

Roadrunner Haiku Journal

August 2008 Issue VIII:3

"As time moves on, the art of haikai will go through its own thousand transitions and ten thousand changes, but all transformations based on *makoto* (genuineness) will be part of the master's art. The master said, "Never content yourself with the drivel of the ancients. Just as the four seasons change, all things become new. Everything is that way."

-Tohō, disciple of Bashō (translated by David Landis Barnhill)

Jason Sanford Brown and Scott Metz, Editors

[☐ Haiku of Ko Reishi \(Huang Ling-zhi\)](#)

[☐ Poems](#)

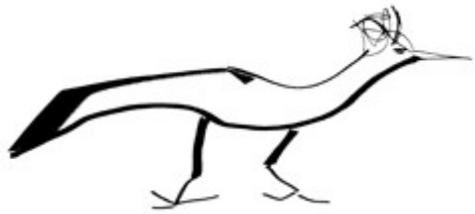
[☐ Found Haiku](#)

[☐ Review](#)

[☐ The Scorpion Prize for Issue VIII:2](#)

ISSN 1933-7337

Copyright © by *Roadrunner Haiku Journal*. All artwork and haiku, unless otherwise noted, are copyright by the indicated artists/writers. All rights revert to the authors and artists upon publication. The roadrunner logo and the scorpion images are by Scott Metz.



Roadrunner Haiku Journal

August 2008 Issue VIII:3

A Sweet Cake Falls: The Haiku of Ko Reishi

by Paul Pfleuger, Jr.

In 2004, when Gary Snyder accepted The Masaoka Shiki International Haiku Grand Prize, three recipients were also awarded international haiku awards. Of those three, I was startled to see that one of them was from Taiwan. Not only was this poet from Taiwan, but he was from Tainan, the place I currently call home. That man is Ko Reishi. An English Internet search of “Ko Reishi,” if one wasn’t looking for the mushroom, for which the poet has taken his penname, would produce all of two paragraphs on the 3rd Masaoka Shiki International Awards [1] that read as follows:

“Mr. Kô Reishi Adjudicator's comments

Mr. Kô writes with particular commitment to the creation of seasonal haiku, while capturing the essence of and portraying the truly unique climate of Taiwan. He expresses deep appreciation for both the Taiwanese and Japanese languages and a love of both cultures, something that he has striven to raise awareness of particularly through his self-published work, “A Glossary of Taiwanese Seasonal Words for Haiku Poets.”

This comprehensive book abounds with haiku alongside detailed explanations of seasonal terms and themes; going far beyond the simple title of 'glossary', it is truly a significant literary work. At the same time, this work has proven that the sensation of seasonality is something which readily adapts to all lands and climates, thus significantly contributing to the evolution and growth of haiku.

Profile

Born in Tainan City in 1928, the multi-talented Mr. Kô is an author and sculptor, in addition to being chairman of the Taipei Haiku Association. As a youth, he was taught entirely in Japanese during his school education. In 1956 he joined the “Taipei Sôshijukai (haiku appreciation society) and began writing with his first major work entitled “Unmo.” However his membership was short lived owing to the instability of diplomatic relations with China at the time. In 1969 he was awarded the Godakuryu Literary Prize for the novel “Kani.” In the following year he discreetly began to participate in the Taipei Haiku Association again by writing in Japanese. His published works have been included in a number of noted haiku anthologies, including the “Taiwan Haiku Anthology.” In 2003 he compiled and published an ordered 329 word glossary of seasonal terms unique to Taiwan, entitled “A Glossary of Taiwanese Seasonal Words for Haiku Poets”; the work includes 8 sample haiku for each phenomenon.”

In addition to this brief introduction would be found a request for more information on the poet posted by Alan Summers, who was kind enough to help in my search for this somewhat elusive Taiwanese man. As it turns out, Mr. Summers was in Matsuyama on the day of the Shiki Awards and reported that Ko Reishi was present and would be accepting his award and with “fingers crossed” told me that an organizer might be able to help out with information, and that he’d get back to me after the ceremony

and memorial party.

Thanks to Alan Summers, the Ehime Culture Foundation contacted me with the poet's phone number and current address in Taipei. His Mandarin name is Huang Ling-Zhi (黃靈芝) and being that the haiku translations to follow are from Chinese and Taiwanese I will refer to him as such for the remainder of this introduction and discussion of his work. Ehime Culture Foundation reported that I was given permission to contact him if I spoke either Japanese or Mandarin. He was soft spoken and kind, and asked for my address to send some of his work. Though we didn't talk for hours, it was more than a memorable moment.

A few days after having spoken to Mr. Huang, nine books of haiku came wrapped neatly in brown paper. To my initial dismay all the titles were in Japanese. However, there is a section in one volume, *The Collected works of Huang Ling-Zhi* [2], which includes 150 haiku written in Mandarin but to be read in Taiwanese. It is a mostly spoken language that borrows its characters from Mandarin which have the same meaning, but pronounced differently. Two versions exist, one colloquial version, the other literary, with Huang's haiku being, for the most part, of the later. I would have had my work cut out for me if these poems were written and read in Mandarin, but the fact that they were to be read in Taiwanese was discouraging, being that my knowledge of the language is lacking. My wife, Zhao-Yan Chen (陳召燕) who was then with the Foreign Languages Department at National Cheng Kung University and I spent the next year translating these poems for our own reading pleasure. We then worked on refining them, on and off, for 5 years.

