August 2007 Issue VII:3

"To the difficult question 'what is new?', I will answer: the new means how the emotions of today's society and people are expressed to fit the times. The haiku must be innovative in any time. So we should begin and continue to express the emotions of the people of this time and generation."

-Sanki Saito, Gendai Haiku, S.21.10
(translation Akiko Takazawa)

Welcome to the Roadrunner Haiku Journal. Roadrunner is an international quarterly online journal that publishes quality English-language haiku and senryu, as well as gendai haiku translations. We chose the name of the journal because we want it to be at the forefront of haiku thought and practice.

Jason Sanford Brown, Scott Metz and Richard Gilbert, Editors

Gendai Haiku Translations | Reads
Haiku/Senryu | The Scorpion Prize for Issue VII:2

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Translator’s note.

Please note that in each case, a form of lineation and punctuation was chosen to best emulate the feeling or power of the original; we were not looking for consistency but rather accuracy and feeling. Where possible we tried to follow the image-story of the original haiku. We also added short notes to a few of the haiku, where necessary or desirable.

大仏殿いでて桜にあたたまる
daibutsuden idete sakura ni atatamaru

exiting the hall of the buddha
cherry blossoms; become warmer
しゅんぎくを播き水を飲みセロを弾く
しゅんぎくをまきみずをのみせろをひく
shungiku wo maki mizu wo nomi sero wo hiku

sow greens
swig springwater
play cello

Note: “shungiku” is a green leafy vegetable, similar to spinach. Note the repetition of the post-position particle wo (linking of verb-object), also there is an abrupt use of three verbs in the original.

蠅生まれ天使の翼ひろげたり
はえうまれてんしのつばさひろげたり
hae umare tenshi no tsubasa hirogetari

a fly born  an angel’s wings expand
頭悪き日やげんげ田に牛暴れ
あたまわるきひやげんげだにうしあばれ
atama waruki hi ya genge da ni ushi abare

stupid head stupid day —
through a field of thistle
bull on a rampage

Note: *genge* (also known as *renge*) is Chinese milk vetch, a purple flower planted in fallow rice fields to return nutrients to the soil. As this flower and its purpose are not generally well-known we selected an alternative.

鉄板に息やはらかき青蛙
てっぱんにいきやわらかきあおがえる
*teppan ni iki yawarakaki aogaeru*

on a cast-iron griddle
the soft breath of
a green frog
冬に生まれたら遅すぎる早すぎる
ふゆに生まれたらおそすぎるはやすぎる
fuyu ni umare batta ososugiru hayasugiru

winter born
grasshopper —
too late
too early

鉄球の硬さ青空の青リンゴ
てっきゅうのかたさあおぞらのあおりんご
tekkyuu no katasa aozora no aoringo

hardness of a steel ball
green apple of blue sky
クリスマス馬小屋ありて馬が住む
くりすますうまごやありてうまがすむ
kurisumasu umagoya arite uma ga sumu

a horse stable
being at Christmas
a horse's home

枯蓮のうごく時来てみなうごく
かれはすのうごくとききてみなうごく
karehasu no ugoku toki kite mina ugoku

a withered lotus moves
around a moment —
everything moves
湯の岩を愛撫す天の川の下
ゆのいわをあいぶすあまのがわのした
yu no iwa wo aibu su amanogawa no shita
groping a rock
at the hotspring, under
the milky way

中年や遠くみのれる夜の桃
ちゅうねんやとおくみのれるよるのもも
chuunen ya tooku minoreru yoru no momo
middle age —
a night peach
ripen in the distance

Note: this is one of Sanki’s celebrated haiku (he also published a book titled “Night’s Peach” (or “Peach of Night,” yoru no momo)). “Night peach” is an erotically charged image.
柿むく手母のごとくに柿をむく
かきむくてははのごとくにかきをむく
kaki muku te haha no gotoku ni kaki wo muku

the hand when
peeling persimmons, like mother
when peeling persimmons

春を病み松の根っ子も見あきたり
はるをやみまつのねっこもみあきたり
haru wo yami matsu no nekko mo miakitari

sick of spring — fed up with the roots of a pine tree
逃げても軍鶏に西日がべたべたと
にげてもしゃもににしびがべたべたと
nigetemo shamo ni nishibi ga betabeta to

escaped, yet —
sunlight of the west sticky
with fighting cocks

水枕ガバリと寒い海がある
みずまくらがばりとさむいうみがある
mizumakura gawabi to samui umi ga aru

water cushion
chomp!
it’s a chilly ocean

Note: Saito Sanki’s epitaph, and a signature haiku.
song of a shrike
   from the tofu
   when it’s cut

Note: mozu (shrike) is a bird of prey which imitates the songs of other birds. In Japanese, the kanji for mozu is “100+tongue” (many-tongued). Its own voice is a sharp “ki-ki” creak, a metallic screech sound. “mozu” is an Autumn kigo.

