BAN’YA NATSUISHI

A Future Waterfall

100 Haiku from the Japanese
A
Future
Waterfall

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Second Revised Edition

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Cover Painting: Willem de Kooning
Untitled V, oil on canvas, 1977, 79.5" x 69.25". Used with permission.
Introduction

Only a very few years ago, it was nearly impossible to discover what was happening in haiku in Japan. There simply were no books by contemporary poets translated into English. The result was that our western notion of what haiku was and could be lagged a couple centuries behind the living practice of it. All that has changed.

Today, we can expect at least one or two books a year to become available in English of the very best work of the present-day practitioners in Japan. We now know not only the names of Tohta, Ishihara, Tsubouchi and others, but also have some idea of why their names have come to have purchase. We now know that the practice of haiku, far from stultifying, has been racing ahead in Japan to express the needs and concerns of poets there, which it must do if it is to remain viable. We now know that we, too, must move forward for the same reasons.

One of the books which helped foment this was the first edition of this book. A Future Waterfall is a seminal work in the history of haiku, Japanese and otherwise. In it, the poet liberates haiku from the constraints which threatened to made the genre old and fusty, and, most telling, unpoetic. He is not the first to have done so, but he is perhaps the most consistent in advocating a free, associative and enlarged pallette for the contemporary haiku poet. He draws upon all the sources which the contemporary poet recognizes as his domain: the entire literary history of his culture, foreign borrowings, hermeneutic symbolism, anecdote, low-culture associations, popular notion, dream analysis, and yes, even the naturalism that has been
stock-in-trade for haiku poets for centuries. Everything is available here, and the result is a freshening of the atmosphere, an enlargement of the genre overall.

There has been the usual hue and cry that has accompanied challenging new work for the past couple centuries: charges that the poet is a blagueur and his work scandalous. And there has been more than one cause-célèbre, with vocal participants on both sides. The sensational is no guarantee, of course, of the merit of anyone’s work. But it’s a very small part of the poet’s oeuvre, and it is in the plethora of other voices and images here that one finds the full flowering of his talents.

We have changed a few things in preparing this second edition: this brief introduction and the updating of Ban’ya’s list of honors and achievements, of course. But we have added significantly to the poet’s prose, so that the reader might gain insight into the issues and challenges which the poet sees himself meeting. The poems, aside from minor adjustments to two of the translations, we decided to leave just as they were, permitting the reader to approach the poems directly, without annotation or other matériel that might bias the reading. This might be seen as controversial, but it stems from the conviction that the poems in this book must be encountered in Japanese or English, but not as a hybrid of the two. It is at least a recognition of the impossibility of true translation, and an argument instead for parallel texts, each at work in its own sphere, with the possibility that the gap between the two might be leapt rather than waded. This is the challenge I now offer you: to be that spark.

Jim Kacian
May 2004, Winchester VA
A Future Waterfall
Under the sky’s vortex
I play with
crystal spheres

Manji nasu ōzora nareba tama-asobi
Kaidan o tsukioticsarete niji to nara

Shoved off the stairs—
falling I become
a rainbow

Ko no mara o sū haha ya koko kawo no umi

A mother sucks
her baby’s cock
amid a sea of mulberry leaves
Wreaking havoc
in the house
a swallow’s wet wings
Asahi yōhi mo miezara kakō o haha to yobu

The estuary where
neither the rising or setting sun’s visible
I call mother

Aozora o suikomi semi no ana wa kiyu

Sucking in the blue sky
a cicada hole
disappears
Over the rooftop gravestone shop radio waves fly

Nippon kakamei nashi nami no ho o utsu arare

No “Révolution japonaise”
hail strikes the crest of a wave

Okajō no hakaishi-uriba o tobu denpa
Senjō wa umō ni ōwaretsutsuwan

The battlefield
must be being covered
with feathers

Natsuishi Ban'ya no negara wa gokusaishiki no sora

Natsuishi Ban’ya’s
roost is
a garishly colored sky
On Sabbath Day
traversing the sea:
a coincidence

Mirai yori taki o fukiwaru kaze kitara

From the future
a wind arrives
that blows the waterfall apart

Ansokubi ami o watarera koansidansu

On Sabbath Day
traversing the sea:
a coincidence
Kaikyō ni sobadatsu inazuma motto banka o!

Above the strait
towering lightning
“More threnodies!”

Makami-otoshi to ia dangai no kusa-momiji

At the cliff called
“True God’s Fall”
weeds’ autumnal red
Kamo no ko yo yozora no kansei fukanōsei

Baby spiders,
the impossibility of the
night sky’s perfection

Sennen no rusu ni bakufu o kakete oku

For my absence
of a thousand years I hang
a waterfall
Hadakagi yo kon’ya mo hoshiboshi wa goshoku da

Bare branches,
tonight again stars, stars
are misprints

Watagumo no sukima koso waga atama nare

That’s my brain, there!
That gap
in the cottony clouds
Yaki wa chiri ni chiri wa ware ni narazaru mo

Though the snow
doesn’t turn into dust,
dust into me

Ten wa kotai nari sanchō no ari no zenmetsu

The solidity of heaven—
at the mountaintop
all the ants destroyed
Sakura chira ōini chi o sū shinbunshi

Cherry blossoms fall:
newspapers
suck in a great deal of blood

Tōkyō ni ikereru hana wa yaki no hana

In Tokyo
the angry flower is
a snow crystal
Shakkō to yogen no ame no kōsa o hakare

Sunset light,
attempt a crossing
with a prophetic rain

Tentai ni kōra shibō o sogekiseyo

Shoot
the fat frozen
on that heavenly body
The embrace of planets
depends often on
rumors