The translations included in this issue of *Roadrunner* can be attributed to her fluency in Mandarin, Taiwanese and English and for that I am grateful. Andrew Chiu (邱東龍), a scholar with a vast knowledge of the Taiwanese language with the Department of Applied Languages for Interpretation and Translation at Chang Jung University, where alongside him I currently hold a position, cannot be thanked enough for incite and knowledge shared with the haiku selections. Realizing the poignancy of Mr. Huang's haiku, I have been sharing his work with friends here, both native and foreign, for some time and they have shared an appreciation of his haiku that strike notes in several keys of the register that is life here in Taiwan. From the viewpoint of some Taiwanese scholars, it was agreed for the most part, that translations from the Mandarin into English could be fairly accurate, but not precise, and as one professor said, "It could very well end up sounding like a piano solo played on a flute." As good as any example to show how difficult it can be for haiku to scan in translation across culture without annotation would be Huang's:

Standing up an egg: no one praises the old hermit

豎立端午蛋 無人誇獎獨居翁

The custom of egg-standing takes place during the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival during the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. The festivities are highlighted by boat races and it is seen as a time for protection from evil spirits and misfortune for the year. People attempt to stand eggs at noon in remembrance of the drowned poet Qu Yuan from the Warring States Period (476-221 BC), who for many is considered to be the father of Chinese poetry. If an egg is stood up on its end successfully at noon sharp, it is said that the next year will be prosperous. Families and groups of friends take part together in activities during the festival, encouraging each other all the while. With this in mind, it shouldn't require great effort to picture the hermit by his lonesome in the midst of the clamor of the crowd trying his luck at standing up the egg. Huang captures and expresses this moment plainly. Without a basic understanding of Chinese and Taiwanese traditions or accompanying footnotes, some of Huang Ling-Zhi's haiku might fail to resonate in the Western ear/mind?. However, as is the case with much translated haiku poetry, there are linguistic and cultural hurdles that can be overcome through annotation and an overall

commitment to allowing translations to convey the poet's intended message.

The Japanese haiku collections that Huang sent me sit on the bookcase by the desk I write at like a basket of faux fruit during the hungry months. The following translations appear to be such a modest portion of his work and it is my hope that in the years ahead a fuller account of his haiku will appear. It should be said that Huang Ling-Zhi gave me permission, but not his blessings, to move forward with these translations stating that there had been attempts to translate his work in the past that proved less than fruitful. Much care and rigor has gone into this ongoing project and it is with optimism that I am proceeding to offer these to the English-language haiku community. It is my hope that these translations will dissuade any pessimism the poet had about seeing his work in English. To allow Mr. Huang to speak for himself, his acceptance speech from the 3rd Masaoka Shiki International Awards and a commentary entitled *On Taiwanese Haiku*, have been translated to bring to view both how humble of a man he is as well as how attuned to haiku poetry he is. As it is seen as an integral part of his haiku, the translation selection in one-line reflects the break that Huang employs which is in adherence to his principle in *On Taiwanese Haiku* that states, "Two pots are needed to bang against each other to create a sound to compose."

The following require no annotation:

Seeing-eyed dog still awake: the typhoon approaching in the night

導盲犬仍不睡 颶風逼近夜

Pesticide- "harmless to humans and animals": I spray big words

殺蟲劑 人畜無害寫大字

Getting divorced: scolding into the smell of a durian

鬧離婚 罵進榴槤味

The silent scarecrow: watching the young girl marry out of town

默默稻草人 眼看小妞嫁他鄉

Burning mountains on TV: spreading to this living room

電視中火燒山 延燒到客廳來

Brief notes have been included with the following haiku in an attempt to convey the poet's meaning:

The mango's sweetness is useless: my younger sister's married

芒果枉費甜 阿妹嫁他人

A-mei' (阿妹) means 'little sister,' in the literal sense, but the term is also used to describe an intimate relationship with a girl or woman younger than oneself that he or she knows well. Taking either meaning, this haiku brings forth the melancholy of one having to accept the fact that someone close to them has committed to a life with another and how futile it would be to hope that even the bursting sweet flavor of a mango could ever serve as a substitute for that person.

Celebrating Chinese New Year: men of every color gather at the diplomat's house

過新正 外交官邸聚人種

Red, black, and white are the three central colors in Chinese and Taiwanese culture. Colors are important during Chinese Lunar New Year, particularly red and gold. Red is the color of envelopes filled with money that is given out this time of year and it symbolizes happiness and luck. Gold

represents wealth. Black, a symbol of misfortune, and white, the color of mourning and death are to be avoided. I've chosen to interpret this haiku as being a reveling in the vibrancy of the many races gathered under one roof at a time when 'ban-nian' (拜年), the tradition of paying New Year's visits to friends and family, are celebrated.

Being chopped up: its pitiful name-a mackerel

被分屍 取名又慘四破魚

Here we see Huang's penchant for word play as the literal meaning in both Chinese and Taiwanese for 'mackerel' is 'four-broken-fish.' The term "fen shi" is used to explain the chopping up of a body by dismemberment.

Picking them poorly planted they ruin their name: rhododendrons

採來種不好 有虧其名滿山紅

Again we find play on words as the characters for 'rhododendron' in Chinese and Taiwanese are literally translated as 'full-mountain-red.'

Poinsettias secretly red: by a mourning family's door

聖誕花偷偷紅 嚴制大門邊

Red, as has been aforementioned, symbolizes happiness and luck, neither of which can be connected with a family grieving the death of a loved one. It is a time for white envelopes (bai-bao, 白包). For the duration of the mourning period, the splurging red of a poinsettia would go unnoticed.

Having fun gambling: no need to be a wife in January

賭博樂 正月不做妻

Traditionally all meals are cooked before the Chinese New Year to leave time for the entire family to enjoy the company of family and friends. Festivities often go into the small hours of morning. Superstition has it that a supernatural figure known as the "Year Beast" (Nian Shou) would come at this time to take things such as good fortunes and possessions while seeking to feast on human flesh. Hanging red couplets on doors, lighting flames and creating noise were believed to be ways of fending off the beast. Many gambled, wives included, through the night.

A cement worker couple: moving silently under the autumn tiger

夫妻水泥匠 秋老虎下默默動

The term 'autumn tiger' is used to describe the period of uncomfortably hot weather after autumn begins according to the Chinese lunar calendar. The way this type of weather approaches and descends is likened to a tiger pouncing on its prey. Many translators refer to the term as "Indian summer" which is not entirely accurate.

