

be a commercial success; you're willing to pay for it. Sometimes this last condition obtains even though any or all of the first three are also true. Publishing haiku is not a lucrative business, and cannot often be done on the expectation that the general market will support it.

A (Very) Brief History of Haiku

There are many books which provide an in-depth account of the origins of haiku, from its roots in the prehistoric mind of the Japanese people up to its current formulations. For those of you who seek a more complete understanding, I refer you to these excellent sources (you will find them in the bibliography for this chapter at the back of the book). For our purposes here, we will merely touch upon a few of the high points of this history, with an eye to what the past of haiku might teach us of the present and future of the form.

It is useful to know that haiku is not a created form—that is, no one person or group of persons devised the rules and format of haiku arbitrarily. Instead, haiku is an evolved form, based on other and previously existing forms of Japanese poetry. Much of what made up its form and content in its classical period was determined by those forms of poetry from which it had arisen. These considerations still have a great deal of weight even today, when haiku is considerably freer than it has been in the past, and a large part of how we judge the value of haiku comes from a knowledge of what the form has been throughout its history.

The origins of haiku, and indeed of all Japanese poetry, are lost to us: we cannot say with any certainty when, in the murk of prehistory, the poets of those times happened upon, and embraced, the rhythm peculiar to and underlying all classical Japanese forms. But since this unrecorded time the alternation of 5- and 7-*on* phrases has been pleasing to the Japanese ear and sensibility. Its short forms are simply this rhythm, iterated once, capped or uncapped; longer forms are made by stacking multiples of this basic building block together. So we have haiku, which is in the 5-, 7-, 5-*on* pattern; *tanka* (literally, *short poem*) in the 5-, 7-, 5-, 7-, 7-*on* pattern; *sedôka* (*head-repeated poem*) in the 5-, 7-, 7-, 5-, 7-, 7-*on* pattern; and *chôka* (*long poem*) in the 5-, 7-, 5-, 7- [. . .] 5-, 7-, 7-*on* pattern. There is something inescapable to this rhythm to the Japanese sensibility, and so it has been utilised and endorsed as the basis for its poetic for all these years.

It does not end here. All the above forms are written by individuals. But the Japanese hold poetry to be a communal activity as well, and it is no surprise that the form utilized for this communal poetry should incorporate this 5-, 7-rhythm as well. *Renga* (literally *linked poetry*) is an alternation of *kami no ku* (5-, 7-, 5-*on*) and *shimo no ku* (7-, 7-*on*) stanzas.

All these forms have their own properties and poetics, differing from haiku in significant

ways. Yet all are related by holding this rhythmic impulse in common. We shall consider some of these forms in the next chapter.

Haiku arose from the practice of *renga*. *Renga* was a serious art form in Japan from about the 12th century until Shiki's time, that is to say, the beginning of the 20th century. Shiki denounced *renga* as artificial, and it fell into disuse. It has made something of a comeback in contemporary times, and is now more usually termed *renku* to indicate the modern form of this ancient practice.

Renga had many, and complicated, rules governing what might be included in a sequence of linked stanzas, as well as rules concerning what seasons ought to be included in what number and order, what topics were allowed, and many other considerations. What concerns us primarily is that *renga* always began with a *kami no ku* stanza, that is, a 5-, 7-, 5-*on* stanza, created by the *rengashi*, or *renga* master, supposedly at the time and place of the occasion during which the *renga* was to be composed. This stanza was termed the *hokku* (literally *opening stanza*). It was often written on the spot, but since it was not easy to create excellent *hokku* on demand (any more than it is to produce excellent haiku), *rengashi* began to create them in advance and stockpile them for use at an appropriate time. In so doing they could more carefully craft each *hokku*, and be certain that

each poem contained not only its topical material but also a depth, or resonance, so that the poem (and its possible links) could open outward. In this way, *hokku* are the true predecessors of haiku, since they were created independently, and needed to incorporate a seasonal aspect, as well as a sense of the place in which they were created: all aspects which came to be integral to haiku.

The great early figures of haiku (Basho, for example) were not haiku poets: they were, instead, *rengashi* who wrote *hokku*. It is only in retrospect that we have claimed them for haiku. This is not unfair, since what they wrote were poems which undoubtedly could have been and sometimes were used as *hokku*, but which also held sufficient interest, integrity and resonance that they could stand alone, without the remainder of the *renga* necessary to justify their creation. It is this tradition we follow when we write haiku: a poem based on a *kami no ku* rhythm, incorporating seasonal and place aspects that locate us in the here and now, which contrast (usually) a pair of images which, when juxtaposed, illuminates them in a moment of insight, creating resonance which deepens the moment and connects the writer and the reader.

Like any longstanding literary form, haiku has experienced times during which it was extremely popular, and times when it was all but ignored; times when it was understood by many,

and times when it was ridiculed. It has undergone many conceptions of what it must be and what it is for: all the great writers of haiku have imbued it with their own personal conceptions of what makes haiku matter. And, of course, the energy of their genius makes it seem so during their time, and for some time after. But in retrospect, it is possible, perhaps, to see that haiku is really a very flexible knot of energy, to use the analogy we used in our introduction: it is capable of sustaining many quite disparate theories of poetics, and produce fine work in all of them. In the course of haiku's history, poets as diverse as Basho and Issa have worked within this same form and produced their own distinctive masterworks, but all identifiably haiku. In our contemporary world, there are many schools of thought as to the correct poetics for haiku, but in the long run it will be the form which survives them all, while permitting each the opportunity to create telling poems within the form.

The Great Four in Japan includes Basho, who could write

along this way
no one travels—
autumn eve

but also

late autumn—
I wonder how it goes
with my neighbors?

Buson, a famous painter as well as poet, brings a visual sensibility to bear, as in the peony poem mentioned before, and this:

That's all there is:
the path comes to an end
amid weedblossoms

Issa is arguably the most popular poet of Japan, even now, almost two centuries after his death. The tragedy of his life did not overcome his basic compassion for his fellow creatures:

don't give up
lean frog
Issa is here

It was people he mistrusted:

long gone from here
I know nothing of them
but the scarecrows askew

The most recent of those accorded greatness in the Japanese pantheon is Shiki, whose theories about haiku were as integral to his fame as his poems. He favored an objective style, and stated a preference for Buson over Basho:

washing, washing
the length of summer
the Mogami River

but later in his brief life wrote many poems of
a personal nature:

two thousand haiku
between me
and two persimmons

As is shown even in these brief selections, they were all very different artists, and each has indelibly marked the form, helping it to expand to its present shape. It is because of their contributions that we can even begin to consider the issues that currently engage us: are *kigo* necessary? are there topics inappropriate to haiku? is the counting of syllables requisite in any way to the practice of haiku? and so on.

The twentieth century was one of great change throughout the world, and no less in Japan. After Japan's brief infatuation with things western in the first couple of decades of the century, much of what was traditionally considered valuable in the culture came under question for the first time in Japan. Mid-century, Japan's involvement in the Second World War was a culturally shattering experience which created a serious rift between those who upheld traditional culture and those who felt the

need to speak more directly to the contemporary situation. After a difficult rebuilding period was rewarded with financial success, Japan again late in the century felt a decline in prestige with a loss of economic stature and a series of government failures and scandals. All these things have weighed on the artists of Japan, and are reflected in the kinds of poems which they have produced.