Kūchū no teikoku bochi ni tane maku mono yo

Thou art sowing
in the Imperial Cemetery
in the sky

Hoshiboshi no hōgō wa ryūgen ni matsu mono ōshi

The embrace of planets
depends often on
rumors
Put a period deeply
into the desert
at the center of the New World

The sea is stormy
the god’s skin
divided and given
Fukagyakusei kyoketsusei ginga ni kaeranan

To the irreversible and ischemic Galaxy
I would return

Yume ni miyo shinchō jāoku kōnen no Kagehime

Dream of
Shadow Princess
a billion light years tall
Tsuki wa hi o ware wa nanji o ou kaze no kuni

The moon runs after the sun,
I after you,
Land of Winds

Nippon-kai ni inazuma no o ga irerareru

Into the Sea of Japan
lightning’s tail
is plunged
Hingashi ni kiri no kyojin ga yokotawara

In the east
a fog giant
lies down

Kaitei no izami no makashi makashi kana

Long, long ago
a fountain
at the bottom of the sea
Sanmyaku ni mimi ari yoru no ishitsubute

The mountain range has ears;
a stone is thrown
in the night

Ruriō no tōzainanboku mizukemari

Water spray
east, south, west, north
of King Lapis Lazuli
The man
with a thousand names
grafts iron into wood
Minami no taigyo no yume ni hairite sakebitashi

Entering a dream of that Great Fish of the South, wanting to cry out

Ryū no hone yori amarete wa warau ware

Each time I’m born from a dragon’s bone I smile
Sometimes vacuums
sometimes clouds
pass through the lachrymal gland

Taiji ni totte mafuyu no forute wa hitsuyō fukaketsu

The forte in the dead of winter
for the embryo
is indispensable

Ruisen o shinkū ga yuki kumo ga yaku

Sometimes vacuums
sometimes clouds
pass through the lachrymal gland
The bureaucratic serenade
has left a crescent
in the middle of my forehead
In a sandstorm
my head is blown into
innumerable slopes

I diarrhea
electric wires, birds, fireworks,
and clouds
On my tongue
a temple appears
allegro
Ten takaku shinfonī-tekī shintai hitotsu

The sky is high
a body
like a symphony

Makkurona suīheisen ni same no hanayome

On the pitch-black
horizon
the shark’s bride
Shinjuku no karasu to yume de aimashō

Let’s meet
Shinjuku crows
in our dreams

Daigaku wa keitō-enbi no hito o kau

Universities
keep
cockscombs and swallowtailed men
Minakami ni koe no recchā arī hakubō

Upstream
there’s a colonnade of voices
twilight

Seisō no rōba o osou fuji no hana

Assaulting
a formally dressed old woman
the wisteria
The sea’s become skinny,
the beach skinny,
and this big man

Warera sari ishi no ōma mo yūyakera

We leave
and the stone parrot glows
in the evening sun

Umi yasete hama yasete kono ōotoko

The sea’s become skinny,
Rōjin to hama o minami e ayunari

With an old man
I walk along the beach
toward the south

Fuji no hana warera no sasamegoto o sū

Wisteria flowers
suck in our
sweet nothings
I came away, abandoning
the Thousand-Year-Old Cedar
dangled by the storm

Dai-bakufu zō no yume mite yukishi hito

Great waterfall:
you who died
dreaming of an elephant

Arashi ga ayasu Sennen-sugi o sutete kita

I came away, abandoning
the Thousand-Year-Old Cedar
dangled by the storm
Ma-rōshi yaka ma-rōshi-jin Meoto-iwa

No aging no death
no ending in old age or death
Husband and Wife Rock

Yuki-geshiki gotai-manzoku Himekomatsu

A snowy landscape
healthy and normal
Little Princess Pine
Waga haiku kyūhyaku kyūjū kyū-sai no kosagi

My haiku:
a little cedar
nine hundred ninety-nine years old

Chie-zakura ōgon shokon gōgō etsuyo

Wisdom Cherry:
in bloom
its golden roots dancing in joy
In that other land
as soon as a breeze rises
the Eternal Cedar goes into smithereens

Natsugasumi Ichimai-iwa no kanki kana

Summer haze:
Single Boulder
rejoicing

Hikoku mihū saidō Tokotachi-sugi mijin

In that other land
as soon as a breeze rises
the Eternal Cedar goes into smithereens
Nami mugen Yononaka-shirase-zakura kana

Boundless waves.
That’s a cherry called
Telling the World

Jidō ēraku Rokkaku-heso-ishigakkyū byakun ka

Children play
around Hexagonal Navel Stone
under white clouds
For the irascible professor
a certificate
for crossing the line

At the end of the 20th century
in Kyoto Tooth God Rock
dozes

Kanshakumochi no kyōja ni sekidō-tsūkashō

Nijisseiki-matsu Kyoto ni madoroma Hagamisama
Yōjō no Ginga o okasu inabikari

Above the sea
lightning violates
the Galaxy

Chanijian burū wa sa gi o karukasuru

Tunisian
blue lightens
the swindling
Hai de shiru sana no chijō to ruri no sora

With lungs I discern
the sandy ground
and azure sky

Torukoishi kara miruka wakideru jūnigatsu

From the turquoise
milk wells up
in December
Rōma no arayura tokoro no yūbenjutsu to mangetsu

In Rome everywhere oratory and the full moon

Suisei miete Pari ni sannin yatto sorou

The comet visible, in Paris finally together the three of us
Nichiyo no Mirabō-bashi o umō tobu