**Saito Sanki** was born Saito Keichoku on May 15, 1900, in Tsuyama, Okayama, Japan. He was a key figure in the movement to transform traditional haiku in response both to the West as well as to the realities of modern Japan. He was thus labeled a “thought offender” and subversive during World War II by Japan’s ultranationalist government and, in 1940, put in jail for 70 days. In 1947, Sanki helped establish the Modern Haiku Association. A poet, short story writer, dentist, dancer, bohemian and sexual adventurer, he died on April 1, 1962.

**Shodo Iwagaki** is a Zen Buddhist monk and artist living in Kuse, Okayama, Japan. For over 30 years he has been living, praying and creating his artwork in Mairai-ji (Mairai Temple). Virtually every wall and ceiling inside the temple is covered with his woodblock prints and carvings.
Haiku/Senryu

far blue mountains
if only I'd held
my tongue

among the reed shadows
the noon blue heart
of the butterfly

Patrick Sweeney

last snow, in the woods,
like the underlining
of an obscure passage

honeybee,
does your language
mention the moon?

years
of commuting
of uneventful merging

John Stevenson

A winter night:
Deeply asleep,
I am a cat

A red ant
Stretches space and time
On a camellia

Petals falling . . .
Finally, I go
Along with them
Inside of me
A bowed homeless man
Collects the rain

Jack Galmitz

deep in the raindrop  a blade of grass

Graham Nunn

the shapes of clouds . . .
neither one of us
is right
dead of winter
someone with
the wrong number

Collin Barber

turning from my
mirror
leaves tossed in rain

alone on the sill
a pear
with age spots
between waves
scuttling gulls
working the gaps

William Ramsey
sunny hillscape
a silhouette in yogaasan
takes on color

slicing wind
the skylark alone
knows the pull

Kala Ramesh

twilight
me slowly pouring
into the not-me

pain fading the days back to wilderness

at the last moment preparing for the next

a breeze and my mind on to other things

Jim Kacian

swallowtails—
a mission fig
cut in half

Peggy Willis Lyles

sharpening a blade
on a whetstone - how far
we've come back

lingering heat...
a young man snags
a sidewalk butt

Andrea Grillo
River festival willows swaying her yukata

Guy Simser

spring dig—
a worm recoils
from itself

cold
in the rain
bounces back

Helen Buckingham

no fruit to offer—
the elephant searches the air
blesses me still

we walk all day
to see the other face
of the great hill

quiet bell chimes . . .
the temple elephant
on a midnight walk

Shyam Santhanam

high beams
the darkness
behind me

ordinary time
the darkening
of stained glass

William Kenney
I watch as
the word fox vanishes
autumn begins

the wind stops
I find myself here
in a far place

night coming
maples
whitened by the wind

a star
millions of wings trembling
in the cave

Peter Yovu

She expands
and contracts
a cock crows

The same problems
the same reactions
raining again

George Swede

missing you
in a phone box full
of burnt holes

Liam Wilkinson

spring mountain the lowest clouds right through her
cold morning
the subway window
with no reflection

Bruce Ross

overnight creative nature wrote a peony white

too old for next year's irises

unsettled as february disappears

if i were a spring centipede would all my legs hurt

marlene mountain

razored through
to the void
raven

Ann K. Schwader

falling into
the space between our spines—
full moon

between the shadows
and spring—
the color red

Dana Duclo
coyote choir
we wake beneath
next season's stars

Allan Burns

red peppers
the things he said
laid out in front of me

after the fight
the boxers’
embrace

Rose Hunter

wild oats
spilling from my daughter's braids
evening light

Josh Wikoff

Saying it for you
cutting winds
on the mudflats

泥地上 凜冽的風 我為你而說

Any bus or train leaving Hiroshima at dawn

長崎的早晨 搭乘公車或火車離開都好
The point of autumn warm water hits the spot

秋分 溫水喝起來真過癮

Getting blown beneath desert stars take me now

沙漠星空下 品蕭 讓我死去吧

Paul Pfleuger, Jr. (trans. Zhao-Yan Chen, 陳召燕)

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Précis

In order to mark the occasion of the re-publication of *Presents of Mind* as of the bilingual (Japanese-English) edition, and to clear up some misunderstandings that have arisen, I would like to discuss a translation journey lasting over four years here in Japan, and comment on the publication as a whole; a work our Kon Nichi Translation Circle (Kumamoto University) has become intimately familiar with over the past several years.