At the beginning of the century, the imposing figure of Shiki shadowed the many who came immediately after. His disciples continued to dominate the literary activities of the haiku community, editing magazines and adjudicating contests. The work of the best of them, such as Hekigoto

scattered maple leaves—
now the garden
is left unswept

and Kyoshi,

stolen
the scarecrow's hat
leaks rain

can be seen as continuations of Shiki's own work. Some, however, turned a different way, such as Seisensui,

late night in winter
my shadow and I write down
personal things

Santoka,

deeper and deeper yet the green mountains

Hosai,

beginning to be cold
a Jizo
with a chipped nose

and Shuoshi.

waterfall
the depths of the blue world
pulses

In recent times Japanese haiku has been divided more along political lines than aesthetic ones, although considerable difference can be found between various poets as to what constitutes a modern haiku. Here is a brief sampling of the variety to be found today:

beneath dead leaves
the snow sinks down
a little

Suju Takano

for a cold instant
a huge broken pendulum
in the river's delta

Sei Imai

toothache—
obviously green leeks
in the field

Tae Kakimoto

day begins
the death of a gull
plunged into the sea

Kaneko Tobta

burning leaves
the pulsing waves
felt this moment

Yatsuka Ishihara

a dragon has sunk
into the Atlantic Ocean
autumn heat

Ban'ya Natsuishi

This sampling gives only the slightest indications of how varied and rich the practice of haiku remains in Japan, but it is only lately that translations of contemporary masters have become available in English. As we come to know the work of our contemporaries in Japan, we will find that they have moved far from the classical models of Basho and Buson—every bit as

far, in fact, as we have in the west.

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Haiku, then, has a longstanding, uninterrupted history and lineage in Japanese, but is a relative newcomer here. How exactly did haiku come to the west?

Interest in haiku began outside Japan during a time of relatively free cultural exchange between east and west around the turn of the nineteenth century. Interest was particularly keen in France, Spain, Serbia, England and the United States, fueled by the efforts of pioneer translators. Compare their translation of this haiku by Basho:

yagate shinu keshiki wa miezu semi no koe

Never an intimation in all those voices of *semi*
... how quickly the hush will come ...
how speedily all must die

Trans. Lafcadio Hearn

Qu'elle doit bientôt mourir,
A son aspect il ne parait pas,
La voix de la cigale!

Trans. Michel Revon

These early attempts, on the whole, failed to encompass the entirety of the form and content of haiku, but some, especially Revon's, were

extremely good work considering the paucity of available literature on the subject. English translations lagged behind, notably Basil Hall Chamberlains's work, which identified haiku with the epigram, and so misdirected understanding of the form for some while.

Shortly after these first attempts, Ezra Pound, H.D., Amy Lowell and others founded the literary movement called Imagism, which held many of the same tenets as haiku, such as using direct language, emphasizing intuition rather than logic, and above all, brevity. Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" is often cited as an early example of western haiku:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd :
Petals, on a wet, black bough.

Other important modernist poets provided their own take on this Imagist directive, leading to such poems as Wallace Stevens' "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" and many poems by William Carlos Williams. Poets from Spain, Mexico, France, Germany, Greece, Serbia and elsewhere followed this lead, and slowly over the next 4 decades footholds of understanding were made in each of these countries.

While these strides were being taken, Harold G. Henderson was making his first translations, gathered together in his book *The Bamboo Broom* (1933). This collection was to

form the basis for his later *An Introduction to Haiku* (1958) which was one of the most influential books in bringing awareness of classical haiku, and more importantly, haiku sensibility, to the west. It is true that in these translations Henderson makes use of rhyme, which later he regretted. Still, the selection and quality of the poems available marked this book as a major leap in understanding the form.

So soon to die,
and no sign of it is showing—
locust cry.

In the aftermath of World War II, another important work appeared, in this case by the British expatriate R. H. Blyth, whose 4-volume *Haiku* is equally a landmark in our coming to terms with haiku. Blyth's quirky but often inspired translations, and more, his erudite and Zen-flavored explications of his translations, probably has provided understanding to more English-speaking haiku novices than any other single source. Blyth went on to write more than a dozen other books on haiku, senryu and Japanese culture.

These two seminal works, *An Introduction to Haiku* and *Haiku*, can be seen as the poles of the two traditions which have since emerged in western haiku. Henderson's work is concerned primarily with the poetic form itself,

while Blyth's work is heavily steeped in Zen, and in fact insists that Zen is the proper state of mind for understanding haiku. This position has colored the way in which haiku has been transmitted in the west ever since.

What made Blyth's position more tenable was the readiness of western culture to consider and absorb the secrets of eastern mysticism in the 1950s. Writers like Alan Watts and Daisetz Suzuki expounded the mysteries of Zen, and many westerners were enthralled by the exotic and esoteric aspects of this new import. Among those who found significance in this new way of looking at things were Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and other writers of the Beat Movement. Kerouac mentions Blyth's 4-volume *Haiku*, in his novel *The Dharma Bums*, and later authored more than 800 haiku himself, including some of the best early poems in the form in English.

Missing a kick
at the icebox door
It closed anyway.

Snyder and Ginsburg also wrote in the form, albeit less successfully.

It was in the 1960s that haiku began to be recognized as a legitimate western poetic form. Several magazines dedicated to the form in English, notably *Haiku*, *American Haiku*, *Haiku*

West, and *Modern Haiku* emerged from this decade. A first anthology of haiku to be written entirely by western authors, *Borrowed Water*, appeared from a writing group in California. Most of the work in these early efforts can be seen to be derivative of Japanese models, or else poorly conceived by contemporary standards. But they were important transitional works moving us beyond mere imitation to an aesthetic specifically derived for western content, language and poetics.

The first collection of haiku in English illustrating a thoroughgoing understanding of the form and its possibilities in its transplanted home is *Sun in Skull*, a short collection by Cor van den Heuvel.

neon lights
in the rain wet globe
of a penny gum-ball machine

van den Heuvel has gone on to edit *The Haiku Anthology*, now in its third printing, but first appearing in 1974. The growth of this anthology from 200 to 800 poems, and the tone of the book from tentative first efforts to established resource, is one indication of how far haiku has come in the past 35 years.

Abroad, expatriate American Richard Wright began experimenting with haiku late in his life, but still managing to leave behind more

than 4000 poems. Many of these show imitation of Japanese originals, but some few are original and striking, and show promise that he would have been an excellent writer of haiku had he had time to pursue the art further. And Dag Hammarskjöld, the Secretary General to the United Nations and a leading international diplomat, published *Vagmarking* (translated *Markings* by W. H. Auden), which contained over a hundred haiku-like poems, although they are more aphoristic than our contemporary understanding of the haiku form would allow.

In the 1970s many new magazines emerged, and the first generation of haiku masters writing in English appeared. A sampling of their work:

waiting:
dry snowflakes fall
against the headlights
Jack Cain

Holding the water,
held by it—
the dark mud.
William J. Higginson

A Hallowe'en mask,
floating face up in the ditch,
slowly shakes its head.
Clement Hoyt

pausing
halfway up the stairs—
white chrysanthemums

Elizabeth Searle Lamb

a poppy . . .
a field of poppies!
the hills blowing with poppies!

Michael McClintock

driving
out of the car wash

clouds move
across the hood

Alan Pizzarelli

tide's far sound . . .
the stars have come in again
to lie among the stones

Martin Shea

Muttering thunder . . .
the bottom of the river
scattered with clams

Robert Spiess

Heat before the storm:
a fly disturbs the quiet
of the empty store

Nicholas Virgilio

and many others. During this time a specifi-

cally non-Japanese diction and content began to emerge, more in keeping with the western lineage of haiku as emerging from free verse and imagism than the specifics of classical Japanese haiku.