Over Sunday’s
Mirabeau Bridge
a feather flies

Warera wa rojōha Monmarutora no natsu no yoru

We the School of Streets
in Montmartre’s
summer night
Waddling into this noonday miracle:
a forest hedgehog

I write a haiku of darkness
to the painter
who keeps a Pharaoh’s dog

Hiru no kiseki e yotayota mori no harinezumi

Waddling into
this noonday miracle:
a forest hedgehog
Pari naupō wa junpaku sakurīn waga tabidachi

The south of Paris
is a pure-white screen
as I set out on a trip

Kashi no mi ya kiri no ue nite inora hito

Acorns:
someone prays
above the fog
Sekhan ga hikari no Maruseiya no kiten

This sarcophagus:
the starting point
of bright Marseilles

Maria no haha wa tsuneni utsumuki hachi nihiki

Mary’s Mother
always looking down
upon two wasps
Hitobito kiete sekkaigan no ōhiroma

People vanish
leaving behind
a great limestone hall

Yonsen-nen o busō no menhiru tori o kiku

Armed with
four thousand years the menhir
listens to birds
Tadoritsukitara itsutsu no izumi ni kashi-ochiba

I finally reach
the five fountains:
dead oak leaves

Ryū ga shizunda Taiseiyō no aki atsushi

A dragon has sunk
into the Atlantic Ocean
autumn heat
To the tail-end
of the row of dewy megaliths
I walk

Anna to Maria to Jesus no izumi kurai ame

Fountain of Saint Anna,
Mother Mary and Jesus:
dark rain
Michi wa hitsuji e Taiseiyō e ishi no ie

A lane leading to sheep
to the Atlantic Ocean
a stone cottage

Ten e hohoemikakeru iwa yori tairika hajimara

From the boulder
smiling up at heaven
the continent begins
White beach, black pines, 
sky is 
a crystalline lens

Swept clean 
it’s a hell of winds 
the Dover Strait
Going under the sea
yellow light
and purple music

Kaitei-tonneru waga kokoro koso aki no arashi

In the undersea tunnel
my heart itself
is an autumn storm

Kaitei kagaru kiiroi hikari to marasaki no kyoku

Going under the sea
yellow light
and purple music
Terebi ni kyokon odora Manhattan reika

On television
a large root dances
Manhattan below zero

Tsurutsuru no seiki to seiki ga kin o umu

A slippery sex organ
and another
give birth to gold
For three hundred years
blue black blue black
New York
The International Nature of Contemporary Haiku

With the help of Alain Kervern, I have published the text of a lecture about "the possibilities of the contemporary haiku," in Daruma, a famous French Japanese studies review.

I had the opportunity to give this lecture, written in French, at the end of February 1998, at the "House of the Fountain," which is in Brest, the town where Mr. Kervern lives. The main content of this lecture is as follows.

Among the haiku composed in Japan, many of them have a seasonal allusion, but there are many more opportunities to move the heart of foreigners by writing haiku without any seasonal allusion. Even in a translated version, they are understandable.

It goes without saying that the haiku genre was born in Japan, and developed particularly in the Edo period (1603-1867), when the country was closed to any foreign contacts. What made this kind of short poetry, called haiku, was a specific sensitivity to the seasons, which took shape and developed in the main cultural, economic and political areas of the country, and Edo. Outside these two towns, this particular feeling for the seasons was considered as an element of "culture" common to all the Japanese people. And what was supposed to express this feeling for the seasons, was the "season word" (kigo).

When the closing of the Japanese frontiers came to an end, Shiki Masaoka, who tried to promote the modernization of the haiku, a hundred years ago, proceeded no further with this "seasonal feeling" as a constituent element of Japanese "culture" and was satisfied with his overseas experience, during the first Sino-Japanese War. After Shiki Masaoka, those who experimented with poetical feeling abroad, were haiku poets born in the Taishô era (1912-1926), who were mobilized as soldiers during World War II. Tohta Kenoko, Murio Suzuki, Onifusa Satô are representative of this generation.

As soldiers (they were mobilized of course against their wills), they lived in China and on several islands of the South Pacific Ocean. We suppose that they realized, through
physical experience, that there were countries and places on the earth with seasons completely different from those of Japan, and the sensitivity to the seasons, an element of Japanese culture, as well as the season words, would never become universal, because all these had limits.

We have strong confirmation of this conjecture, because after the war period they composed haiku without season words.

A representative poem of Tohta Kaneko is the following one:

A lake in my heart  
on its banks prowls the shadow  
of a tiger all black

During the “House of the Fountain” lecture, I quoted this contemporary haiku without any seasonal element, and I declared that this excellent poem was inspired by the depths of the author’s consciousness, and there were no links with any Japanese seasonal feeling. The “tiger” hidden in the Wilds of Mother Nature represents the author’s double. When I explained that this behaviour announcing future psychological progress and vital energy was depicted in such a way that one could imagine it very precisely, the audience approved it wholeheartedly.

The Japanese haiku was formerly the cultural basis for the seasonal feelings, but in our globalization period, this common basis became merely a local phenomenon limited only to Japan.

In Europe or in America, insects common in Japan, like the dragonfly or the cicada, are rare. Trees, like the pine tree, the zekolva tree, or the cherry tree, are different according to the areas, and climates, and their appearance differs from those of Japan. The haiku without a season word, which appeals to the universality and community of human heart, is appreciated more easily.