Quality and Selection

I first ‘met’ Jim Kacian via email correspondence, in 1999. I had been living in Kumamoto for two years, and was seeking North American publication for a first research-article on Japanese haiku, written as a result of living in Japan, “Stalking the Wild Onji.” At the time, I was unaware of Red Moon Press. Upon discovering Jim’s efforts, I ordered the existing catalog, and later read *Presents of Mind*. I found the book to represent a sustained and innovative achievement at a level of creativity I had not
encountered in English-language haiku. I found interest, depth, humor, contemplation, language creativity, originality of image, and composition, in all 85 haiku presented. There was something rarer as well—the haiku knit themselves into a cohesive world, a world of solitary woodland retreat encompassing a yearlong contemplation of nature, self, and the seasons—reflecting with epistemological clarity the intentions of Thoreau and *Walden*. It is rare for any grouping of haiku to articulate a meta-narrative—arrive not only as pastiche but as coherent “parts of a world,” in Wallace Steven’s coinage. This was my predominant reaction to the work, and inspiration for my founding the Kon Nichi Translation Circle, in 2002. Reading the work both individually and as a group, we all became excited by the project.

Over the succeeding years of translation effort, the poems of *Presents* proved themselves worthy of intensive scrutiny—poems of discovery and delight. Our translation group of five took four years to translate the work into Japanese, completing the project in 2006. The significant reason for such a timescale had to do with our goal: to introduce a translation of English haiku into Japanese which would work at the highest possible level of genre acceptance in Japan. To our knowledge this had never been successfully attempted. It was a challenge which took our varied talents and experiences to muster, if not master. For five busy professionals, each holding down a different job, meeting on a weekly basis for some years wasn’t an easy thing to accomplish. There were two elements which held our group together: delight and depth. Both qualities sprang from the poems themselves.

Upon finishing our task, we sought publication in Japan, as the book was designed primarily for a Japanese market (this should be obvious, by the right-to-left succeeding page order). To our frustration, we found that publishers we approached in Japan deemed there would be no market for the book. As a result the completed project languished. After over 18 months of fruitless attempts, I contacted Jim to explain our frustration, and we were consequently able to work out a means to publish through Red Moon Press—this also gave Jim creative control over his original text, as he had retained the original 1996 galleys. It was a serendipitous solution.

**Reviews**

Our relatively small run of copies arrived in Japan late in the winter of 2006. Over the last several months of 2007 copies have been sent to professors and literary critics around Japan, and has been introduced by Tsubouchi Nenten in his *Sendan Journal* and Hoshinaga Fumio in his *HI-HI Journal*. In celebration of the publication, Jim visited our translation group in Kumamoto for 10 days (October 2006), gave lectures at two universities, and was interviewed by the Kumanichi Newspaper. As well, Jim gave a public reading and entered a recording studio to create a CD of the haiku of *Presents of Mind*, accompanied by Jeff Cairns-sensei on shakuhachi (Jeff is a recording artist and internationally respected shakuhachi teacher, whose recent CD is titled *Silent Letters, Secret Pens* [http://cdbaby.com/cd/jeffcairns]). Following the production of the CD, additional copies of the book and CD were sent around Japan, and as we had extra copies, it became possible to make the project available in North America, through the Red Moon Press website. The CD has proven to be a nice addition.

Within the bilingual publication itself is an essay detailing some of the innovative features of Jim’s work, and a Translator’s Note, co-authored by the Japanese translators. I have reprinted the English version of the Note, as an addendum to this article—you will find that the text is oriented towards the native-speaking Japanese reader familiar with the Japanese genre.