Grave visiting: I run into a runaway husband

探墓厝 遇到離家夫

Tomb Sweeping Day is held on the 104th day after the [HYPERLINK "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dongzhi"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dongzhi) winter solstice and usually falls on either April 4,th 5,th or 6th. The responsibility of taking the family to burial grounds to pay respects to deceased ancestors rests with fathers and married sons. A somber irony is found in this haiku, the husband coming across as a man who has presumably deserted his family, yet still honoring his traditional duty to take them to the family tombs. As the verb 'yu-dao' can be used for 'bumping into someone' that one

hasn't seen in a long time, it can be assumed that the poet is not at all close with the husband. The poem carries with it undertones of what this occurrence might be like from the wife's perspective.

Four-god-soup: internal organs match the ba-zi

四神湯 五臟六腑合八字

As food and its symbolism are of importance to the Taiwanese, it turns up as a recurring theme in Huang's haiku. 'Four-god-soup' is made with pork organs, the stomach and/or the intestines, along with the 'four-god' herbal medicine. The Mandarin characters for 'four-god-soup' were originally 'four-courtier-soup' being that this blend of four medicines is on the courtier level of the complex ranking system of Chinese medicines. This level of herbal medicine is for remedying effects along the lines of qi (energy flow), blood circulation, and digestive system functions. Most people in Taiwan can speak Taiwanese. When translated from Mandarin into Taiwanese, the 'courtier' character is pronounced "xin" which is "shen" in Mandarin. This may serve as an example of what might be called the "Taiwanization" or localization of Mandarin Chinese. 'Ba-zi' or the 'Four Pillars of Destiny' is a metaphysical Chinese astrology system which is used for fortune-telling. One's date of birth according to the Chinese solar calendar is told to a soothsayer who makes predictions regarding one's future and personal matters and/or relations with others and their environment based on the Xia (Farmer's) calendar. While no concrete meanings have been drawn, an association might be made between the ba-zi and either the number of organs used in the soup. Another interpretation might see a positive fortune coupled with the promise of health benefits from the medicinal herb. The reference to the former use of the characters used for this soup indicates his deep knowledge of Chinese characters and number symbolism as well as his understanding of literary Taiwanese.

Freckle face: a man-made satellite speaks of Earth

雀斑臉 人工衛星說地球

This last selection will remain without comments and has been included to give a feel for the less conventional side of Huang. One might interpret this haiku in many ways. I will leave that up to the reader. This translation project can still be termed "a work in progress," and, with any luck, it will be seen by next year in its finality as a published work.

Included are texts translated from Mandarin in The Ko Reishi acceptance speech for the Masaoka Shiki International Haiku Prize and 'On Taiwanese Haiku.'

I would like to thank Mr. Huang Ling-Zhi for both the writings he has shared with me for the past five years and the permission to offer these to the haiku translations to English-language haiku community.

...

Notes

1 The Third Masaoka Shiki International Awards [HYPERLINK](http://www.ecf.or.jp/shiki_haiku/details1_e.html)

"http://www.ecf.or.jp/shiki_haiku/details1_e.html"

http://www.ecf.or.jp/shiki_haiku/details1_e.html

2 The Collected Works of Huang Ling-Zhi (Ko Reishi). Taipei: Fu Yuan (福元印刷事業有限公司), 2000.

Ko Reishi's (Huang Ling-Zhi) acceptance speech for the Masaoka Shiki International Haiku Prize from the Ehime Cultural Foundation, in Matsuyama City, Japan, on November 7, 2004 [1].

Teachers, ladies and gentlemen,

As you can see, I am like the Hunchback of Notre Dame, a man with a bent back. In Taiwanese, we call him "The god with a hunch back." Having to stoop down all the time in a way which suits the garbage collector, I was thinking if I could find haiku while walking up here. Matsuyama is the place where modern haiku originates. Though I didn't find any, I am wondering if any of you will give me yours.

Well, it's believed that a sweet cake falls once you open your mouth to the sky. Because of such a saying I gave it a try and it turned out that I got a message about the Masaoka Shiki International Award. Speaking of Masaoka Shiki, whose haiku poems were the first that I read and inspired me, he is also the one who inspired me with his attitudes and way of life.

So this is why I have been invited here. In fact, I am a strange-tempered and awkward person. Concerning the matter of haiku, I started to write it after World War II. After World War II, due to the fact that the Japanese were coping with being occupied nobody intended to work on haiku, I was willing to do it. It's a strange reason.

Let me confess again that this is the first time that I had ever left Taiwan for Japan. Well, it was the very first time. After the war everyone enjoyed travel abroad and I was the only one who wouldn't leave Taiwan. It's because of that I have considered for a long time whether or not I should accept this award. My personality is such that I have to accept an award in person if I am to accept it; on the contrary, I would have to refuse the award if I could not accept it in person.

At that time I started talking about it with my best friend and asked for his opinions and he said, "Do you know the senryu poem that goes, "I am a cat and that's why I refuse.?" Here, this senryu satires the widely-respected Japanese writer Natsume Sōseki. When academia wanted to endow him with a PhD of Literature, he refused. Therefore, someone wrote this poem in response to one of Natsume Sōseki's books entitled, "I am a Cat."

Of course, there are other reasons. Anyways, I put my feelings of discomfort aside to come to this place. However, though it's good to be here, I'm still uncomfortable with having been asked to make a speech. We make a certain kind of rice, which is like the red rice of Japan to celebrate the completion of the first month after birth of a child and we give it as a gift to neighbors, relatives and friends. At the same time, the one who receives the gift gives a small stone back to bless the baby's head to be hard like a stone. Therefore, my head has been turned into a stone that is always silent. If a stone is asked to speak, it would be to the wrong thing to do.

Well, I expect that I may stutter as soon as I start to speak today and I've made a draft so please allow me to read my first draft instead of speaking. Now let's start our discussion.