Even using Nature as a theme of inspiration, the poet Kan’ichi Abe gives us the following example:
Let one climb the tree
and here is the brightness
of an elsewhere, and Africa

The contemporary haiku, which transcends the Japanese season feeling, and strongly transmits a psychological movement coming from very ancient times, can inspire sympathy crossing all boundaries, and the audience of my lecture had a very significant reaction to this new trend in the haiku.

The haiku was considered a dusty old thing coming from the Japanese feudal period, but we can also consider it from a universal point of view, as we live in a century which offers us unexpected possibilities.
Composing Haiku in a Foreign Country

As a Japanese haiku poet resident in France from 1996 to 1998, I experienced something which Bashô, Buson, Issa and other haiku masters of the Edo Period could have only dreamed about: composing haiku in a foreign country. To be sure, Bashô, for one, wandered up and down Japan, but his wandering was limited to his own country. Japan’s famous isolationist policy was in force, and Bashô never had a chance to go abroad. So all he could do was imagine.

In 1689, for example, during his trip to the north, he composed a haiku:

In Kisagata
in the rain
Seishi’s silk tree flowers

At the time Kisagata was famous as a beautiful sight, although not many people actually visited it. In fact, Bashô became the first haiku poet who actually visited many of the famous but seldom visited places in Japan. And in describing one such place, Kisagata, Bashô alluded to a legendary beauty in ancient China, Seishi (Xi Shi in Chinese), who is said to have disappeared on a lake with her lover. To the Japanese of Bashô’s day, China was synonymous with “a foreign country,” and foreign literature meant Chinese literature. As a result, Chinese allusion was common, and yet only at second-hand.

In the middle of the 19th century, Japan abandoned its isolationist policy, and since then a great many Japanese people have traveled overseas, as they continue to. Nevertheless, not many Japanese Haiku poets have been open to foreign experiences. The question is, why?

The main reason is their idée fixe about nature. As you know, traditional haiku have focused on the four seasons, and a countless number of so-called kigo, or
season words have been created. And each kigo is supposed to convey the essence of a given season. This situation has effectively prevented Japanese haiku poets from looking at a foreign land from a non-Japanese perspective. Foreign landscapes remain largely alien and incomprehensible.

More than three hundred years after Bashô, I am trying to create in my haiku diverse, astonishing traditions and phenomena of the whole world. In 1996, while traveling in the southern part of Bretagne, France, I composed a haiku:

A dragon has sunk  
into the Atlantic Ocean  
autumn heat

Some of you know the legend about Saint Gildas. From a promontory he sank a ferocious dragon into the Atlantic Ocean. The day I faced the Atlantic Ocean, it was hot as if the dragon at the bottom of the ocean was emanating the heat and the glaring light. Did I find an extraordinary autumn—in Bretagne?

A haiku poet in a foreign country has many occasions for inspiration. Many things provoke him to look at them from new and different angles—provide him with a new insight and a different sensibility. This is the way it should be. After all, one principal purpose of haiku is to discover something new in everything and to reveal it to the world.
DA: Dimitar Anakiev  
BN: Ban’ya Natsuishi

DA: Mr. Natsuishi, recently your collection of poems “Romanje po Zemlji” was translated and published in Slovenia. What does this mean to you, and what do you think of the role of the “small” languages in today’s world of poetic literature?

BN: There are no small or minor languages . . .

DA: You are known around the world as a promoter of World Haiku. What is “World Haiku”?

BN: It is nothing less than everything important for the human race. A single word or a short message may be the first and most indispensable discourse for any culture.

DA: What relation does haiku have to other genres of poetry? Are there any barriers between the differing genres of poetry?

BN: There are no walls in any poetry. Poetry has been essential to all humanity for its entire history. Perhaps surprisingly, I believe that haiku is the most important poetic genre in the new century. This is because such a short poetic form may contain the most essential message.

DA: Well, then, is haiku poetry based in words, or form, or images?

BN: In words, of course, like all poetry.

DA: What are some of your personal inclinations in Western poetry? Who are your favorite western
poets? What is your favorite style of poetry? And is there any relationship between Western poetry and your work in haiku?

**BN:** I like the proverbs in the Bible, though I’m not Christian, because it is possible in these brief expressions to find such deep wisdom. I have particularly studied the French surrealist poets: André Breton, Paul Eluard, etc. They, too, tried to find the most essential poetic expression.

**DA:** To what extent have foreign influences affected Japanese haiku in the past? Is World Haiku a result of some further interaction?

**BN:** Bashô was strongly influenced by the Chinese classics, including Lao-Tsu and Zhuang-Tsu. Shiki Masaoka was indirectly influenced by French realism. Santôka Taneda’s haiku master, Seisensui Ogiwara, was influenced by German literature, especially Goethe and the American free-verse poet, Walt Whitman. Santôka himself is influenced by the Bible, Russian novels, and Japanese naturalism as a derivation of French realism. My haiku master, Jûshin Takayanagi, is influenced above all by two French men of letters in the 19th century: Charles Baudelaire and Villiers de l’Isle-Adam. Tohta Kaneko was influenced perhaps by the Chinese classics, Rainer Maria Rilke, and perhaps Arthur Rimbaud.

**DA:** It is perhaps fair to say that Western poets consider haiku to be a reality-based poetry. What is your opinion of this issue?

**BN:** Western poets perhaps confuse “reality” with “fact”. Reality might easily include the imaginative and unreal. What interests me is the totality of human reality.
DA: Another particularly interesting question in haiku is the issue of time. Western poets often speak of the “haiku moment”, but in your haiku, we can find poems situated in the past and future? Your most famous haiku, for instance, concerns a “future waterfall”. Can you explain your position on the matter of time in haiku?