It is my opinion that Jim is among the finest haiku poets in English and that this work in particular represents both an advance for the genre and will stand the test of time.
The book is worth owning just for Jim's Introduction alone—a superb piece of poetic prose. Addressing the question of literary judgment, I would like to briefly quote from Favorite Haiku Volume 4, by H. F. Noyes, who comments on this haiku,

the cold night
comes out of the stones
all morning

"We have here an unusual twist: the poet reverses the usual practice of haiku to achieve depenetration. But we sense a spiritual element commensurate with that which Bashô found in interpenetration. There's a touch of genius in Kacian's saying 'the cold night' instead of just 'the cold': it forms a stronger tie with universe and eternity." (The haiku and many others in the book have been translated into French, German, Slovenian, German, Italian and now Japanese.)

H. F. Noyes has also commented on the following, in his Favorite Haiku, Volume 3:

chopping wood—
someone does the same
a moment later

“I rank this haiku as close to Bashô’s frogpond haiku—in much the same way, it connects me with eternity. I don't think we hear the frog's splash anymore the way Bashô did. We may need Jim's two sounds to propel us into an awakening, an echo to remind us that we can be so self-absorbed as to be oblivious even of our own sounds, or those right next-door. We need to rediscover time and space and silence, to receive the grace of an eternal moment of sound.”

A different opinion of the haiku just above was recently expressed by Robert Wilson (Simply Haiku, 5:2), who seems miffed at what he takes to be the scent of self-promotion—Red Moon Press being responsible for the publication. I hope I have set the record straight: the impetus for the re-publication and entire project came from our translation group in Japan. It was only after over a year of fruitless searching for a suitable publisher, following four years of translation, that we turned to Jim for advice on publishing in North America. I take full responsibility for the critical content and errors contained within. Naturally, critics of poetry are liable to disagree on which haiku or work succeeds or fails, rises or falls in estimation. Nevertheless, virtually all of the haiku contained in Presents of Mind have been published previously in haiku journals (that is, independently judged and selected), including a number in the Yomiuri Newspaper; several were awarded in international contests, and selected as exceptional representatives of the genre. This record accordingly suggests that professional critics have judged many of the haiku in Presents of Mind to reflect excellence and accomplishment.

The Future

Our translation group has languished since completing our book project, and sadly, Prof. Higuchi, the main translator of Jim’s prose-poem “Introduction” into Japanese, has suffered a stroke, and is only now in recovery from a coma. We are planning to play him the CD—this was the last project he was involved in before his terrible illness. Our group is looking for something new to bring into Japanese,
so please feel free to offer your suggestions. Life is short and we have only certain shining moments. That is why we commenced on our project, and why we were determined to publish our collaborative effort: to share these moments. It was well worth the effort, and we honor the poet who brought us this depth of shared culture.

Kon Nichi Circle, Celebration Party
From the left, Takke Kanemitsu haikaishi, Dr. Richard Gilbert, Itô Yûki (Ph.D. cand.), Jim Kacian, Dr. Masahiro Hori (Prof. Yasuo Higuchi is absent)

Presents of Mind — CD Session

Addendum: Japanese Translators’ Note from Presents of Mind

Publication: Translator’s Note in English, from Presents on Mind. The original text presented Japanese/English on facing pages. The Japanese co-translators are: Professor Masahiro Hori, Ph.D. (Kumamoto Gakuen University), Professor Higuchi Yasuo (Prefectural University of Kumamoto), Kanemitsu Takeyoshi (poet and haiku historian), Itô Yûki (Ph.D. candidate, Kumamoto University).

A Note on the Translation

Our motivation for composing the Japanese translation of Presents has been to introduce a notable poet, writing haiku in English, to scholars and poets in Japan. As we examined published translations of English haiku into Japanese, we saw that translations usually treated the haiku literally in Japanese, with little or no attempt being made to offer the haiku as a powerful poem, fitting within the existing tradition of Japanese haiku literature. It has been our goal to provide readers with a Japanese-interpretive translation which can be immediately felt as native rather than as foreign haiku.

In fact, this book has taken several years to complete, as there were a number of issues to resolve. For instance, how should the youthful, modern American haiku genre best be comported in Japanese? We can say that Jim’s haiku run a fine line between what we consider to be Japanese gendai (modern) and early-modern (kindai) haiku. And yet, all use language in ways which would date them at the earliest to the 1920s in Japan, and the postwar era of the late 1950s in America. That is, in terms of their predominant three-line form, syllable count, indication of nature or seasonal theme, punctuation, and
often their basal imagery, these haiku in part evoke the translations of R. H. Blyth, and the early growth of haiku in America, dating back half a century.