During February to March of the 31st year of the Meiji Period Masaoka Shiki proposed his 'Letters to a Tanka Poet' [2] which is written in ten chapters. While Shiki was studying at the First Higher School in the 20th year of the Meiji period he asked Ohara Kiju about haiku that summer at home on a return visit. In the summer of the 18th year of the Meiji Period when he was studying at Daigaku Yobimon, he asked Fusetsu Nakamura about waka when at home on a visit.

Therefore, Shiki did not always prefer haiku from the beginning and "Letters to a Tanka Poet" was written ten years after that. In this book, Shiki said straightforwardly that, "Ki no Tsurayuki is a terrible waka poet" and the "Kokin Wakashū is a boring collection...No one is more stupid and leisure than a waka poet," or "the shallowness and stupidity of waka poets is incredibly unbelievable." He was not at all polite. We usually feel uncomfortable hearing someone speak behind someone's back. Yet, reading

this criticism is quite pleasant. Though it may be because of the work's clear argument, with the way Shiki was with his sickness, the beauty of the article is one of the reasons for this. At the same time, this work also tells something of the Japanese literature and art background in the 20's or the 30's of the Meiji Period, as well as Shiki's commitment to the reformation of literature and art and the responsibility he would have to carry.

Shiki not only wrote haiku, devoting himself to the reformation, but he wrote tanka in addition to writing novels, criticism and informal essays. He has done much in a range of fields. Shiki was not the only person devoted to these new types of impromptu commentaries. Contemporary artists of literature and art were doing the same. This is similar to the attitude of modern Chinese literati who intone (compose) poetry and know thoroughly the arts of calligraphy, painting and seal cutting.

In modern society, the professionalized situation in which haiku writers don't intone tanka and the writers of tanka don't write haiku will become more common in the future.

Though it's hard to say if professionalization is good or not, it's just that waka poets only consider waka of which the tradition is thousands of years old as the Japanese quintessence in the contemporary cultural background. The fact that they look down on other types of literature and art can be seen in the Shiki criticism.

The Shiki work is an ax that hacks with precision. In fact, Shiki ponders "the beauty of literature and art" from the perspective of Nakamura Fusetsu or the modern Western sense of appreciation of beauty. This is different from what the waka poets think of as "the world of language and soul" which is the spiritual world or characteristics within language.

Subsequently haiku becomes international because of its "shortness." However, even now we have not heard of "the internationalization of tanka." In fact, in my opinion, there is no way that tanka can be internationalized. Even now, tanka still yearns for the ancient proclivity and characteristics of the lingual history of the Japanese. Consequently, there's no reason for tanka poets to be internationalized.

Let's not talk about this for now. Tanka has its own sense of excellence and haiku has its own. The same goes for Chinese and English poetry. Shiki demonstrates what's good from his point of view. Contemporary tanka poets consider tanka the ultimate poetic form and see their status as being preminent. The reason for this is simply because of their ignorance of beauty in things other than tanka.

However, there's nothing wrong with Shiki's criticism in terms of the composite concept of beauty. He was saying that this poem is not good rather than saying that all waka is not good.

Here, due to my lack of study, I am wondering if I can say that most, if not all of Shiki's haiku, seem to be written in the seasonal reference form (有季定型). If haiku has its own sense of excellence and tanka has its own, then it is obvious that the seasonal reference form has its own sense of excellence as does the non-seasonal free form(無季自由律).

Why does Shiki only write with the seasonal reference form of haiku?" Excuse me, (asthma acting up). I am a little short of breathing right now. Now we must think about how to define haiku. Maybe Shiki and most modern haiku writers are quite alike in that they think haiku must be written according to the rules or principles of the seasonal reference form and that non-seasonal free form is sometimes allowed.

However, this cannot be made the definition. Let's assume that someone asks what a motorcycle is. The answer that a motorcycle is a two-wheel vehicle simply reflects the appearance rather than the definition of what a motorcycle is. The definition of a motorcycle should be that it is a means of transportation which is light, convenient and spry.

In other words, the definition of haiku should be that it is the “shortest poetry.” Seasonal reference form and non-seasonal free form are only technical approaches. If they were not, so-called international haiku could not exist.

Is it because I am a foreigner that I am thinking this way? But then, haiku should be defined as the shortest poetry rather than something else. Well, it’s not really that.

Perhaps haiku is the “shortest poetry with one condition that being that it should be based on the principles of the seasonal reference form,” shouldn’t it?

If this is so then “Coughing, even: alone” should be discounted and affirmatively regarded as non-haiku, shouldn’t it? Needless to say, so-called art should exist with “a beauty that comes from irregularity” or “vagueness as an aftertaste.” However, could the game of baseball still go on if a strikeout allowed four strikes?

In sum, haiku has its own sense of excellence, as does tanka. Therefore, write haiku if the material is suitable and compose tanka with suitable material. This is the most sufficient way to which no one could ever object.

Similar to what has been discussed, this theory can be extended to say that this subject is suitable to be sung about in Japanese and this is suitable to be sung about in Italian.

Yet, it is neither easy nor possible to develop it to this condition since human beings’ linguistic ability is limited. At least we can consider distinguishing between using seasonal reference haiku or non-seasonal free form to suit subject matter.

At any rate, Ozaki Hōsai’s masterpiece, “Coughing, even: alone,” one simple soliloquy, is so touching, is it not?

Moreover, the fact that Western works which are written in three lines using a varying number of words today can be called haiku reflects that the problem of format no longer exists.

Nowadays, haiku has spread to every corner of the world like sparks. On the other hand, there are many haiku communities in Japan-the birthplace of haiku, which compete with each other and are shown on TV or published in the newspapers and magazines so that everyone knows the word “haiku.” It’s in its springtime during this generation. Its state of play is no different from what it was one hundred years ago when Masaoka Shiki wrote “Letters to a Tanka Poet” when the tanka poets were still indulged in the tanka world of their generation and looked down on other poetry.