In addition, a group of poets gathered around Harold G. Henderson in New York to further study the form, and out of this alliance emerged the Haiku Society of America (1973), the first organization of poets dedicated to the form outside Japan. HSA has grown from its initial membership of fewer than 20 poets to an international organization of nearly 1000 members today. In addition, it publishes *Frogpond*, one of the two most important haiku magazines, along with *Modern Haiku*, of haiku outside Japan in the world.

Internationally, Jan Bostok created *Tweed* magazine in 1972 in Australia, Eric Amann founded *Cicada* in Canada in 1977, and the first European magazine, *Haiku*, appeared in Yugoslavia under the direction of Dusan Doderovic in 1978.

In the 1980s further growth was evidenced by several more magazines emerging, and also the creation of the first haiku presses in the west. Wind Chimes Press, From Here Press, HighCoo Press and others began publishing and distributing collections of haiku as part of the small press revolution that was taking hold throughout the west. In addition, the second

edition of van den Heuvel's *The Haiku Anthology* was released in 1986.

Many poets emerged as leading practitioners in the 1980s, including

the silence a droplet of water trickles down a stone

R. Clarence Matsuo-Allard

leaves blowing into a sentence

Robert Boldman

Pregnant again . . .

the fluttering of moths

against the window

Jan Bostok

Autumn rain—

a dog looks up at each person

passing on the street

Chuck Brickley

in the dark lobby

of the residential hotel

a feeling of autumn

L. A. Davidson

Snow at dusk:

our pot of tea

steeps slowly darker

Betty Drevniok

Among the white bones
of the whale's ribcage—
the drifting sand

Lorraine Ellis Harr

between church bells
the gentle ringing
of rain

Adele Kenny

she runs to greet me—
so many shades
of april green

Hal Roth

a child is born a new shadow

Ruby Spriggs

One by one to the floor all of her shadows

George Swede

This hot summer sun—
looking for a little give
in the honeydew

Tom Tico

shadows in the grass
our feet grow cool
as we talk of lost friends

Rod Willmot

and many more.

In the 1990s, haiku became even more ac-

cessible, as the small press revolution was overtaken by the internet revolution. More people than ever before were exposed to haiku via electronic means. Of course, not all the information available was of the soundest quality, but in terms of sheer numbers, haiku was made available in an unprecedented way to more people in more places than ever before.

Other events brought to practitioners a greater sense of community as well. The Haiku North America series of conferences was inaugurated by Garry Gay and Michael Dylan Welch. These biannual meetings have now been held in San Francisco, Toronto, Portland, Evanston, Boston and New York. They are the largest gatherings of aficionados of haiku anywhere outside Japan.

In addition, significant new haiku presses were established, including Press Here and Red Moon Press. This latter inaugurated the Red Moon Anthology series, annual anthologies of the best haiku and related works published in English each year from around the world; and also the New Resonance series, which recognizes promising newcomers to the world of English-language haiku. Increasingly it is possible to discover what the best poets in the form are doing on a regular basis, meet and discuss with them the present and future of the form, and engage fully in the literary community in a way that was impossible only a few years ago.

Many new voices emerged in the 90s, including:

spring afternoon
I try another combination
on the shed lock
Randy Brooks

starry night—
biting into a melon
full of seeds
Yu Chang

light rain
a woman reading braille
on the porch
David Elliott

snow bound
coloring inside
the lines
Sandra Fuhringer

Hole in the ozone
my bald spot . . .
sunburned
Garry Gay

his side of it.
her side of it.
winter silence
Lee Gurga

in the fire
a log shifts
the flow of thought
Christopher Herold

summer rain
on top of the sheets
we lie without touching
A. C. Missias

a snowy daybreak—
everything's just different
shades of violet
Brent Partridge

coming home
flower
by
flower
Jane Reichbold

the men on both sides
have taken
my armrests
Karen Sobne

checking the driver
as I pass a car
just like mine
John Stevenson

after the quake
adding I love you
to a letter

Michael Dylan Welch

Many others from all these decades have been quoted elsewhere in this book, and there are many others besides these worthy of mentioning as well.

New magazines and sites for haiku emerge annually; new anthologies and collections of individual authors are regularly released, and contests held virtually every week. There is increasing notice in the mainstream media (including *Newsweek* citing Basho as one of the 100 most important cultural figures of the preceding millenium in 1999), and many more outlets for sharing haiku than ever before.

This is true around the world. The first European haiku anthology, edited by the Dutch Haiku Society, featuring over 150 poets, was published in 1990. And today the Balkans now host over a dozen haiku journals, ranging from a simple newsletter format to an annual, multilingual, 300 page anthology. Haiku is now written in over 20 languages, and there are Haiku Associations in more than a dozen countries, including the United States (which hosts several regional organizations as well), Canada, France, Italy, Sweden, Great Britain, Croatia, Serbia, Yugoslavia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Ger-

many, the Netherlands, Belgium, and shortly in South Africa, China, Brazil and Spain.

This proliferation of haiku from so many cultures and so many languages has created a need to share this common form amongst the many, and so, at the turn of the millenium, the World Haiku Association has been created to establish international standards and a common language for haiku around the globe. This organization has adopted English as the international language of haiku, and seeks to elevate the dialogue about the form and practice of haiku beyond nationalistic and regional concerns to an international standard. At last, after centuries of insularity, haiku is finding a common meeting place where all who participate can find equal footing and communications with the many others from around the world who seek a similar dialogue.

Haiku, like any viable art, is shifting continuously, and what will emerge in the future of haiku can only be guessed at. But it is safe to say that it has become a viable, popular form of literature throughout the world, capable of being written, shared and appreciated by many cultures, in their different ways, in all parts of the world.

Related Forms

Haiku, though it may seem to have come from practically nowhere, is part of a varied and long-standing poetic tradition in Japan. It is useful to know something of this tradition, especially in light of how this tradition comments directly upon our own experiences. Also, this provides for us a background against which we can see how the haiku impulse has been redirected in many ways over the centuries of its existence.

It is particularly valuable to recognize that haiku is part of a larger poetic tradition which incorporates all sorts of short poems in Japan. The Japanese term is *haikai*, which today has the connotation of nonstandard or incorrect, but which may be seen to be the umbrella term for all this sort of poetry. Within its confines there is, of course, haiku, but also other sorts of poems which more or less fulfill the major formal requirements of haiku, which nevertheless have some other aim than the kinds of intuitive insights which are a necessity for success in that form. These similar and yet different forms include *senryu*, which has become as common in the west as haiku, and also *zappai*, which might be called miscellaneous short poems and would include what we see most com-

monly in the mainstream media, things like spam-ku, corporate or technological haiku, sci-fiku and the like. In addition, we find *haikai* refers to other kinds of short verse such as *tanka*, and also to *renga*, along with its contemporary counterpart, *renku*. We will here consider briefly each of these forms.

Senryu

Haiku, as we have discussed, evolved from *renga*, specifically the opening verse, the *hokku*, and has adopted and more or less maintained its refined tone, its concern with nature and its poetic/nonpoetic language. But if we consider *renga* as a whole, it is obvious that the topical material covered is far greater than merely natural phenomena. In fact, in typical *renga*, consideration of human circumstances occupies over half the links of the poem.

It is not surprising, then, that haiku is not the only form to emerge from *renga*. It has a close cousin in the form of *senryu*. *Senryu* shares an outward similarity of format with haiku, but its content and tone are very different. As haiku have come to embody the most important characteristics of the nature elements of *renga*, *senryu* have done likewise with the human elements.