BN: “Moment” may mean a lot of things: an instant; the motive; the cause, etc. The word “moment” offers us a rich opportunity as regards time. Certainly in a moment we can write a haiku. But precisely speaking, a moment consists of several moments. The so-called “haiku moment” is never a single moment. One of the most typical techniques of haiku, “kire” (including “kireji”) shows us haiku composed of more than two moments.

DA: In the West we most often come to haiku through classical examples in translation, many hundreds of years old, and through this method haiku has become something of a fixed form for us. Do you feel there has been any historical development in haiku?

BN: Yes, things change all the time: we have realist haiku, free-form haiku, non-seasonal haiku, proletarian haiku, war haiku, feminist haiku, avant-garde haiku, city haiku, four-line haiku, etc.

DA: It seems that classical haiku, in contrast to Western poetry, has never faced the problem of nihilism as a philosophical underpinning. Is this true?

BN: In Japan, people like sentimental nihilism. But in our Eastern culture, the nothing (nihil) can connect with everything, or turn into a more positive philosophy. Through negative stages, it is possible to reach some positive dimension.
**DA:** For quite some time, haiku has been treated as an “alternative” form of poetry to Western forms, as if it didn’t quite count or wasn’t to be taken that seriously? What do you think about this?

**BN:** Haiku can co-exist with anything, even with so-called “Western poetry”. I have learned many things from Western poetry, and I believe, similarly, that practitioners of Western poetic forms could learn much from haiku.

**DA:** What is the relation of World Haiku to the question of form? Can we define the new genre of World Haiku, and what is the difference between it and any other short poem?

**BN:** World Haiku offers a new dimension to the haiku writing of all languages. World haiku is at an embryonic stage now, but after the real birth of World Haiku, the definition of haiku will likely be changed. It is perhaps possible to say World Haiku may be considered a short poem, generally three lines or three fragments, of fixed form or free form. But shorter or longer haiku must be included as well.

**DA:** Goethe founded his idea of “Weltliteratür” as an outgrowth of his mysticism, however you have founded your theory of World Haiku in the “collective mind” of humanity. Do you think haiku today can be considered an example of World Literature? What is the borderline today between “World” and “Local” in literature?

**BN:** Today it is impossible to separate “World” from “Local”. We often confront a false sense of “World” promoted by commercialism. But the true “World” literature is a flower and the “Local” literature is its root. We need both the flower and the root!
DA: In 1990 you published “Dictionary of Keywords for Contemporary Haiku” as a basis of World Haiku. The Polish Nobel Prize poet Czeslaw Milosz said that poetry is “organizing archetypes”. Is there any connection between your revolutionary theory in haiku and that opinion of Milosz?

BN: Mr. Milosz is great, and I agree with his opinion!

DA: In your speech at the World Haiku Conference (Tolmin, Slovenia, September 1-3, 2000) entitled “Our Basis for World Haiku in the 21st Century”, you bring up the issue of a common ancestry for humanity and the possibility of a common genetic background. As you say, there is “something common between us... that resides beyond any secondary differences”. Is this the power of haiku that makes it so popular all over the world?

BN: Yes, of course! Today countless people read and write haiku in many languages. I have visited the United States, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy and Slovenia to meet haiku poets and exchange mutual opinions. With very few exceptions, they all have good will and good taste!

DA: Let us return to the idea of our “human reality”, if we might. It seems the main accent—the central axis—of World Haiku has moved from nature, as a central theme of “classical” haiku, to humanity. Do you think this is the case? And, can you explain the dynamics and interaction of the human and the natural in World Haiku?

BN: Yes, it is the interaction itself which is most important. Engaging in it, we sometimes get tired but often quite thrilled. The interaction between several cultures, the interaction between several languages, the interaction between humanity and nature, the
interaction between persons, these are extremely important. We can find some interaction within nature itself. Both interaction and individuality are indispensable for World Haiku.

**DA**: I have heard it said that World Haiku is a part of the process of globalisation?

**BN**: Globalisation is a political strategy, most notably utilized in the United States. Beyond the USA’s intention, something akin to globalization is going on. I prefer the word “mondialisation”, from the French, to “globalization”.

**DA**: In the eras of Homer and Dante, poetry was very close to the people. But modern times have alienated and separated poets from “la grande âme populaire”. Why has haiku never so alienated its historic cultural community? It is at the same time a very popular poetry, and yet very individual in nature. Can contemporary haiku be part of our alienated modernity?

**BN**: I suppose you know the unhappiness of “Modern Times” as the great actor Charles Chaplin wordlessly expressed in his famous film. World Haiku liberates people from a sense of modern alienation. World Haiku activity “beyond the borders” can speak to us clearly of the most important essence of poetry. It is a deep and creative joy.

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English text prepared for print by Richard GILBERT.

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A Giant Question in Macedonia

From the sky, Macedonia seems a country of bare mountains. What is bare? Not only the mountains, but something unseen as well. When I visited Greece for the first time several years ago, a bareness impressed me so hard: I was speechless. This kind of bareness came from the violent destiny that attacked Greek heroes and heroines, for example Oedipus. Macedonian bareness may differ from the Greek.

Landing onto
the bare country
full of narrow roads

I have been in Struga which is famous for its international poetry evenings, this city on the southwest border of Macedonia. Before my visit, a Macedonian friend, Aleksandar Prokopiev, informing me that Struga is exceptional in his country. Yes, indeed, Struga is exceptional. Contrary to Macedonian bareness, Struga on the Lake Ohrid shore is surrounded by rich water. Moreover it’s the birthplace of the River Drim.