Not far off in the future, I worry that someone will write ‘Letters to a Haiku Poet’ to get their revenge. Is this not going to happen?

To end, I would like to say thank-you sincerely for this award I am receiving. What has been discussed may only be observations and questions from the perspective of a foreigner. Ha!

Notes

1] English text from this speech was translated from the Mandarin by Paul Pfleuger, Jr. and Zhao-Yan Chen (陳召燕) as it appeared in translation from the Japanese in the Taiwanese journal *Literature of the Saline Land* (鹽分地帶文學) #7, December 2006, pp50-55.

2] The characters for ‘waka’ were used for all references to Shiki’s ‘Letters to a Tanka Poet.’ These are the only references for either ‘waka’ or ‘tanka’ that have been altered from the text.

On Taiwanese Haiku*

Huang Ling-Zhi

Haiku is short poetry containing few words. One line can be a haiku. A characteristic of haiku is that it is “short.” So what does “short” mean? Few words are needed. There must be little, but not weak, content.

The best haiku express contemporary life with brilliant syntax. Haiku can be likened to Japanese sumo. How is this so?

The dohyō (sumo ring) is a circle fifteen meters around that is woven together with rice-straw. This small ring is the minimum floorage needed for humans to wrestle, two men six feet tall, to be precise.

Sumo is a two-man fight, which means two fighters are the minimum number needed in the ring.

Sumo wrestlers fight naked. Haiku does not become successful because of beautiful lyrics. When all accessories are thrown out, what is left is haiku, which is what it is meant to be.

Winning or losing in sumo wrestling can be determined by one moment. This is because the wrestler does not need knowledge or reasons, but feeling, to reach his goal. Haiku is the same.

There are the so-called forty-six techniques of sumo wrestling, but only one way is needed to win or lose. Again, haiku is the same. Therefore, viewing sumo wrestling can be seen as being no different from reading haiku, being that it isn't just poorly written, though it is short. It is hardly tiring to watch sumo wrestling or to read haiku over and over again.

Haiku was one of the Japanese traditional cultural arts. However, the “shortness” of haiku theory and its function has brought the greatest shock to many countries in the realm of artistic culture. For example, many countries in Europe and Eastern Europe, Africa, and China have already established national haiku associations or research institutions. There are many courses included in elementary school education in some countries like the United States. It is believed that those haiku associations from over forty countries have joined in the International Haiku Association, of which the head offices are located in Japan, including the World Haiku Association. In Taiwan, the Taipei Haiku Association, which originated from the 1970's Japanese Haiku Association has also joined the International Haiku Association and become its sister organization. Haiku of each country is written in its own language. In Taiwan, the Taipei Haiku Association, which is also known as the Taiwan Haiku Association, collects haiku poems written in Chinese, and includes those written in Fukienese, Hakka, and Mandarin, which is “wan pai” in abbreviation. The following are rules of “wan pai” in accordance with the characters of haiku:

It should be written with a minimum of seven characters and a maximum of twelve. Six-character haiku is acceptable, while the thirteen-character type should be avoided.

A haiku contains two verses. These two verses complete a haiku. Why does it need two verses? Because two pots are needed to bang against each other to create a sound to compose.

There should be “seasonal words” (a language of present seasons). It is better to just use words of one season. The following are origins and purposes of using “seasonal words.”

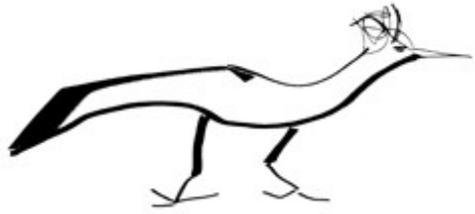
Haiku is an artistic culture created by the Japanese. Japan is a country located in the temperate zone where the natural landscape and presence of four seasons are clearly defined. Those who live in this environment are able to sense the transformation of the seasons and be deeply affected by them. This is the environment which creates haiku.

It is because of this that haiku has to be related to seasonal affairs like ancestor worship, cultural folk customs, and habits. Therefore, people recognize, experience and feel much in common like a family.

Hearing cicadas sing conjures the feeling of seeing a barefoot little girl climb a tree while her young brother sits under enjoying the company of a puppy. Seeing a beauty with no head wearing a bathing suit in the display window feels like enjoying the bustle of white sand and crabs at a watering place. The seasonal language's distinguishing characteristic is that it relates to peoples' communal feelings and enlarges the content of the little world of haiku. In other words, the seasonal language of haiku includes ingredients and characteristics which can be used without further explanation.

* English text from this speech was translated from the Mandarin by Paul Pfleuger, Jr. and Zhao-Yan Chen (陳召燕) as it appeared in translation from the Japanese in the Taiwanese journal *Literature of the Saline Land* (鹽分地帶文學) #7, December 2006, pp 44-45.

Copyright © 2004-2008 by Roadrunner Haiku Journal. All rights revert to the authors upon publication.



Roadrunner Haiku Journal

August 2008 Issue VIII:3

Haiku/Senryu

another shoeless evening
at the bottom
of the world

lilac scent
straight to
my purple heart

entering barefoot
the scent
of lemon

running
for nothing
rainy headed boys

tic tac toe
another cat's game
in the universe

nose pressed in boletuses
I could not be found
in this world

Patrick Sweeney

down all the alleys
of seventeen
lilacs

between branches
between bones
winter fog

Ann K. Schwader

who knows
daisies
who knows who knows

by the light of the pine do not resuscitate

dust devil on a dead planet

a sharp wind your tears around the corner

year after year
of zeros
blue eyes

John Stevenson

within the stone the sandstorm

through me the reedy night harmonica

Billie Dee

why not the june sky lingers in one star's blue light

Andrea Grillo

maintenance required and rain and rain

this dandelion
inside my chest

two walls of green pulling us deeper

Dana Duclo

the rain opens
thousands of eyes
in a peacock

your last breaths
I am breathing
with you for you
and sometime
after

the wind turns
and turning takes on
a body of many
bodies, blackbirds turning
into light

in a seed I don't know the answer

no season
what this moment needs
is a penguin

down the long hallway
of a telescope
my howling eye

Peter Yovu

The door to my throat opens :: the only thread shining

Standing alone :: there is a coffin :: too small for my days

Go into the knife :: a cup of black clouds to drink

Is forsythia the wrong destination

Grant Hackett

Use masks when you go
Down to the barrio place
And just cover your face

G. David Schwartz

Oh, only two eyes
to see this:
the sky full of lanterns

Smiling
behind the death mask,
this is God, too

Such is autumn:
if I cry, I cry
I must face this grave

I was born here
with those cold angels
and their trumpets

Narcissicus,
Let me keep you in this vase.