This is perhaps an artificial dichotomy: human nature is as much a part of nature as any-

thing else, and so to differentiate it can be seen as self-interested, perhaps even self-serving. But this is a most human response, and that is what senryu are: human responses, often humorous, aiming not to be elevated but ironic, not pastoral but urban, not spiritual but earthy.

Senryu is named after Karai Hachiemon (pennname Senryû, 1718-1790) who, along with many others, collected these little verses of humor and irony into anthologies that were extremely popular in their day. Senryu and the other editors of the eighteenth century recognized a disaffection amongst their readers for classical haiku subjects and treatment, reflective as they were of an outdated feudal society, and a growing predilection for humorous verse, often on subjects more reflective of their urban environs and business-filled days. What these editors looked for in these verses reads like a list of taboos of haiku writing: word-play, especially puns; cleverness and intellectuality; emphasis on ironic and overtly humorous circumstances, especially subject matter which concerned itself with human affairs; eschewal of season words; and a lack of interest in the virtues sought in haiku as exemplified by the works of Basho, particularly *sabi*, *wabi* and *yugen*.

It is no different today: in fact, we might say that senryu is having a rebirth by virtue of the haiku having become popular in the west. In many ways the tone and content of what is

available to westerners immediately is the stuff of senryu. Increasingly we live in urban environments, and it is irony which strikes us more immediately than the profundities of nature. Also, we remain our own favorite subjects, and poems which feature human circumstances, especially those which recognize and gently ridicule our all-too-human peccadilloes have an immediate appeal to most. Such are these:

meeting her boyfriend
our handshakes
out of sync
Tom Clausen

self-defense class
everyone
facing the mirror
Don Foster

laughing together
out in the hallway
her lawyer and his
Cindy Guentherman

her fish-net stockings catch my eye
Jim Handlin

his ashes scattered
what to do
with the box
Paul Watsky

Zappai

The British punk poet John Parker Moore wrote, as a means of illustrating his understanding of the form, the following “haiku”:

TO CON-VEY ONE’S MOOD
IN SEV-EN-TEEN SYLL-ABLE-S
IS VE-RY DIF-FIC

And virtually all of us who have been on-line for any length of time are familiar with these poems, and many more like them:

Delicately, I
Sniff your hand. You’ve been petting
A strange cat. Traitor!
Deborah Coates

Windows NT crashed.
I am the Blue Screen of Death.
No one hears your screams.
Anonymous

These are examples of zappai, a miscellaneous group of poems whose main point of contact with haiku is its outwardly similar formal aspect. Usually written in 3 lines of 5-7-5 syllables (far more often than contemporary haiku, for instance), these purport to be haiku but lack most of the internal components we have come to recognize which distinguish haiku. Never-

theless, these can be fun, and so long as we recognize the differences between the various forms, harmless enough to the appreciation and achievement of genuine art. Other kinds of zappai include sci-fiku:

Earth-Tansen treaty talks
the alien ambassador lying
out of each mouth

John Dunphy

corporate-ku:

Truly, the Wise One
is creative: he invents
his own statistics.

William Warriner

vampire-ku:

The Brujah have no
concept of society.
Come Kiss My Ra, fool!

Kristian Priisholm

This is a partial sampling—there are hundreds of different kinds of zappai. Enjoy them, but recognize that there is little accomplishment here in terms of art, and that they are, for the most part, ephemera intended to evoke a chuckle (or strike terror!) and then move on.

Tanka

Tanka, which literally means “short poem,” is related to haiku because of its common origin in renga, and from its similar structure (of its first three lines) of a short-long-short arrangement of lines, mirroring the original Japanese structure of 5-7-5 *on*, which are then completed by a 7-7 cap: so the whole of the poem is arranged 5-7-5-7-7, or short-long-short-long-long.

snow still
on the high places,
the echo
of my calling voice
comes back cold

Anna Holley

The subject matter of tanka is very different from haiku. In fact, it is a poetry of self-expression where haiku is rather one of subsuming self while identifying with the rest of the universe.

What prompts its appearance and consideration here is the similarity of structure, especially if we consider the poem as being comprised of two parts. The opening three lines is an exact replica of the haiku form, and owes its form to the same origin in renga. And the capping pair of lines are an exact replication of the

following link in renga. In fact, we ought to think of the tanka as changing directions at exactly this moment of pivot: three lines to set up one scenario or situation, two lines following to twist the situation into a surprise of realization. Most commonly subject matter is personal in nature, such as love, sadness, and desire.

Awakened
by the rooster's crow
dawn slipping under
the window shade—the morning
of her womanhood

Pat Shelley

Renga, Renku & Rengay

Linked verse has a long and honorable history in Japan, and it is not possible to do justice to it in such a brief overview as this. We have already seen how renga has been the source of inspiration for haiku and senryu, as well as zappai and tanka.

The general principles are quite complex and can take years to master. In brief, the goal is to link to the preceding verse in such a fashion that the link seems inevitable and yet was unexpected; also, to carry the poem forward in a non-narrative way, but still maintaining the momentum of the flow of it. Ideally, the link

should also shift the poem toward a new subject or season, depending on the needs of the poem at the moment. The ensemble effect is to be inclusive of all the seasons in a proportionate way, and to observe a balance between natural and human elements. No topic may be repeated, and seasons are repeated in a prescribed manner. It is a highly artificial (in the sense of being decorative) form, social in its effect and mannered in its execution.

It fell out of favor in Japan at the beginning of the twentieth century, when Shiki denounced it, but has staged something of a comeback, especially in the west. Its social and public elements appeal to many.

1. Renga: The Seahawk's Feathers

An Interpretation of Classical Renga

This is the first *kasen* of *Saru-mino-shu*, written in Kyoto in early winter, 1690, published 3 July, 1691. This translation was begun 24 April, 2003 and was completed 4 June, 2003.

1 *Kyorai* (1651-1704) also known as *Rakushisha*, one of Basho's most devoted disciples

2 *Basho* (1644-1694)

3 *Boncho* (?-1714) a physician in Kyoto, who, along with *Kyorai* played a leading role in editing *Sarumino*.

4 *Fumikuni* (?-?) well-educated doctor who moved to Kyoto and later Edo to follow Basho.

the seahawk's feathers
preened just so,
the first of the cold drizzle₁

a gust of wind and then
the leaves are hushed₂

early morning
traversing the river
my breeks wet through₃

a dainty bamboo bow
to scare raccoons₄

vines of ivy creeping
over the slatted door
the evening moon₂

not for the giving:
these pears of such repute₁

as autumn fades
his wild strokes yield
a unique sumi-e ₄

so wonderful . . .
the feel of knitted footwear₃

peace presides
in everything while
not a word is uttered₁

sighting a village
the noontide conch is blown²

the plaited grass
of last year's sleep mat
fraying at the edges³

one petal falls
then another: a lotus⁴

a bowl of broth
wins the highest praise,
graced with suizenji!²

the road ahead
above three miles or more¹

this spring also
Rodo's man stands ready
in the same employ⁴

hazy-moon night,
a cutting has taken root³

though bound in moss
the old stone basin sits well
with the blossom²

anger in the morning
finds its own resolve¹

two day's worth
of foodstuffs consumed
at a single sitting³

a snowy chill:
the north wind over the isle⁴

to light the fire
on sundown he sets off
for the peak temple¹

the mountain-cuckoos,
done with all their singing²

a gaunt man
still not strong enough
to sit up in his bed⁴

with next door's help
the ox cart is pulled in³

he, obnoxious lover,
shall be guided through
the Hedge of Thorns²

his swords just now returned
in sign of parting¹

a desperate haste
this way and that
the head stroked with a comb³

“Look then here's a madman
firmly fixed on death”⁴

blue heavens
the daybreak moon still lingers
in morning light¹

first frost on Mt. Hira:
the autumnal lake²

a door of twigs,
a waka to proclaim
the theft of buckwheat⁴

wrapped in a soft kilt
these windy evenings³

jostling for pillows
one snatches a little sleep,
then off again²

Tatara's skies still red
the ragged clouds¹

a tack shop frontage
from the crupper maker's
window—blossom³

young buds burst aflame
amongst old loquat leaves⁴

Suizenji: special nori-seaweed rich in minerals from Suizenji pond in Kumamoto, Kyushu where the Mukai family originated