“The river’s birthplace
is the birthplace of poetry”
a wind said

For us Japanese blessed with seas, lakes, ponds and rivers, the water is literally the source of energy for all activities. So, Struga inspired my poetic spirit. Does a Muse reside in the Lake Ohrid? The lake or the sea becomes often the start point of my reflections. In Struga, first, I wondered whether this vast water, the Lake Ohrid might not be a giant and gentle creature itself. It is true that the water is inorganic matter, but the lake not only consists of pure water, but of microbes, fishes, waterweeds and so on.
The wind rustling
a road on the lake:
   a road of questions

I asked Lake Ohrid a giant question. What kind of question? A giant and radical question of our life and death. It is also a living and eternal question. These reflections of mine in Struga are unexpected even for myself. Well, I watched an interesting contrast between life and death on the hill of Ohrid city.

   Nearby a dead scorpion
   I’m playing
   with a puppy

In the paper museum on the hill, I played with a guardian’s naughty puppy near a dead scorpion. I don’t know why this dangerous creature was there. The neighbor of this museum is the church devoted to Virgin Mary. Of course, she watched the birth and death of Jesus Christ. She is the tragic fountain of the life and death.

On another hill of Ohrid city, Saint Clement Church stands restored. It’s one of the most beautiful churches that I have ever visited. They said there was also an ancient university for Christians. Though not a Christian, I have sympathetic interest in Christianity, because I had Catholic teachers from West Europe at high school. Still now I remember well questions by me and answers by Catholic teachers when I was a teenager. Watching the Lake Ohrid glittering from this hilltop, I recall one of my questions: “Was it unfavorable for people after the death of Christ? Because they cannot hear directly from Christ” A teacher answered: “No, we can hear from him through the Bible.” Now, about 30 years later since that period, am I out of this blind alley? No, I’m living in many questions around life and death.
From the lake
at the mountaintop university
comes a question

In some cave church on the Lake Ohrid shore, I encountered a curious combination between sand and candle. Candles were on a tray filled with sand. It was a surprise for me.

Silently putting out
a candle in the sand—
midday

Did a hermit living in the cave light the candles as part of his routine? I found a primitive and quite impressive combination between the sky and the earth through the candle and the sand. Watching the vast lake, is the hermit thinking of God?

Finally I recognized the fact that the Lake Ohrid is not contrary to bareness, but bareness itself. This lake is a vast and bare body of organic water. This half-naked body is breathing silently and slowly. So it is a long-lived bareness itself. Such a rich bareness makes us think well of eternal questions.

Out of the lake bottom
Jesus’s questions spring forth—
bubbles spring forth

On the other hand, bareness confronts always nothingness. Almost bare, was Jesus Christ thinking of God on the Galilee Sea shore? It’s another question.

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The phrase “World Haiku” sounds peaceful as well as painful. It is peaceful, as it reminds us of “world peace”, while it is painful, as it reminds us of “World War”. I must say that between “world” and “haiku”, there is an extraordinary relation.


The first remark is that in haiku there is “no assertion . . . for the logical intellect, but a natural scene outlined in three strokes of the brush for the imagination or the memory”. This remark is quite persuasive even in our days. Of course, haiku is a kind of poetry, one of the verbal arts, but its most outstanding character may be a power to create an image. In Japan as well other countries, they often say that the successful haiku gives birth to an impressive image. So today, not a few people are fond of haiku writing and haiga drawing at the same time. Our World Haiku Association holds a monthly haiga contest on its website; the submitted haiga from many countries show us creative variety. Enjoying each beauty of submitted haiga, a question comes to me. Sometimes I wonder if haiku aims to only create some image. What kind of image is the most desirable for haiku? Is haiku really a tiny picture made of a few words? Though Shiki Masaoka has no direct relation with Chamberlain, one of the aims of his haiku modernization is also to create an impressive image by means of haiku.
Before answering this important question, I had better mention the second remark on haiku by Chamberlain as follows. Haiku is “shattered crystal, each reflecting at a different angle some minute corner of a scene, a brief note of some fact in nature, or maybe an indication of some sentiment or fancy”. Saying so, Chamberlain didn’t praise haiku to the skies, but he denied haiku as literature or poetry. I find a crucial encounter of haiku and the West in Chamberlain’s denial of haiku as literature.

Now I cannot say haiku has really encountered the East other than Japan, knowing that some Chinese began haiku writing called “kanpai” starting in the 1980s, in China.

Let’s get back to Chamberlain’s denial. If haiku is only a tiny picture in words, haiku is neither literature nor poetry worth its name. Chamberlain, who clung to so-called Occidental cultural tradition and sense of values, could not predict any possibility of the short poetry that in fact came into flower during the whole 20th century.

The most famous short poem influenced by haiku is “In a Station of the Metro” in only two lines:

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

(Ezra Pound 1917 USA)

Ezra Pound (1885–1972) composed this in Paris in the 1910s. It is an amazing fact that a poet of the American Lost Generation could compose a short poem in a country other than his homeland. The underground “Station” is Concorde; on it an obelisk brought from Luxor in Egypt stands. This monumental short poem by Ezra Pound is extremely international. Contrary to Chamberlain’s keen denial, since the beginning of the 20th century, short poems like haiku have been successful. From this poem, what kind of image can we receive? It is not an ordinary realistic scene, but an impressive, suggestive and unexpected image that reminds us of
something ontologic and mythologic.

In 1920s and 30s, French poets were absorbed in haiku writing. For example, a dadaist and surrealist poet, Paul Eluard (1895–1952) wrote many haiku (under the name “haïkaï”) as well as short poems. His most beautiful haiku appeared in 1920.

