

## HAIKU IN SPAIN

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Short poetry has always been very popular in Spain: the *seguidilla*, comprising four lines of 5-7-5-7 syllables, coexists with lesser-known forms, such as the *tercerilla* or the *bordón*, both consisting of three lines and a small number of syllables.

In addition, Eikichi Hayashiya, co-translator with Octavio Paz of *Sendas de Oku (Oku no hosomichi / Narrow Road to the Deep North)*, a significant milestone in the introduction of haibun and haiku into Spanish literature, stated in a recent interview that “for writing good haiku one of the decisive elements is sound. The Japanese as well as the Spanish language uses the five clear vowels a, e, i, o, u as a basis. That is why Spanish-speaking people have an advantage in producing sonorous haiku in a pleasant rhythm.” Thus we meet two prerequisites for haiku to develop in quite a natural way in Spanish: tradition and our own language.

The recognized poet Antonio Machado soon came to realize this, and he consequently tried to connect haiku with our authentic folk songs. The first Spanish haiku have also been attributed to him. Other authors such as the Nobel prize winner Juan Ramón Jiménez and Rafael Alberti followed his example. However, the Civil War was soon to break out, with its ensuing period of forty years of dictatorship under Franco — rather an unfavourable time for any sensibility of this new poetic genre. It may be the work of the undervalued José Ángel Valente that justifiably merits being highlighted most from this epoch.

However, already in those days people were beginning to understand that haiku was far more than three lines of 5-7-5 syllables, and this rightly helped in forming a genre of its own. Just a handful of mainstream poets turned their attention to it, though with little success. While it is true that the Spanish poet of Belgian origin and National Poetry Award winner Chantal Maillard made short but interesting studies of haiku, these materials remain an exception. Nevertheless some studies helped to some degree to achieve the dissemination of haiku: Fernando Rodríguez Izquierdo, who had spent several years in Japan, made the work of H. R. Blyth available in Spanish.

Aullón de Haro researched haiku in Spanish poetry. Félix Alcántara devoted himself to a thorough study of haiku in Spanish, and Vicente Haya put a lot of energy into spreading his idea of a “rigorous haiku“ respectful of the Japanese “mainstream“ (traditional) model.

It is likely that technological developments have enabled the recent explosion of the writing and reading of haiku in Spain. The el rincón del haiku website (<http://www.elrincondelhaiku.org>), set up in 2000 by L Corrales, soon became a meeting place for all kind of people interested in haiku: students and translators (JM Bermejo, JM Cabeza, etc.) came into contact with poets (Susana Benet, Frutos Soriano, etc.) and *haijin* (JL Vicent, Mavi, L Carril, Raijo, Maramín, etc.). Thus the website turned out to be the very embryo in the evolution of haiku in Spain. It has essentially assumed the functions of a Spanish Haiku Society, even promoting the publication of books (Haibooks).

Other forums followed: No-Michi, run by Mar Ordóñez (now discontinued), and paseos (<http://www.paseos.net>), administered by Gregorio Dávila, still very busy nowadays.

In addition, there are working groups in Navarra, Madrid, and Albacete. The Asociación de la gente del haiku en Albacete (AGHA—Association of haiku folk in Albacete) organizes annual or biannual competitions and international meetings, as well as book publications, haiku courses, lectures, etc., thus generally supporting all initiatives connected with haiku.

Amid all of this flourishing of haiku, an Internet journal was launched in 2009: *Hojas en la Acera (HELA / Leaves on the Pavement)* edited by Enrique Linares. This quarterly follows the rhythm of the seasons, and recently even a special printed edition has come into existence. Undoubtedly these are good times for haiku in Spain, in terms of both quantity and quality.