Rodo: (?-811) a Chinese poet/tea master during T'ang Dynasty

Tatara: the name of a beach near Hakata, Kyushu, where a crucial battle was fought

Translation by Eiko Yachimoto & John E. Carley

2. Renku: “New Coolness”

Ninjuin Renku at Onawa, Maine, September 6-7
2002, by *Yu Chang, Paul MacNeil, John Stevenson,* and
Hilary Tann. Rotation by Paul MacNeil.

new coolness
a perfect day
for climbing js

red maple leaves
line most of the bootprints pwm

she reads
mother’s pancake recipe
by moonlight ht

the usual suspects
of a murder mystery yc

accountants
in three-piece suits
and handcuffs pwm

I offer you my name
with a hyphen js

at Las Vegas
our best man
hits the jackpot yc

bright nasturtiums
frame the herb garden ht

all five
car doors
frozen shut js

cardboard boxes
on a subway vent yc

tattoos tensed
the harpooner
listens pwm

eye to eye
with an eagle js

it rained
on their golf course
rendezvous ht

whispering...
under a pool umbrella pwm

sangria
on the rocks
and slivers of moon yc

the photojournalist
adjusts his lens ht

we sense
the silent prayer
is about to end js

rich soil
yields to the harrow pwm

on the classroom wall
shadows
of magnolia blossoms ht

homemade nets
for the smelt run yc

In the 1990s Garry Gay, an American poet, refined a form of linked verse he felt would be more accessible to western sensibilities. Entitled *rengay*, this form has taken off in popularity. It is quite different than renku in that it seeks rather to build a cumulative effect through its links, and usually does not regard season as an important element unless it is the actual subject of the shared poem. Here is an example in which the inventor participates:

3. Rengay: “Snapshot”

cropped photograph—
leaving my shadow
on the darkroom floor

from the bottom of the tray
your smile slowly develops

pulling me closer
in front of the camera . . .
first date

pinned
on the bulletin board
your snapshot

a roll of negatives . . .
the brightness of your dark eyes

self-timer
I join you
in the photograph

Cherie Hunter Day/Garry Gay

Sequence

Sequences are relatively rare in contemporary haiku, but occasionally they will be found in one of the journals dedicated to the genre. Usually the intention is to produce several poems on the same theme, but occasionally the poet will attempt to use the same image, or even a repeated line. Here are two short in English:

1. Sequence: "Torque"

Iraq forgotten—
the stubborn top
of the jelly jar

what matters?
the stubborn top
of the jelly jar

nothing else—
the stubborn top
of the jelly jar

mind zooms in
the stubborn top
of the jelly jar

glaciers in Greenland
the stubborn top
of the jelly jar

Michael Ketchek

2. Sequence: “Only”

autumn
the path along the river
grows narrow

home from my travels
my dark house
greet me

for the last time
looking at the mountain
that is only a hill

by her sick bed
sprig of pussywillow
in a stone vase

autumn grass
waving
with one shadow

Leatrice Lifshitz

Haibun

Haibun, literally “haiku prose,” is another form which has nearly disappeared in Japan, but which is burgeoning in the west. A prose section, usually telegraphic in style and specific to the context of the poem, precedes or incorporates a haiku, which may be seen as a culminative element to the work as a whole, but which should not reiterate the substance of the prose. There are several styles, including the explanatory (which essentially describes how the haiku came to be):

1. Haibun: “Thunder Season”

In the desert the days are usually blue-skyed. But in summer months the monsoon winds curve up from the Gulf of Mexico, rise over the dry mountains, curl into dark clouds, obscure the sun, and pound thunder down the arroyos. Sometimes it rains. Usually it doesn't. When clouds build and

rumble, but dissipate without raining, the Tohono O'odham Indians of southern Arizona say "as t-iatogi." That is, "they just lied to us." Every summer afternoon my dog looks worried, her ears pricked, anticipating the first rumble. Even when it doesn't come, thunder defines the rhythms of these days.

night's dark sleep—
thunder
flutters the curtains

Tom Lynch

the essay (which discusses some subject, often nature, and uses the haiku as illustration or enhancement):

2. Haibun: "Fields of Rape"

All afternoon it takes to move by train from Akita to Niigata, following the northwest coast of the Sea of Japan. Each of the modest-sized towns in which we stop, drenched in the soporific spring sunlight, drones with its small commerce. We exchange a group of lurching rotarians from Ugo-Honjo for a gathering of farmers' wives going shopping in Sakata, and later collect children making their way from school to their homes in outlying Amarume. All regard us with a pleasant enough curiosity, but none is willing to sit next to us.

We pass by dams and alongside highways, under bridges and over ditches, coming slowly to a first-hand knowledge of the challenges of this ter-

rain, and of the many strategies by which people here have sought control over it. Geography does much to inform character, and character, Thomas Hardy tells us, is fate. The land here is resplendent with personality. Primal force manifests not in abstractions, but pure being: the perfect cone of Fuji, the catarract that is Yonjusanman. One of the earliest creation myths of Japan involves the periodic awakenings of a giant koi whose struggles deep beneath the sea shiver the land into seismic activity. Animism has been the popular religion for a millennium and longer, and still figures extensively in the emotive, if not the literal, lives of the inhabitants. Interestingly, in the years following upon the exploding of the Atomic Bomb, the koi and other creatures buried within racial memory re-emerged but in a significantly different fashion. Godzilla, Mothra and others, whose movements in their earlier guise as dragons once created the lay of this land, now moved directly into the provenance of man, walking his roads, destroying his cities. Completely oblivious to the resistance of man, they are subsumed only through combat with forces of equal magnitude as themselves. And we humans escape destruction only through their purblind indifference to us.

It is understandable that a culture whose environment is so fraught with unpredictable and dire events seeks control as a guiding principal. But there are cracks in such reasonings, just as there are cracks threading the tunnels of the Tokyo subway. Control is an illusion we grant ourselves, and it is relative. Taken as a basis of a cultural *Zeitgeist*,

it subverts the wild and actual world in favor of a manufactured and manageable one. This may be said of all art, all culture, but it must be admitted that *bonsai*, *ikebana*, and the related arts do not represent a love of nature as it is (as is popularly believed), but rather as it may be shaped by hand. But while our reason may be fooled, we are not so easily misled at the level of myth. There we hold the apprehension that we are ever powerless before the most potent of nature's forces; that our engineering of the environment is never without incalculable, if not always apparent or immediate, expense; and that in the end, we have no other place in which to abide. An esthetic which counsels management of the unmanageable will ultimately fail; it can succeed only as idea, and there must atrophy, devoid of primal force. The landscape rolls on. The fields are largely empty just now, since only within the month has the cold Siberian wind ceased to blow across the Northern Sea. However, rape is in bloom, and vast fields of it stretch in all directions. I recall Buson (via Blyth):

A field of rape:
The sun in the west,
The moon in the east.