As Jim’s haiku fit a familiar (we might say traditional) form of haiku in English, we likewise modeled our translations on the familiar 5-7-5-on form of Japanese (with a few necessary exceptions). And, as Presents contains not only Chapters, each dedicated to a season, but also a clear seasonal reference or indication within each haiku, a search was made for appropriate kigo. But we must add a note concerning the difference between “seasonal theme” in English, and kigo in Japanese. The kigo tradition in Japanese poetics finds its roots in ancient China, and has developed over many centuries of literary and cultural evolution. On the other hand, the haiku genre outside of Japan exists within an entirely modern literary ethos. For this reason, a traditional saijiki (kigo compendium) is not possible. Additionally, due to extensive and heterogeneous geographies as well as cultural diversity, a unitary saijiki is not likely to arise in the future. Jim adds this comment:

It has been my express desire to connect with the Japanese tradition in this book, but in ways that still function within the English literary model. For example, the use of multiple kigo is not done as a deliberate affront to the Japanese tradition, but in the knowledge that what functions as kigo in Japanese is only image in English—we can say “moon” and not automatically assume it to be the harvest moon. This is a function of the English haiku trying to speak more directly to experience, and less to convention, in part because the convention is not our own. Such a relationship is both a strength and a weakness: the haiku can be quite fresh and direct, but we must also work to evoke allusion and depth—not always a simple task in such a brief poem. [personal communication]

We hope that readers will be open-minded to the idea, as it exists in American haiku culture, of “seasonal reference” and can say that an evocation of the “environment” of the haiku is quite important in the English-language tradition—which also includes all of the environmental variety found in gendai haiku (urban haiku, socio-political haiku, etc). At the same time, environmental depictions are not restricted by a requirement for any specific word to be delimited to a specific season (and time-period within that season). In a sense then, haiku in English are gendai, in that they appear as muki-teki haiku (haiku reading without kigo). However, this would be overly simplistic, as season plays a strong role, as does a sense of naturalism—and there are additional features. We can say that there are no strict rules in terms of syllable count, or keywords, or kigo, in English. Some of the haiku in Presents, when first translated literally into Japanese, had more than one kigo. Resolving such issues, as well as differences in geography, culture, climate, and language have been among our goals as translators.

Especially, we have sought to create haiku which would have power in Japanese, seen from within the existing haiku tradition. In any literature, including Japanese haiku, there are few truly excellent poets in a given era who have produced an oeuvre such as Jim has which possesses commanding interest and depth. We hope that the importance and promise of haiku in English from such a talented poet can be experienced from the dual perspectives of our mutual traditions.

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stuck in the mud reeds full of spaces for nymphs and me

-marlene mountain

marlene mountain, most likely the first person to begin writing monolinear haiku in English consistently, has created over the decades a world of immediacy hard to produce in haiku conceived in trilinear form. The haiku selected here could have been easily conceived and cast in three parts: stuck in the mud / reeds full of spaces / for nymphs and me. But done that way, it would have lost the urgency of experience, as well as, shall I say because we are here on the subject of breaking up something into lines or not, the viscosity between words.

This raises the sticky question, my hobby horse: Did not those who decided to translate Japanese haiku as a three-line poem make a mistake – or, to put it positively, create a new genre? Why is it that even those Japanese haiku writers who are perfectly aware that most haiku written in non-Japanese languages are in three lines refuse to follow suit, some even feeling that the form has been misunderstood—even though, I must hasten to add, many are gracious enough to see that the matter may be different outside their country, in other languages?

Here, for example, is a haiku by the bureaucrat-world-traveler-cum-haiku writer 西村我尼吾 (Nishimura Gania; Gania, as you may have guessed, is a haiku name; the name his parents gave him is a more mundane Hidetoshi, 英俊):

花に寝る髪も腕も多感なり
_Hana ni neru kami mo kaina mo taken nari_
Asleep in flowers both hair and arms are hypersensitive

I have picked this partly randomly, from the haiku books I have received recently, but partly because, to be honest, I work, like Nishimura, for a government office. Now, as in most translations I do, I can’t recreate the alliterative effect here of _kami, kaina, and taken_, but suppose Gania had broken this up in three parts?

_hana ni neru_
kami mo kaina mo
taken nari

Sorry, I’ve brought in a personal animus in selecting marlene’s haiku as best.

-Hiroaki Sato