That sound pigs make with room to move

But I found myself in these waters that run by the church

Capturing a butterfly the American in me

Paul Pfleuger, Jr.

when in doubt i ask the spreadwings

in the ever-changing compost to ponder

tennessee crop circle food prices rise in outer space

where blood shouldn't be young leaves of dogwood

marlene mountain

siesta
the sun
sketches me a moon

Helen Buckingham

chromatophores:
concealing the lover
revealing the loved

is it the loved
or the lover,
sunning

I see you
chameleon
blossom

Sabine Miller

altered memories
birdsong tugging
at the sky

Carolyn Hall

blue waves where the body washed up

anyway
this is the road I'm on:
snowfall thickens

Mike Dillon

that time of day
sunlight on water
water on sunlight

George Swede

born
again
green

Victor Ortiz

whodunit mystery—
the winter moon clears
its throat

glühwein—
a dark hole
in his laughter

Capitol garden
I teach roses
to be quiet

under Buddha's eyes
a janitor sweeps
yesterday's petals

Fay Aoyagi

into the whys of the river bend the pied-billed grebe

white dew the crow stretches out its caw

from tomb to boneless tomb the black redstarts

John Barlow

moonlight
on the tips of her fingers
crushed moths

John W. Sexton

sandflies
in the surf
the breath of clams

Patrick M. Pilarski

. . . don't worry snake the stars will get us both

aphrodite . . .
winding kite string
around a dowel

chill night
losing its shape . . .
confucian dream

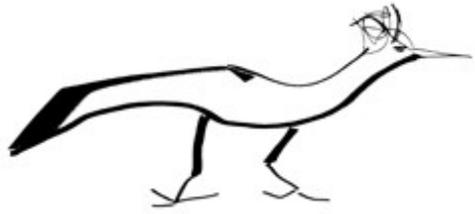
nothing is swifter than a rumor clouds

startled by the shadow of a spider walking stick . . .

Tyler Pruett

wind-borne seed
I have
my doubts

Peggy Willis Lyles



Roadrunner Haiku Journal

August 2008 Issue VIII:3

Found Haiku by Scott Metz

AMONG THE MULTITUDE. *by Walt Whitman*

AMONG the men and women the multitude,
I perceive one picking me out by secret and divine signs,
Acknowledging none else, not parent, wife, husband, brother,
child, any **nearer** than I am,
Some are baffled, but that one is not—that one **knows** me.

Ah lover and perfect equal,
I meant that **you** should discover **me** so by faint indirections,
And I when I meet you mean to discover you by the like **in you**.

A GLIMPSE. *by Walt Whitman*

A GLIMPSE, through an interstice caught,
Of a crowd of workmen and drivers in a bar-room, around the
stove, late of a **winter night**, and I unremark'd
seated in a corner,
Of a youth who loves me, and whom I love, silently **approaching**
and seating himself near, that he may hold me by the hand,
A long while, amid the noises of coming and going, of drinking
and oath and smutty jest,
There we two, content, happy in being together, speaking little,
perhaps **not a word**.

Low-Anchored Cloud [Mist] *by Henry David Thoreau*

Low-anchored cloud,
Newfoundland air,
Fountain-head and source of rivers,
Dew-cloth, dream-drapery,
And napkin spread by fays;
Drifting meadow of the air,
Where bloom the daisied banks and violets,
And in whose fenny labyrinth
The bittern booms and heron wades;
Spirit of lakes and seas and rivers,
Bear only perfumes and the scent
Of healing herbs to just men's fields!

Smoke *by Henry David Thoreau*

Light-winged Smoke, Icarian bird,
Melting thy pinions in thy upward flight,
Lark without song, and messenger of dawn,
Circling above the hamlets as thy nest;
Or else, departing dream, and shadowy form
Of midnight vision, gathering up thy skirts;
By night star-veiling, and by day
Darkening the light and blotting out the sun;
Go thou my incense upward from this hearth,
And ask the gods to pardon this clear flame.

Respective Sources:

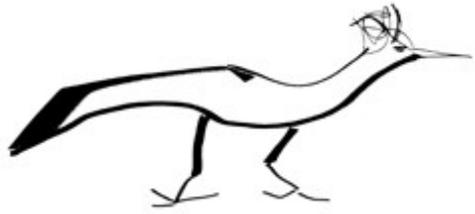
Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman, p 111. Mitchell Kennerley (New York), 1897. Google Books.

Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman, p 109. Mitchell Kennerley (New York), 1897. Google Books.

<http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/thoreau/thoreapoems.html>

<http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/thoreau/thoreapoems.html>

Copyright © 2004-2008 by Roadrunner Haiku Journal. All rights revert to the authors upon publication.



Roadrunner Haiku Journal

August 2008 Issue VIII:3

A Review by Paul Pfleuger, Jr.