It is the same for us, two hundred fifty years after the poet described it, and it is possible to believe that nothing has changed here in all that time.

This train, passing as it does through city, suburb and field, provides us a glimpse into the back yards and private spaces of peoples' lives. Every-

where we find neatly tended plots, tools ordered on benches, sculpted pines, and only an occasional display of extravagance; here are the revelatory works of spirit, and seem characteristic of these people: apt, artful, sincere. Occasionally there might be found a lawn-chair become fixed by the growth of garden about it; or a man's washing hung in the sun. But everywhere tiny revelations of these lives are manifest, some of which seem easy to read, some less so, and all are suggestive of a life beyond interior space, or rather, an interiority mannered and easily translatable to a life spent out of doors, under the sun.

backyard fish pond—
a nibbling koi
shatters the moon

Jim Kacian

the narrative,

3. Haibun: "Losing Private Sutherland"

Steven Spielberg's searing indictment of war—the bloody and horrendous carnage at Normandy Beach—was difficult to watch as I sat in the dark theater during a weekday matinee. Then, unexpectedly, the 506th was mentioned and I found myself on the verge of breaking down; that number identifying our basic training regiment triggered the old and unassuaged grief at Sutherland's death. A magnificent human being wasted in a forgotten war;

the youth and promise of a good friend forfeited. I can still see him standing in combat boots smudged with Kentucky mud ... a residue of cold rain dripping from his helmet and poncho ... a cigarette in his mouth that he lights for me ... and then another he lights for himself. Pentimentoed under this memory, carried for almost 50 years, is a body riddled with bullets as it is washed away in the flashing rampage of a Korean river, and there follows a scene long and relentlessly willed to stave off madness ... *sediment settles gently on my friend's handsome face ... peacefully ... softly ... quietly* Yes, the soldier can no longer hear gunfire; the young soldier can no longer hear the river thundering into his throat. He is quiet ... as I soon will be quiet ...

the flag folded
something of myself is lowered
with his coffin

Jerry Kilbride

the dream or journal report,

4. Haibun: "Pantry Shelf"

Pottery shops were a weakness of yours. When we came upon one your eyes would lock on it. You'd glance at me with the words, sometimes unspoken: "Do we have time?—Yes, let's have a look." Usually, not looking for anything in particular—just the delight of seeing, touching and holding useful things crafted with care. When you just had to buy,

we went for coffee mugs—you can never have too many! And so we had a shelf of them in our pantry—most were ‘yours’ and a few were ‘mine.’

six weeks after—
her coffee mugs
at the back of the shelf

Cyril Childs

and the travelogue,

5. Haibun: “Key West”

Key West, the veritable end of the road and southernmost point in the continental United States. *Cayo Hueso*, as the Spanish explorers originally named it—Isle of Bones, because of the Native American remains they found strewn across its tropical desolation. Now, the living far outnumber the dead, as thousands of tourists drag their tired bones down the narrow palm-lined streets, determined to see everything the tiny island has to offer.

The most celebrated daily activity is watching the sunset, when hundreds of people gather on the waterfront dock at Mallory Square, where buskers entertain before and after the sun drops into the ocean, as nature provides a stunning light show.

The orange sun drops
below the horizon—
the crowd applauds

The main event over, the crowd thins as many head back to the famed bars of Duval Street. Sloppy Joe's Bar, one of Hemingway's haunts, is open-sided and brimming with tourists, eager to soak up some of the seedy ambiance (as well as rum) that supposedly inspired Papa. But in Hemingway's day, there were fishermen and sailors at his sides, no ATM in the corner for drinkers in need of cash, and no kiosk selling t-shirts with his visage, which, somewhat fittingly, looks rather sad.

Sloppy Joe's Bar—
packed with Hemingway
wannabes

At the visit's end I reflect on what Dos Passos wrote in a letter to Hemingway, that his trip over the Keys by train was a "dream-like journey." By 1935, 23 years after it was completed, the railroad was gone, destroyed by a hurricane.

I slide behind the wheel of the car and head north, the only way to go. Aquamarine water stretches as far as the eye can see on both sides of the narrow road, the bright sunlight reflecting off of it to produce a variety of hues. What lies ahead brings to mind Basho's final haiku, which inspires a final haiku of my own about this enchanting place.

Keys journey . . .
over sun-baked bridges
dreams wander on

Brett Peruzzi

Haiga

Haiku began in Japan as a pictorial as well as literary art: even when there is no *sumi-e* or other illustration attached, the presentation of the poem itself, in its calligraphed form with use of visual elements and space, was as much a visual treat as a poetic one. Haiga is the natural extension of this inclination: the combination of haiku with illustration.

Many of the haiku masters illustrated their own work, often with great skill. Buson, for instance, was a professional artist. Even those without great proficiency in the skills of painting show an appropriate aptitude to render their own work, and occasionally others', with a charming simplicity.

There are three major traditions of haiga: the rendering of the subject of the poem in the illustration:

Walkien Pond:
a lone dragonfly pauses
on the sandy path



Haiku: Bruce Ross
Painting: David Murray Ross

illustrating something not present in the poem
which obliquely opens the poem in another or
deeper direction:

motes of dust
sparkling



in November sunlight

AS

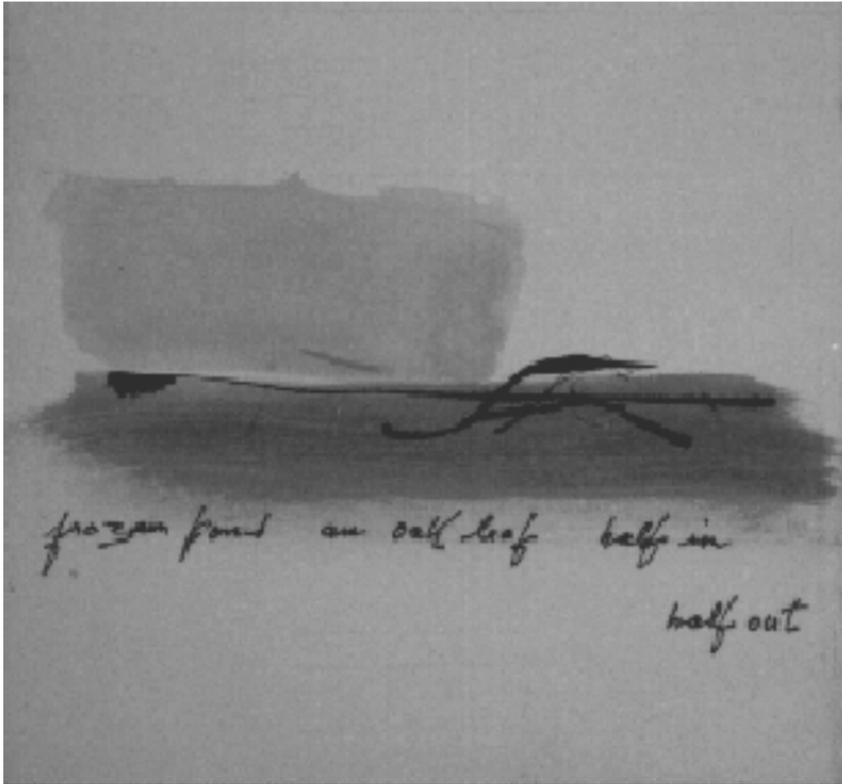
Haiku & Painting: Stephen Addiss

and a portrait or self-portrait of the poet who
composed the haiku:



Haiku & Painting: Jim Kacian

All of these schools are still in practice, and haiga, though a relative newcomer to the west, is finding a rebirth here. Besides adopting these kinds of haiga, there have already emerged schools of haiga which are endemic to the west, and which promise to revivify the art. These include abstract haiga, which works suggestively around the haiku:



Haiku: Raffael de Gruttola
Painting: Wilfred Croteau

and a hybrid east/west painting style which seeks to capture the best of both traditions:



Haiku & Painting: Jeanne Emrich

There are other trends as well, and it will be particularly interesting to watch to see how this

art unfolds as it gathers momentum here outside its homeland.

