

The town of Krapina is the birth town of Dubravko Ivančan, and in 1998 the Open University of Krapina began hosting the haiku meetings “Dubravko Ivančan,” with haiku contests in Croatian and the Kajkavian dialect for adults and children, bestowing a total of 12 awards each year. Prize-winning haiku are illustrated by Dr.art Mirjana Drempetić Hanžić Smolić from the town of Zabok. First prize winners are presented with the original haiga, and along with second and third prize haiku/haigas become a part of the permanent collection at the Gallery of the Town of Krapina.

The same year, Dr.med. Mile Stamenković edited the *Haiku anthology Hvatanje sjenke vjetra/Catturare l'ombra del vento/Grasping the Shadow of the Wind*, and in Rijeka hosted the first meeting of the haiku poets of the region.

Mile Stamenković (1952-2000)

Uništen prostor—
vjetar se zaustavio
pod divljim kestenom.

Destroyed area—
the wind has stopped
under the horse chestnut.

An Award, 33rd A-Bomb Memorial Day Haiku Meeting Competition

Vjetar u šašu.
Divlje guske gledaju
u vodu . . .

Wind in the reed.
The wild geese look into
the water . . .

Vrabac/Sparrow No. 7-10, 1994-1995.

In 2000 Višnja McMaster published a bilingual anthology *100 Hrvatskih haiku/100 Croatian Haiku, An Anthology for the Haiku Cards Game* (Biblioteka “Kultura Japana”/The Japan Culture Series, Društvo hrvatskih haiku pjesnika, Zagreb). Two years later haiku poets met in the town of Lovran. The Haiku Society in Rijeka published its magazine *Galeb (The Gull)*.

Višnja McMaster

brežuljci u zoru—
dio mene ne spava
stapa se s pticama

pre-dawn hills—
part of me not sleeping
merges with birds

3rd Prize, 12th Kusamakura Haiku contest 2007

s bujne livade
praznih ruku: samotna
zdjela ikebana

back empty-handed
from the bursting meadow: idle
ikebana bowl

Grand Prize Winner, *Timepieces* 1996

THE KLOŠTAR IVANIĆ HAIKU MEETINGS AND CONTESTS

The first meeting of the haiku poets in the place Kloštar Ivanić was held in 2003, founded by Vida Pust Škrkulja and Đurđa and Stjepan Rožić.

Vida Pust Škrkulja

jutarnji vlak
snježnim se ljestvama penje
sve brže i brže

morning train
climbing the snowy ladder
faster and faster

3rd choice, World Haiku Club R.H.Blyth Award 2002

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| bolnička soba | a hospital room |
| u snovima lutam kroz | in dreams I wander over |
| Bašōov uveli vrijes | Bashō's withered moor |

Sedam prozora/Seven Windows, A Joint Haiku Collection (Ivanić Grad, 2002)

Each year there are open contests for haiku in Croatian, English and Croatian dialects. The first ten volumes were edited by Đ.V.Rožić, while Dubravko Korbus had done several years of judging, as well as editing two volumes. The judge for haiku in the Chakavian dialect has been Duško Matas, and judges of Croatian haiku included the late Vladimir Devidé, Zvonko Petrović, Zdravko Kurnik, Boris Nazansky and Željko Funda.

Dubravko Korbus

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| svjetla gradića | lights of the city |
| rastu iz mirnog mora | growing from the silent sea |
| u zvjezdano nebo | into starry sky |

A Prize, International Haiku Poetry Festival, Aichi Expo 2007

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| jesenji sumrak | silent autumn dusk |
| nebo se tiho spušta | the sky descending calmly |
| na leđa vrane | onto the crow's back |

A Special Prize, 2009 Genkissu! Spirits up! World Wide Hekinan Haiku Contest, English haiku

Duško Matas

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| staza uz potok | path along the stream |
| slijedi ga nizvodno | following it down |
| i uzvodno | and up |

2nd Prize, International Kusamakura Haiku Competition, 1998

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| niski let ptice | low flight of a bird |
| nabujajli potok nosi | a swollen stream carrying |
| prazno gnijezdo | an empty nest |

2nd Prize, Ito-En, Tokyo 2000

In 2003 Japanese national television Efuban no ichi Inc. created a documentary *By the Paths of Croatian Haiku*. It was filmed on the island of Pag, at the foot of the mountain Velebit, Ravni Kotari, Zadar and the island of Iž. It was shown on Japanese television three times and had seen it about sixty million television viewers saw it.¹¹

During the same year, in the town of Ivanić Grad, local haiku poets founded the Haiku Association "Three Rivers," publishing the haiku magazine *IRIS* (Đ.V.Rožić, editor-in-chief).