Le coeur à ce qu’elle chante
Elle fait fondre la neige
La nourrice des oiseaux.

Heart to her song
She makes snow melt
Wet-nurse of birds

(Pour vivre ici 1920 France)

Mobilized during World War I, Eluard encountered haiku. Short poems like haiku became his ideal poetry, that is a poetic image without any other element. This haiku itself is a pure image beyond our common sense. The image enclosed in the whole short poem is a warm crystallization of Eluard’s deep ontology. Again and again, Chamberlain’s denial of haiku was betrayed by short poems charged with poetic energy.

In Japan, in the 1930s, New Style Haiku poets tried to create surrealistic haiku based on their experience and imagination during World War II. Hakusen Watanabe (1913–1969) wrote the following haiku in 1939.

Senso ga ōka no okuni tatte ita

War stood
at the end of the corridor

(Hakusen Kashū 1975 Japan)

Just like the case of Pound and Eluard, the haiku by Watanabe itself is a pure image. This pure image is realistic because it reflects well the war time; this image is surrealist because it surpasses our ordinary life.
Now we can say that during the first half of the 20th century, haiku in different countries was finding a new way of creating a pure image. From this way springs out an image that is fragmentary but fully charged with poetic energy. I would like to consider this way as the basis of World Haiku. This basis was born secretly after two world-wide wars in the 20th century. We needed the whole second half of the 20th century to recognize this basis.

Then, what are the possibilities of World Haiku in the 21st century? This is our question. First of all, I would like to say that World Haiku conceives still unlimited possibilities in itself.

Let’s cite a few significant examples.

In Brittany of France, Alain Kervern (1945–) wrote some spiritual haiku.

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\begin{align*}
\text{Brise d’aurore} & \quad \text{A dawn breeze} \\
\text{an enfant-lavoir} & \quad \text{a girl washer} \\
\text{frissonne} & \quad \text{shivers}
\end{align*}
\]

(To Breizh 2001 France)

Really from his haiku, we can take a realistic image, but this image is colored with pure spirit. In his haiku, the human being and nature exist in primitive relation.

Last year, with a Portuguese poet, Casimiro de Brito (1938–), I composed a renku consisting of one hundred haiku. In this renku, de Brito showed me a haiku similar to a proverb filled with wisdom:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Uma cidade! Um grão} & \quad \text{A city! A grain} \\
\text{de areia! Fragmentos} & \quad \text{of sand! Fragments} \\
\text{da Via Láctea} & \quad \text{of the Milky Way}
\end{align*}
\]

(Através do ar 1 in GinyuNo.17 2003 Japan)

This haiku is typical; its nihilist assertion gives us a cosmic image as well an encouragement after nihilism.

Before concluding this speech, I dare to mention a case concerning me. In the past two years, I have been
writing series of haiku entitled “Flying Pope”. I don’t know when this writing will finish.

*Sora o tobu hoo senka wa hanera nomi ka*

*Flying Pope!*
*The fire of war*
*is a jumping flea?*

*Soratoba hoo nandomo nandomo sara o kama*

*Flying Pope*
*many times many times*
*crunches sand*

(Flying Pope 4 in GinyuNo.18 2003 Japan)

One day, in a dream of mine, a word *soratobu hoô* (“flying pope”) was said by myself. Then I began my “Flying pope” haiku writing without noticing what the phrase means. The image of “Flying Pope” is quite clear, but it may be only a caricature of Christianity.

Writing and writing this series of haiku, finally I found that the viewpoint of “Flying Pope” could be peculiar to our days. From the mobile viewpoint of “Flying Pope”, we can watch anything that might occur on the earth. In this century, we can acquire not fixed but mobile and imaginary viewpoints.

So World Haiku will be promising, if haiku poets in different countries find a truly poetic way suitable to our new century.

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There are many problems in World Haiku, which at first might appear quite easy to resolve, but finally are quite difficult. This difficulty sometimes contains the truths in which our lives themselves are engaged. For example, take the simple but large question: Does all humanity have a single common ancestral mother, the so-called African “Eve”? Before we consider a common basis for World Haiku, it might be worth considering whether humanity has one mother or several. Of course, I’m not an anthropologist, and cannot give a definitive answer. But if an “African Eve” is our sole ancestral mother, then it seems easy to search for a basis for World Haiku. If, however, we have multiple ancestral mother “African Eve”, “Asian Eve”, etc., then it seems not so easy. Regardless, we have some things in common, inasmuch as we can exchange genes, in giving birth a baby, for instance. In any case, we have something common within us that resides, to a certain extent, beyond any secondary differences.

By the way, other animals besides humans can have a dream while sleeping. In fact, dreaming may be indispensable for some other creatures besides ourselves. Interestingly, dreams play important roles in many myths, legends and folktales all over the world. For example, ancient Egyptians considered a dream to be a divine revelation. In the Christian and Jewish worlds, everyone knows the dream of Solomon and that of Jacob. In our Japanese mythology, the dream of Takakuraji impelled him to help the future first Japanese Emperor Jinmu to unify ancient Japan. We could enumerate many other significant dreams appearing in the myths and legends of other countries not mentioned here. I have no intention of recommending that intelligent contemporary people return to the ancient world, but I would like to ask my contemporaries to note the continuing importance of dreams to humanity.

I’m very interested in the contemporary haiku in which the word dream is the core. From the “All Year” chapter in Haiku World (1996) by William J. Higginson, I offer this:
restless dream
a game of hide and seek
in the graveyard

Joanne Morcom USA

I like this one because the expression “restless dream” has the same sincerity as each of our lives has.