Haiku & Other Arts

Besides the obvious relationship available between haiku and art, there are traditions of haiku in other arts as well. Although we will be unable to reproduce these forms here, you might easily imagine some aspects of these for yourselves, and you might find this inspires you to consider your own artistic response to the haiku sensibility in another medium.

Besides the performance aspects of haiku accompanied by music, there have been serious attempts to set haiku to western art music. These have ranged from impressionistic renderings of single haiku to choral settings of groups of poems to symphonic music which incorporated haiku into the fabric of the musical context. Accompanying forces have varied from guitars and recorders to piano, string quartet, and small orchestra. Many of the same problems of presentation inherent in haiku reading are encountered in setting haiku, and it is interesting to see how various composers meet these challenges. There is no dedicated disc of haiku music yet released, but a useful discography does exist.

In addition, interpretive dance has been employed to interpret haiku often of late. It is

interesting to compare the achieved forms with haiga for poems which have received both treatments. A concert of haiku dance was given in Boston in April of 2000, and another was held at Haiku North America in 2001 in the same city. Many others have followed.

Besides these, the traditional Japanese arts of ikebana, calligraphy and sumi-e painting lend themselves well to haiku interpretation, and have often been employed to do so.

As usual, the goal of all these artistic visions is to find means through which the vision of the poet can be shared intimately with the perceiver. It is quite difficult to judge all these efforts, but what matters most is the transmission of the haiku moment: did the artist communicate clearly to you the moment of revelation? Whenever this has been achieved, no matter the medium, an enhancement of poetic mode is apparent. This is perhaps not the last word, but might serve as a means to enter the newly hybridized form, and therefore might at least stand as something of a beginning.

Performance

Haiku is meant to be shared; it has no other purpose. There may be things which result from this sharing—poetry is powerful magic, and in the past has been used to heal, incite, recall and dispatch, among other things—but all results come forth from this first intent.

There are many ways in which to share haiku. We have already considered publication, and this is the most common way to go about it, and has the advantage of having the greatest potential audience. But while it has some virtues, it lacks the immediacy of interpersonal contact, for example, or the nuance of voice. In this chapter we'll consider some of the ways in which haiku have been offered in person and out loud in the past, and suggest some other ways which might be tried.

It is true that haiku are difficult to read, particularly individual poems. It is difficult to generate momentum within the course of a single haiku: by the time the reader is finding his rhythm, or the listener has fully attuned herself to the speaker's pitch and intonation, the poem is over. Also, haiku are very densely filled with images, and after a short while any listener might experience an input overload. We

could compare it with a box of chocolates: everything in the box is tempting, but eating them all at a sitting will produce not satiation but a heavy dullness. There is a limit which finds a balance between these states, and it is not always easy to predict or recognize.

A standard practice has grown up in English-language haiku circles to read a haiku, pause, and read it a second time, before moving on to the next poem. This has the advantage of allowing the images to be fixed a second time in the listener's mind, and for the resonances to well up. On the other hand, the stop-and-start action prevents the building up of momentum. Nevertheless, this must be considered the norm for reading practices at this point, especially useful for single poems.

The key element here is the creation of useful time for the listener to imagine himself into the situation, and to experience it for himself. Many other devices have been employed to achieve this same effect. One such practice has been the sounding of a gong or bell following the reading of a poem, with the subsequent poem not read until the vibrations from the bell have totally died away. Another imaginative method for outdoor readings has been the releasing of helium balloons, with the next poem read when the balloon fades from sight.

These techniques are especially useful, as before, with single poems, or with groups of

poems by several authors. On the other hand, there is the danger that the resonances of the poem may be lost to the inherent interest in the sounds or sights generated as spacers to the poems. There is also the consideration that the last-mentioned technique is not perhaps ideally attuned with contemporary ecological and conservationist practice.

A different approach to gathering time and resonance to the poem is the use of another medium, such as music or art, in collaboration with the readings. Often individual instrumentalists are employed to accompany the reader, very commonly a *shakuhachi* or *samisen* player, but increasingly musicians who play western instruments such as oboe, clarinet or flute. Stringed instruments are often used as well, especially guitar or violin. Here, because of the development of the musical line (ideally related in affect to the poem read), a musical pause is developed, which can be especially moving when there is good connection between the two performers. Of course the music may prove distracting when the players do not match each other well.

In the case of art, or photographs, or dance, or physical re-enactment, these same sorts of values come into play, with the same potential advantages and difficulties.

For longer readings, the aim is usually to attain a balance between the individual poem

and the movement of the whole. These last few performance styles lend themselves to longer performances as well as the one-poem-at-a-time format. In addition, the reading style can vary considerably as well. One particularly effective means, if losing individual resonances of particular poems is not a concern, is the jazz reading, where streams of poems in which cascades of images wash over the listener are read close upon each other, with particular emphasis given to the rhythmic element in the poems. This too can be enhanced by musical accompaniment, and reinforces the historical connection English-language haiku holds with the Beats.

Then there is the cyclic reading, where poems are read two or more times at different intervals over the course of the reading. This has the effect of introducing the listener to a poem the first time, and allowing a resonance to grow from repeated exposures, while at the same time permitting a certain amount of momentum to be generated over the course of the whole performance. This works particularly well with poems which are related by thematic, seasonal or emotive links.

Rare, but not unheard of, is the sung reading, wherein all the poems are performed by the reader with pitch and often melody. This is a truly creative mode which goes beyond the simple considerations of performance and enters the realm of new form. It can be inspiring,

but obviously depends upon gifts which not every haiku poet may have at his command.

It is useful to consider the differences between the traditions in this matter as well. The Japanese rarely employ any of these methods, preferring straightforward readings, although there is perhaps a higher incidence of sung readings there. One of the reasons for this may lie in the fact that the Japanese are utilizing a more specific rhythmic underpinning than we in the west, who are more comfortable with a free verse tradition.

In the Japanese haiku, especially those which seek to employ traditional concepts of format, there is an understood rhythmic form which gives shape to the reading of every poem. We may think of it as though it were a grid of eight beats per line, times three lines, so an overall pattern of twenty four beats. I don't mean beats to suggest stresses as they would in English: we might better conceive of them as the ticks of a metronome, unstressed but marking a specific passage of time in a specific tempo.

Within this grid, there is a great deal of latitude for performance, and one may speak on or off the beat, or syncopate with partial beats, or employ silence for a beat or beats. In other words, the grid is extremely flexible, while still providing structure. And it is within this structure that the reading of a haiku is heard by a

Japanese listener, although he or she may not consciously refer to it. It operates somewhat as cadence does for us in the west: once the pattern of tonal closure has been evoked, we will hear it automatically, or else feel discomfiture if it is withheld (so, too, a haiku without rhythmic closure).

This may suggest why haiku performance with music can be so powerful, and also provides ideas for future performances. It might be possible to create a similar rhythmic expectation in an audience in the west by providing some sort of rhythmic accompaniment—something as simple as a clicktrack or as complex as a full-blown musical composition—and then operating within the rules of this rhythmic device, or else breaking them, to gain the desired effect appropriate to each poem.