Marijan Čekolj published *Antologiju hrvatske haiku poezije/Croatian Haiku anthology 1990–2005 (Vrabac/Sparrow, Hrvatsko haiku društvo/Croatian Haiku Society, Samobor)*. With Croatian haiku taking part on the international haiku scene, there was another haiku meeting organized in the town of Obrovac, in memory of René Matoušek.

A number of Croatians have published their haiku collections, and yet, there is hope there will be still more of these collections and the collections of those authors who have not

published any of them yet. A collection of haiku poetry by Marinko Kovačević, *Predan putu/Committed to the road* (Zagreb, 2000), and especially its part entitled *The Miner's Lamp*, wherein the author speaks about his youth in the mines, is among those specially prominent books. Also of interest, and translated into several languages, is Tomislav Marijan Bilosnić's *Velebit*.

Marinko Kovačević

| | |
|---|---|
| miš u rudniku— korak brži od svjetla moje rudarske lampe | a mouse in the mine— for a step quicker then the light of my miner's lamp |
| Encouragement Award, 9 th Itoen "Oh-I-Ocha" New Haiku contest, Tokyo, Japan 1998 | |

| | |
|---|--|
| bližeći se jami rudar prigrli svoju svjetiljku | approaching the pit, the miner cuddles to him his lamp |
| <i>Predan putu/Committed to the Road</i> (Zagreb, 2000) | |

In 2010, his Excellency Dr Drago Štambuk, Croatian Ambassador to Japan (now to Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela) founded The Vladimir Devidé Award in Osaka Japan. It is an open competition for haiku written in the English language held at the Asian Conference on Literature and Librarianship in Osaka. Named in memory of the Croatian haiku poet, Vladimir Devidé, this competition pays tribute to his vision and passion for haiku.

In 2011, Đurđa Vukelić-Rožić edited *Nepokošeno nebo/An Unmown Sky (Antologija hrvatskoga haiku-pjesništva 1996-2007/Anthology of Croatian Haiku Poetry 1996-2007)*. This anthology, received a Touchstone Distinguished Book Award from The Haiku Foundation.

Đurđa Vukelić Rožić

| | |
|---|--|
| večernje vijesti još jedna masovna grobnica vremenska prognoza | evening news another mass grave weather forecast |
| Peace Museum Award, 33 rd A-Bomb Memorial Day Haiku Meeting 1999 | |

| | |
|--|--|
| pecanje s ocem— prazna kanta prepuna nezaboravnosti | fishing with father— an empty bucket full of unforgetfulness |
| 2 nd Prize, Sharpening the Green Pencil, Romanian Kukai Group, 2013 | |

HAIKU IN ISTRIA

During the past five years one can witness the news about the success of the Istrian haiku poets. They have received a number of international awards, and been published in well-known haiku magazines and on the internet. The first authors from Istria include Marija Pogorilić from Rovinjsko Selo, Malvina Mileta from Labin, Marija Maretić of Žminj and Dejan Pavlinović from Pula. Đermano Vitasović, Rita Stokić Brgić, Sonja Buljević Sanja Petrov-Vlahović, Vesna Milan, Nevenka Erman . . . are Istrian authors on their haiku way. Seemingly

there is no haiku contest without at least one award or commendation being received by an Istrian haiku poet or poetess. The internet has contributed to haiku being truly global.¹²

Dejan Pavlinović

utopi se
u vlastitom odrazu
snjegović

drowning
in his own reflection
a snowman

2nd Prize, 14th Kusamakura Haiku Competition, Kumamoto 2009

oblutak
samo na tren
u maloj ruci

sea pebble
only for a moment
in a little hand

Tokusen/2nd Prize, 21st Itoen "Oh-I-Ocha" New Haiku contest, Tokyo, Japan 2010

Marija Pogorilić

iz plavog mora
sivozeleni kamen
podignuo glavu

from a blue sea
a grayish-green stone
raised its head

Honourable Mention, 12th Mainichi Haiku Contest 2008

vjetrić odnosi
miris roštilja
susjedu za večeru

the breeze carrying
fragrant barbecue smoke to
my neighbour for dinner

An Award, *Diogen pro cultura* haiku contest, Summer 2012

Đermano Vitasović

svojom zrelošću
suncokret izgubio
putanju sunca

wholly ripe
this sunflower lost
the sun's orbit

1st Prize, 14th Apokalipsa Haiku Contest, Slovenia 2012

bus vijolica
topi snig, grije grotu
proliće zovuć

a bunch of violets
melting the snow, warming the stone
inviting the spring

Honourable Mention, Kloštar Ivanić Haiku Contest 2013 (Chakavian dialect)

Malvina Mileta

u mrežu snova
zalutala ribica
budi se ribar

a stray fish
in the net of dreams
waking the fisherman

3rd Prize, 13th Kusamakura Haiku contest 2008

mali gušter
s ukradenim suncem
puni rupu suhozida

a tiny lizard
with stolen sunshine filing a hole
in the dry stone wall

1st Prize, 15th Haiku Day Dubravko Ivančan, Krapina, Croatia 2013

In Delnice, in the Croatian mountainous county of Gorski Kotar, the Association “Goranski koraci” (president Slavica Grgurić-Pajnić) founded the newest haiku meeting in Croatia, the first one held in 2013. In 2014 they created their first haiku contest.