Driftwood, Jack Galmitz.
Wasteland Press, 2006.
Shelbyville, KY. 91 pp
ISBN13: 978-1-60047-025-7;
ISBN10: 1-60047-025-4.
Price: US\$10.00.
To order:
www.wastelandpress.net

Za vrabec/For a Sparrow: Haiku, Jack Galmitz.
Skopje, Macedonia.
Blesok, 2007. 158 pp.
In Macedonian and English.
Translations into Macedonian by Igor
Isakovski.
ISBN 978-9989-928-63-0.
Price: US\$12.00.
To order:
www.blesok.com.mk

A New Hand, Jack Galmitz,
Wasteland Press,
Shelbyville, KY. 64 pp.
Translations into Japanese by
Ban'ya Natsushi.
ISBN 978-1-60047-004-2.
Price US \$12.00.
To order:
www.wastelandpress.net

A Silver Speech: Jack Galmitz's Haiku Years 2006 and 2007

With much talk of haiku needing reconceptualization and/or reform, it is ironically refreshing to find an approach that relies much on the imagination while at the same time being grounded in classic poetic devices to potentially reinvigorate the English-language canon. Jack Galmitz's haiku poetry steps far outside the humdrum of what I'll call, "the haiku template." This template can be likened to what Peter Yovu, in a keen review and commentary on the state of contemporary English-language haiku that is currently considered deserving of attention [1], has called, "sketches from haiku." This variation of haiku is the result of a good many poets basing their haiku more on "sketches from life" that they've seen published rather than risking being imaginative in approach. Jack Galmitz's haiku risks it all. Often exposing what lies deepest within.

Galmitz's work is not altogether abstract and may even be seen as having to it a feel of the neo-classical, which might contribute to its accessibility. His haiku has been well-received, garnering more than its fair share of favorable critical reviews. This being my first issue for *Roadrunner*, to honor its pledge to push this poetry forward by commenting on the work of such a poet seems, at the very least, appropriate. I first asked myself, "What exactly is it that makes his type of haiku work?" After first seeing his haiku some years back, my immediate impression was that it was picturesque and perfectly willing to distance itself from the type of poems that are most published in western journals, but might have bordered on sentimental at times, as in the following appearing in 'The Effects of Light' on Jane Reichold's AHA poetry site [2]:

A vacant lot
Sparkles with raindrops -
A midnight walk

How beautiful!
A pumpkin in the porchlight
On a round table

High tide -
Touching me the first woman
Made me die

As is the case with most poets, his was a quiet entrance onto the scene. It took some getting used to seeing haiku presented as English poetry coupled with Japanese aesthetics, which, of course, are grounded in Buddhist thought (i.e. simplicity, symbolic association). This approach seemed to find concord through discord. It is a technique that he has expanded on during his development. The type of haiku that Galmitz now writes moves more freely, asks more questions, and challenges. This brings me to the prolific years that were 2006 and 2007, which saw three collections released by the poet: 'A New Hand', 'Driftwood', and 'For a Sparrow.' They are nothing short of rousing, painting a vivid but sometimes sobering portrait of experience and engagement with an all-encompassing landscape (urban, suburban, and rural) distinctly belonging to North Eastern America. Through lines rich with rhythm, the poet's interactions and observations, at times exposing in nature, are revealed. Perhaps what most distinguishes his haiku from other poets in these three collections is the presence of worlds outside as well as within our own:

Deep snow:
Everyone I ever knew
Appears in my room

(For a Sparrow)

The poet does not necessarily write with an economy of language. The fact that he gets so much in the three lines he adheres to is striking. I would be more than willing to wager that Galmitz would reject the notion that his haiku could be deemed "gendai", yet in its intimacy and daring are found radical and, ultimately, post-modern qualities. His haiku do not subscribe to any particular rubric. What might throw 'Western' traditionalists for a loop is his use of figurative language. These spatial jumps that pepper his work may not be familiar in the western haiku context, but we would be best to remember *that the poetic devices employed are*, and that holding fast to the ahistorical "show don't tell" dictum would not allow such expression to be heard. A reader will find many surprises, but no red herrings, in any of these three collections, as the imaginative leap the poet often asks us to make comes off unforced.

Returning to the poetic devices utilized by the poet, the following haiku effectively employ personification:

Picking up a rock
It talks
Always of the dark

(A New Hand)

The darkest hour...
Peering into the red face
Of a flower

(For A Sparrow)

The rose I think of...
Within its fold,
Night is dreaming

(A New Hand)

There is exceptional use of alliteration:

A quarter moon:
In the blue bay-
Whose boat is this?

(For A Sparrow)

My primal self
Lapping the shore
A silver speech

(A New Hand)

Galmitz also effectively slights the rule against end-rhyme in haiku:

A field of new grass!
Another way of saying
Recognize me last

(For A Sparrow)

I throw flowers
at these solid walls...
down, down they fall

(For A Sparrow)

Poplars in spring...
Who will be my wife
In the next life

(A New Hand)

Galmitz's haiku also employ metaphor, as in the following:

I am speechless
In the great hall silence hangs
From a deer's horns

(For A Sparrow)

With chickens and cows,
My body is a manger...
And a divine child

(For A Sparrow)

There is much discovery to be found in these three collections. When returning to the beginner's mind, he reminds us that in something as commonplace as a leaf may be found a macrocosm as vast and far-reaching as the sea:

The vein of a leaf!
I travel to the edge
Of a green sea

(For A Sparrow)

And not all discoveries are as charming:

Really like a horse
A man mounts in the dark
A darker truth

(For A Sparrow)

The world runs through Galmitz with reckoning, creating space and time for pondering and contemplation, often followed by somewhat of a sense of closure at the end of each engagement. Call it “hard- thinking haiku” minus the ego and philosophy. Utterly human. One is moved by his ability to be affected by what surrounds him in a profound way, to the point where he finds himself in a similar situation in two haiku (following below) with extreme differences in terms of possibilities, which reflects his allowing mood and objectivity to surface in his work. He may be seen as vulnerable, but perhaps this is more a consequence of his leaving himself open to discovery than anything else. In this next haiku, we find an undeniable optimism in teaching a girl to read, accentuated by buds sprouting in the cold:

Winter buds...
Teaching a girl to read
So she will learn her world

(For A Sparrow)