The most important consideration, no matter what the technique, is to remember that communication with the intended listener is paramount. All effects ought to be aimed at permitting the listener a closer experience in keeping with the reality of the poem. Where this is successful, a powerful enhancement of the text is possible. Where the listener can enter more entirely into the moment of each poem, there will we find the greatest connection possible, the primary purpose of haiku.

Haiku: The World's Longest Poem

ou have now begun the journey of haiku. You will help maintain its lineage by knowing what it is, how it works, and what has been valued in it for centuries. You will help make it new by bringing to it your own vitality and sensibility, and the new experiences and values which only you and the future can supply. This is what is necessary for haiku to matter: a sense of its past, a relevance to the present, a growing into the future.

It will also help you to see haiku, and your place in it, in larger terms. Haiku is, as we have seen, the world's shortest poetic form. Properly considered, it is also the world's longest poem.

The goal of every haiku is to see the world aright, see it whole, see it true. Every haiku contributes some small piece to this seeing. Every haiku aims, then, at a common goal, and as such can be seen as a piece of a whole. When considered in this way, haiku becomes the agglomeration of thousands, even millions, of small moments, from nearly the same number of poets over several centuries, shared by way of a common form. We are a part of this far-ranging community, and as such can feel the

power which community can bring to such an enterprise. Bashô once wrote that a life in which even a single perfect haiku was written was not lived in vain. It was in this context that such a statement means something. And we, too, will make our contributions, which others today and in future generations will appreciate and make part of their view of the universe.

I once wrote, in another context, that another poet had wondered aloud what I might hope to accomplish by working in such a brief form as haiku. I answered, quite spontaneously, that such a question was similar to pondering what God might have done with the universe if he hadn't had to work moment by moment. The cumulative effect is rather magnificent, despite the modesty of the building blocks.

I believe haiku is precisely what we need in our lives today. Its brevity permits us access in as short a time as we might have to spare, and for the same reason makes further consideration often and at odd moments much easier. But we need not spend hours to know the intuitive sense of any of the best haiku. A few moments, deeply considered, are enough.

At the same time, haiku are deep. They move past the surface of things as we are accustomed to seeing them, and connect us with those things that lie beneath the surface: the way things really are, the way we really feel. There is a great need in our time of glossy sur-

faces to find resonance beneath the slickness.
Haiku help us do this.

At bottom, haiku connect us with ourselves, with the earth, with our time and place on earth. They are about the real, the here and now, the truth. We need this now more than ever, in our time of provisional truths and circumstantial ethics, and yes, of quantum physics and virtual time. Haiku ground us in ways which are undeniable to our ways of being. They make us see what is right in front of us, right now, and when we can see what is right here, we are better able to manage what has been and still might be. Haiku is a gift, from one to another, from our generations to those which will come, and ultimately to ourselves.

the silence
while the gift
is being opened
Myra Scovel

Glossary

caesura—a pause or breathing place, usually in the middle of a line, and indicating a pause in the sense or meaning of the line.

choka—long poem (also *nagauta*) in contradistinction to *waka* (short poem, which includes haiku and tanka).

haibun—haikai writing of many sorts; contemporaneously, a combination of (often poetic) prose and haiku (or *senryu* or *zappai*).

haiga—haiku painting; the combination of image and text, often simple and sketch-like, where each element enhances the character of the other.

haiku—a brief poem in 1 to 4 lines, often concerned with nature or the human experience, and usually juxtaposing a pair of images; at its best, it fosters a resonance which deepens over time

haikai—as contemporarily used, haiku and related forms, such as *renku*, sequences, etc. Classically, suggesting irregular and/or comic poetic forms.

hiragana—one of the two syllabaries, along with *katakana*, and collectively called *kana*, used in writing the Japanese language. *Hiragana* is the more traditional, and was originated, according to popular legend, by the Buddhist *bhōdisattva* (enlightened being) Kōbō Daishi in the 9th century A.D.

hokku—the opening verse of a *renga* or *haikai* sequence, sometimes composed independent of its linked usage; the forerunner of haiku.

ikebana—flower arrangement in one of many Japanese styles.

Jizo—the Japanese name for the Mahayana Buddhist *bhōdisattva* Kshītigarbha. He is especially concerned with the welfare of the dead, and is the special protector of dead children, as well as being concerned with roads and mountains. Shrines to Jizo are found throughout Japan, especially in places where children have died, and at rural crossroads.

kami no ku—the first three lines of a *tanka* (literally, “upper stanza”), opposed to *shimo no ku*, the final two lines.

kasen—a pattern of *renga* or *renku* comprising thirty-six links.

katakana—the other of two syllabaries, along with *hiragana*, collectively called *kana*, used in writing the Japanese language. All foreign words are written in *katakana*.

kigo—a seasonal word or phrase, through which haiku may call upon associations of nature which might not be available within the short compass of the verse itself. Traditional haiku must contain a *kigo*, though contemporary practice, both in Japan and elsewhere, shows less insistence upon its use.

kireji—cutting word(s) (in Japanese such words as *kana*, *-keri*, *ya*, etc.) which initially were employed in *renga* in certain verses, and later were adapted to use in haiku as a kind of caesura or terminus.

nijūin—a pattern of *renga* or *renku* comprising twenty links.

on[ji]—a sound; for haiku purposes, a Japanese linguistic entity closest to an English syllable.

renga—linked poetry, essentially a linking of alternating 3-line and 2-line verses, usually with strict rules for linking; the opening verse became known as the *hokku*, which later developed into the contemporary haiku.

rengashi—*renga* masters, such as Basho.

renku—the contemporary name for *renga*; it suggests less stringency to classical rules of composition, though this is not necessarily true.

resonance—the secondary significance which the words of a poem elicit beyond the first, literal, meaning.

romaji—a system of romanized spelling for the Japanese language.

sabi—the appreciation of solitude and quiet apprehension; an aesthetic virtue espoused by many poets throughout the classical age of haiku in Japan, and in general in Japanese art.

samisen—a Japanese (originally Chinese) musical instrument of three strings and played with a plectrum, not unlike a guitar.

satori—enlightenment as conceived by Zen Buddhism; more colloquially, a moment of insight into the nature of reality.

seasonal reference—see *kigo*.

sedoka—one kind of *waka*, or short poem, consisting of six lines in the (classical) pattern of 5-

7-7 5-7-7 on.

senryu—a short poem similar in structure to haiku but featuring ironic, humorous and/or coarse observations on human nature.

shakubachi—the Japanese wooden flute.

shasei—literally, “sketch”; the school of composition founded and championed by Shiki which states that haiku must be taken from Nature and rendered with an incompleteness which permits the reader to finish the poem; though only one of many competing theories, this scheme has had inordinate impact on haiku practice in the West.

shimo no ku—the concluding (two) lines of a tanka.

sumi-e—ink painting.

tanka—along with *choka*, one of the two principle types of *waka*, or short poem, consisting of five lines containing an upper stanza (three lines) and lower stanza (two lines), though of course variants are common.

wabi—the beauty inherent in poverty, and the impoverished; an aesthetic virtue espoused by many of the poets throughout the classical age

of haiku in Japan, and in general in Japanese art.

yugen—mystery and depth; an aesthetic virtue espoused by many of the poets throughout the classical age of haiku in Japan, and in general in Japanese art.

zappai—irregular poems of many types, including *senryu* and those similar which do not realize the aesthetic goals of haiku.