Slavica Grgurić Pajnić

bijeli lotus
osvjetljava noć
ponad mirnog jezera

a white lotus
enlightening the night
above a still lake

3rd Prize, 16th Kusamakura Haiku Contest, Kumamoto, Japan 2011

graktanje gavrana —
miris jeseni
pod sumornim nebom

a cawing raven —
fragrance of the autumn
under a sullen sky

Honorable Mention, 15th *Mainichi* Haiku Contest 2011

The Association of the Croatian Haiku Poets (Višnja McMaster, president) organizes haiku workshops and a contest for children within the programmes of the Zagreb Libraries.

It is difficult to say who are the best living Croatian haikai nowadays. Connoisseurs of haiku poetry recognize the work and the names from the international contest, haiku magazines and the world anthologies. A haiku master—the haikai knows. On the other hand, there are a number of authors who do not participate in contests in Croatia and abroad, and yet contribute to the quality of (Croatian) haiku in general. However, among Croatian authors those most recognized surely are Boris Nazansky, Željko Funda, Stjepan Rožić, Tomislav Maretić, Marijan Čekolj, Višnja McMaster, Jadran Zalokar and Đurđa Vukelić Rožić, as well as the late Vladimir Devidé, Marinko Španović, Zdravko Kurnik, and Darko Plažanin.

The 21st century has brought new important names onto the Croatian haiku stage: Nada Jačmenica, Ljubomir Radovančević, Božena Zernec, Tonka Lovrić, Janko Dimnjaković and Nikola Đuretić.

Nada Jačmenica

zraka sunca
na putu u tamu —
krzno krtice

a ray of sunshine
on its way to darkness —
mole's fur

Runner-up, 1st Vladimir Devidé Haiku Award 2011, Osaka, Japan 2011

Ljubomir Radovančević

sumrak u dvorištu
jedino svjetlo dopier
od rascvale trešnje

dusk in the yard
the only light there is
a blossoming cherry

Sakura Award, Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival, Canada 2009

Tonka Lovrić

velikom slapu
otima se letom
vodomar

scrambling
against the waterfall
a kingfisher

Ardea No.2

Janko Dimnjaković

Žaba viri iz
ribnjaka: ma gdje li je
stari majstor Bashō?

a frog peeps
from the fish pond: where is now
the old master Bashō?

Božena Zernec, Krapina

beskrajno more
zgujeno između
dva čempresa

the endless sea
crouched between
two cypresses

Kumamoto "City of Artesian Waters" Haiku Award, 13th Kusamakura Haiku contest 2008

Nikola Đuretić

Kaić u luci —
s vesla kaplju biseri
zalazećeg sunca.

Dinghy in the harbour —
pearls of the setting sun
dripping from the oars.

Labor u šašu (Zagreb, 2012)

Croatian haiku poets, like many authors from the so-called small languages which have adopted haiku into the culture, translate mostly commonly into English, and must be evaluated shoulder-to-shoulder with English-language poets. Taking this into count, this relatively small haiku country enters the world haiku stage with much love and pride. In closing, here are two Croatian haiku poetesses of the younger generation:

Silva Trstenjak

autokamp:
naš je prvi susjed
puž s kućicom

auto camp:
our first neighbour
a snail with its shell
1st Prize, Apokalipsa Haiku Contest, Slovenia, 2010

Poledica
prijatelj siguran
uz moja kolica

slippery frost
my friend safe
by my wheelchair
Runner Up, 3rd Vladimir Devidé Haiku Award, Osaka 2013

Jana Žufić

withering wind's wake—
unveiling stars beyond stars
beyond bare branches

bdjenje britkog vjetra—
razotkriva zvijezde iza zvijezda
iza golih grana

An Award, Spiritual Haiku Contest 2013, Sponsored by “Paras Dharma Ashram”

ancestors
have is
called our call
is will
descendants

2nd Prize, HaikuNow! Innovative Haiku Contest, The Haiku Foundation 2012

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It would not be possible to have collected the information on the history of the Croatian haiku without assistance of the Croatian haikin and their work. I must thank, with all my heart, all the haiku poets, authors of essays, editors and translators of anthologies and numerous collections and magazines, who have built the Croatian haiku movement and shared the information unselfishly, most of all to Boris Nazansky and Tomislav Marijan Bilosnić. Had it not been for the passion and love for haiku of the Croatian haiku pioneers and the fellowship of Croatian poets, this essay could not have been written.

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