. . . while presented almost as the antithesis to his teaching the girl to read is the following:

Teaching a man
To read and write:
No moon tonight

(For A Sparrow)

These two haiku exemplify the range of human qualities that can be found in Galmitz’s poetry. In learning to read and write one knowingly, or not, enters that discussion of whether the written or spoken word is more meaningful or reliable. The teacher is responsible for opening that door. While not stating where he might stand in the debate, the debate itself and the instabilities that lie on either side may be difficult for Galmitz to negotiate being that he is a Buddhist and his faith’s doctrine sees the spoken word as more sound than the written. William S. Burroughs, in his essay, ‘Electronic Revolution’ [3] suggested that “the written was actually a virus that made the spoken word possible. The word has not been recognized as a virus because it has achieved a state of stable symbiosis with the host” While I am willing to suppose that the poet does not hold as hard a stance, the Burroughs statement demonstrates how divergent thoughts on the written word can be. All metaphysical assumptions aside, be they aligned with Plato or Derrida, or any other mind that that expressed an opinion on the matter, teaching a man to read and write is a difficult juncture. Adding to the intensity of this moment may be the fact that the poet is both a prolific writer and scholar who has seen his way through academia (a PhD in English), and undoubtedly found pragmatic truths along that path that is paved by papers and books. Facing such a night punctuated by the moonless heavens, in this man’s learning to read and write, a light replacing that moon may burn or a deeper darkness may dwell. We cannot know.

A New Hand, *Driftwood*, and *For a Sparrow* at times exhibit what Wallace Stevens saw in 'The Necessary Angel' [4] as the poet's function, which is to, "make his (the poet's) imagination theirs (the readers') and he fulfills himself only as he sees his imagination become the light in the mind of others." Galmitz's imagination, which makes experience more meaningful, can be found in these next two haiku:

Inside of me
Bison are stampeding
Across caves

(For A Sparrow)

Sleeping soundly...
The freshly fallen snow
Is a woman nude

(Driftwood)

It is my genuine hope that it is not past the point of highly-recommending these three collections for purchase in this most untimely of commentaries. The haiku years that were 2006 and 2007 might very well be remembered for these works. I await with eager anticipation the poet's next publication, as it will doubtlessly further expand the possibilities of haiku. ...

Notes

[1] Yovu, Peter. Book review: Big Sky: The Red Moon Anthology 2006
Modern Haiku (Spring 2008) Volume

39.1, <http://www.modernhaiku.org/bookreviews/RedMoon2006.html>, Accessed July 12, 2008

[2] AHA Books Online, 2002 <http://www.ahapoetry.com/galmitz.htm>, Accessed July 10, 2008

[3] Burroughs, William S. 'Electronic Revolution' in Burroughs, Ah Pook is Here. London. John Calder, 1979

[4] Stevens, Wallace. The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination, New York: Vintage, 1965

Roadrunner Haiku Journal

August 2008 Issue VIII:3



The Scorpion Prize for Best Haiku/Senryu of ISSUE VIII:2

Most journals that publish haiku/senryu written in English present in each issue so many poems that a rhetorical truth lifts its ugly head. A reader without unlimited free time will likely make quick decisions about where to invest full attention. Journals that publish only a few poems per issue, like *Mayfly* and *Wisteria*, get around the problem in an admirable way—yet surely we would not want all publications to be so selective. Sad to say, but some of the best poems, quiet ones, may slip under our radar.

I have chosen four poems to comment upon—the four that I admire most. The final poem is winner of the Scorpion Prize.

light bulb goes dead suddenlywearealltouching

Chad Lee Robinson

This haiku startles with what seems to me a profound truth. There is an artificial world that we human hobbits have constructed to comfort ourselves and to ward off all natural threats from darkness to mortality. When this world craps out, we realize we have only one another, and boy do we feel it! The running together of words in this poem may seem too clever, but notice how it binds the word “suddenly” to the second image. It is the spookiness of the experience depicted, the séance-like mood, which guarantees no one will miss this poem. And the poem repays our attention.

under closed circuit

surveillance

old snow

on an island

in the pond

Philip Rowland

I might have missed this one, were I apolitical. But I am very political and the police state is on my mind, for some reason. It is the quiet humor of this senryu that I love. The action surveilled is not even snow melting, but snow getting older. Quite nice the way the poet has used form to focus the reader where the camera needs to focus. Welcome to the mindlessness, lidless eye of modern security, leaving us with nothing to fear but ourselves. (I recognize that the author may be less political than me, and that no reference to a police state may be intended.)

winter blues
too much earnestness
in my prayer

William Ramsey

Few would miss this one, because it is so clear in meaning, so true to being human, so funny, yet cuts so deep. It is when we are most in doubt--dragged down by life, by relationships, by our own limitations—that we most stridently practice what we take to be our deepest beliefs. I would call this poem a senryu because of the nature of its humor, and yet there can be no doubt that it is haiku. After all, it's the "winter blues." Of the interaction between human and natural worlds there can be no doubt. That connection is central to the poem.

thought I was going somewhere March wind

John Stevenson

This Scorpion Prize winner is a quiet poem, a haiku of course. Some might miss it I suppose. Yet its modest use of poetic fireworks will attract those of us who esteem modesty. Once one lingers within its world, the poem will certainly repay attention. The poet had planned a trip that got cancelled, and now he sits in his house as the March wind whips past, sighing at the eaves, full of itself. Or maybe the poet had hoped for a promotion at work. Or had thought it was love. We all know how it feels to be left behind, to remain in place as others speed away on the highway of life, happy and energized. Yet no one is sulking here. Precisely in the author's choice of words we find a wonderful humor full of resignation and acceptance. We are being offered a type of wisdom not unique to haiku, but perhaps best suited to expression through haiku. Just the poem to help us remember not to read too swiftly.

William Hart

Copyright © 2004-2008 by Roadrunner Haiku Journal. All rights revert to the authors upon publication