Among Japanese free haiku submitted to Our Dream (2000), edited by Sagicho Aihara and myself, and published to commemorate both the World Haiku Festival 2000 and the Inaugural World Haiku Association Conference here, the following contain the word “dream(s)”.

As numerous as
thorns of the cactus
my dreams

Samie Aihara Japan

In my dream
float
all shapes and sizes

Saki Inui Japan

Sumie Aihara recognizes her many bitter dreams. A little Japanese girl, Saki Inui is surprised at her confused dream. Indeed, in composing their haiku, the two Japanese women succeed in seizing on the truths of the dream.

The following poems especially focused on the dream and find a deep attraction in my heart:

Mlada trava... The young grasses...
Planina krvari iz slema Mountains bleed from a helmet
Punog snova full of dreams

Dimitar Anakiev Slovenia

In alluding to Basho’s famous “Natsukusa ya”, Anakiev expresses skillfully the miserable war dead. In this haiku, in a way that is true to life, the word “dreams” shows us the future possibilities erased by the war. I suppose that Anakiev composed it based upon his own war experience in
the former Yugoslavia. His haiku is certainly realistic, but what matters the most important now is the universality of his haiku. Even a man who doesn’t know the details of the war in the former Yugoslavia can understand the cruel truth of the war, owing to the haiku written by a refugee in Slovenia. In the haiku of Anakiev, both the cruelty of the war and the beauty of the landscape are emphasized at the same time. Needless to say, it’s not propagandistic in any way.

After visiting several sites near Tolmin, I guess Anakiev was also inspired by the former battle field of World War I where more than one million young soldiers were killed. I would like to offer one haiku to these young dead, to let them take a restful peace.

Behind a rock  
on the green slope  
dead soldiers’ spirits

Another haiku alluding to this same theme, found in PARČE NEBA: Haiku iz skloništa (1999—the English title is A PIECE OF THE SKY: Haiku from an air-raid shelter):

US-bomb Us-pakao  
U dečijim snovima  
Zašto Šrbija?  
US-bombs US-hell  
in children’s dreams  
why Serbia?  
Miroslav Klívar Czech Republic

In the second line, the word “dreams” serves as a center of any relations among the words appearing in the haiku cited above. More precisely, “children’s dreams” is a crucial acknowledgement of all the miseries of the people unhappily involved in the war.

In contrast to these two haiku composed in the southeastern Europe, Jim Kacian’s smart example is quite refreshing.

Into my dream  
the gentle rocking  
of the ship  

Jim Kacian USA
Kacian’s “dream” becomes gentle and relaxed through the healing movement of the ship. Through haiku composed in several languages, we can reach various essential aspects of the dream. Thus the non-seasonal keyword “dream” is an excellent illustration of World Haiku concepts.

Two contradictory principles are always at work in any one haiku. The first: brevity, instantaneity, concentration; the second: duration, continuity, undulation. The most important element of the first principle is the keyword, whether it concerns the seasons or more fundamental matters for humanity or our universe. I would not like to abandon all Japanese season words as worthless. But if we are to truly enter the age of World Haiku, there can be no absolute center of haiku, as Greenwich serves in the case of clocks. On our earth there is no standard time or climate for World Haiku. We can fully enjoy the various and local conditions while still locating them all within World Haiku. And yet, despite such individuality, we need some rich basis to keep our haiku from becoming prosaic and trivial.

At present, we are not certain of the entirety of our basis for the future of World Haiku. However, the little part of it illustrated by the keyword “dream” seems quite rich. One hundred keywords would not illustrate the whole, but might reveal a widespread and precious part of it. I would like to say again that we hold something in common greater than that which lies between us, any secondary differences such as nationalities, religions, languages, tastes, passions, ages, etc. “Look before you leap!”

Though our basis is not complete, it is here and there. So our common dream, namely our future of World Haiku is very promising, as this haiku by one of the most brilliant Japanese haiku masters, Tohta Kaneko, tells us:

Slept well

till the withered field in my dream

turned green

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Ban’ya Natsuishi is the penname of Masayuki Inui, born in Aioi, Hyōgo Prefecture, Japan in 1956. He studied at Tokyo University where he received a Masters of Arts in Comparative Literature and Culture in 1981. In 1986 he was appointed Associate Professor at Saitama University in Japan, and in 1992 Professor at Meiji University where he continues to teach. He spent 1996 to 1998 as a guest research fellow at Paris 7th University. In 1998 he founded, with Sayumi Kamakura, the international haiku quarterly Ginyu, and became its Publisher and Editor-in-Chief. In 2000 with Jim Kacian and Dimitar Anakiev he co-founded the World Haiku Association, and currently serves as its Director. In 2001 he attended the Vilenica Poetry Festival, in 2003 the Struga Poetry Evenings, and in the same year served as Chairman of The Steering Committee for The Second World Haiku Association Conference. In 2004 he was invited to attend Poetry at Porto Santo in Portugal. He lives in Fujimi near Tokyo.

Among his awards—

1980 Commended as Poet of the Year by Haiku-hōron
1981 First Prize in the Haiku-kenkyū competition
1984 The Shii-no-ki Prize
1991 The Modern Haiku Association Prize
2002 The Hekigodō Kawahigashi Prize of the 21st Century
   Ehime Haiku Prize

This is the second revised edition of A Future Waterfall, a book which, when it first appeared in 1999, revolutionized the way contemporary Japanese haiku was read and considered in the west. Included here are four essays not included in the first edition, and all 100 poems in translation and other essays from the original version.