

JUXTATEN

10TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP IN HAIKU

2024

THE *Haiku* FOUNDATION

JUXTATEN

Research and Scholarship in Haiku

2024

THE *Haiku* FOUNDATION

JUXTATEN

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CONTENTS

Editor's Welcome	Ce ROSENOW	9
Foreword	Peter McDONALD	11
The JUXTA Award		15
<i>Haiga</i> : “uomine e sete”	TARTAMELLA/CODRESCU	16
JUXTA Articles		17
<i>Haiga</i> : “autumn arises”	ARIMA/CODRESCU	18
Found in Translation	Jennifer HAMBRICK	19
The Poet's AHA	Shelley BAKER-GARD	105
<i>Haiga</i> : “even higher”	Bashō/CODRESCU	116
Japanese Haiku Meter	Bo ZHAN	117
<i>Haiga</i> : “alte gucken”	DE GRUTTOLA/CODRESCU	154
JUXTA Presentation		155
<i>Haiga</i> : “dopo il lampo”	KACIAN/CODRESCU	156
Haiku Translation	Toru KIUCHI	157
JUXTA Interview		175
It Seems The World Is Still Here	Crystal Simone SMITH	177
JUXTA Theme		183
<i>Haiga</i> : “left to itself”	MOUNTAIN/CODRESCU	184

<i>Translation Practices</i>	185
<i>Haiga</i> : “deep in raga”	Ramesh/CODRESCU 186
Accidental Translator	Fay AOYAGI 189
Kaleidoscope	Antonella FILIPPA 192
Some Recent Translations	Phillip KENNEDY 198
Climb Mt. Fuji, Little Translator!	David LANOUE 202
Thoughts on Translation	Peter MEISTER 209
The Case of <i>Night Jasmine</i>	Emiko MIYASHITA 212
Translation into Hindi	Teji SETHI 213
The Wings of Translation	Iliyana STOYANOVA 223
My Examples	Kosyu TAKAHASHI 229
My Translation Process	Alice WANDERER 231
A Magician’s Task	David WATTS 235
Aspects of the Problem	Klaus-Dieter WIRTH 238
JUXTA Reviews	243
<i>Haiga</i> : “la nuit d’été”	Takahashi/CODRESCU 244
<i>The Routledge Global Haiku Reader</i>	Pippa PHILLIPS 245
<i>Lenard D. Moore</i>	Emily SPENCER 248
<i>Haibun: A Writer’s Guide</i>	David GRAYSON 254
<i>Haiga</i> : “at my gate”	Issa/CODRESCU 258
JUXTA Haiga	261
<i>Haiga</i> : “flowering broom”	ARIMA/CODRESCU 262
JUXTA People	263
<i>Haiga</i> : “men and thirst” ...	TARTAMELLA/CODRESCU 264
Contributors	265
Staff	268
Adjudicators	270

in memory of

COR VAN DEN HEUVEL

(1931 – 2024)

EDITOR'S WELCOME

Welcome to the tenth issue of *Juxtapositions*!

To celebrate our first decade of publication, we present a themed issue on translation with some wonderful content. The issue includes a foreword by *Juxta*'s first senior editor, Peter McDonald; articles and personal essays; interviews; a conference presentation; an overview of the American Haiku Archives; and book reviews.

Our anonymous donor has once again made it possible to offer an award for the best content in the previous issue. Congratulations to Owen Bullock on receiving this award for his article, "Synesthesia and Haiku."

Over the past decade, we have had the good fortune to receive editorial guidance from many haiku scholars who participated for a time on our editorial board. Peter McDonald acknowledges their contributions in his foreword. I'd like to offer special thanks here to Josh Hockensmith, who recently stepped away from his work on *Juxta*, and we hope he will return in the future. I also want to welcome Sheila Smith McKoy and John Zheng. They joined us this year and have already made a positive impact on the journal. Thank you!

Beginning with *Juxta* 11, we will include a special, themed section in the journal with its own guest editor. I'm pleased to announce that Sheila Smith McKoy will edit next year's special section on haiku from Africa and the African diaspora. Material on other haiku-related topics will continue to be published, as well.

Finally, I want to say thank you to our editorial board members, Managing Editor Jim Kacian, The Haiku Foundation, our anonymous donor, and everyone who contributed to this anniversary issue of *Juxta*. Here's to another ten years!

Ce ROSENOW
Senior Editor

FOREWORD

Ten years, good grief! That long? What an honor it is, though, to now introduce our 10th anniversary issue after all these years. While the haiku journals *Modern Haiku* and the Haiku Society of America's *Frogpond* published some of the most important articles on this literary form over many decades, *Juxtapositions: Research and Scholarship in Haiku* remains the only English language journal devoted solely to the scholarly study of haiku.

In the summer of 2014, while still Dean of Library Services at California State University, Fresno, I requested from the provost a six-month sabbatical to study how haiku had evolved over the decades, to deal, if at all, with our climate crisis, the loss of nature and the sixth extinction we all face today. Had it insulated itself from these crises? Or had some brave haikuists ventured, somehow, anyhow, to touch on these disturbing subjects where the observation of nature has been historically so central to the form.

I had no idea where to begin. I was not an active member of the Haiku Society of America, though had a solid collection of seminal texts, runs of many journals including full runs of *Raw Nerve* and *Acorn*, and was friends with a number of respected haikuists. At some point in my early research, I stumbled upon the name of Jim Kacian, editor of Red Moon Press, and on a whim reached out to him. He listened politely to my inquiries about haiku and the loss of nature. If I recall, he was not sanguine that this topic would yield much of a research paper. Most of the haiku poets he published shied away from political topics, though we touched on some exceptions like experimentalist Marlene Mountain.

But halfway into our first conversation, Jim planted the seed for what became *Juxtapositions*. I had mentioned I had been a founder and editor of several journals, so Jim deftly steered the conversation to a pet desire of his — starting a stand-alone scholarly journal devoted solely to haiku. I was intrigued. While I had to admit I felt entirely lost in the woods on my chosen topic, managing and editing a scholarly journal I knew how to do. I had the requisite managerial and scholarly skills, and before you know it, by our second call we were talking seriously about the who, what, where and when. The name ‘juxtapositions’ came from Jim.

Soon enough, under the imprint of The Haiku Foundation, I agreed to become the ‘Senior’ editor, while Jim as publisher became ‘Managing’ editor, and honestly, it was our first string of amazing editorial board volunteers on those early calls, who brought this wonderful journal into being. Our original cast of editorial members included Stephen Addiss, Randy Brooks, Bill Cooper and Aubrie Cox with Ce Rosenow as our ‘Review’ editor. Of course, I knew the work of Stephen Addiss since anyone remotely interested in haiku has leafed through one of his many beautiful introductory compilations. And I was familiar with Randy’s Brooks Books, having bought a few volumes of poetry under that imprint over the years.

We were perhaps a bit gung-ho in those first months as we put out a call for papers in various fora. Of course, *Modern Haiku* and *Frogpond* remained the dominant publications for submissions, but our call for only scholarly papers, strictly following academic journal guidelines of abstract, cited sources, original scholarship and a scholarly bibliography slowly brought forth our first issue’s submissions. For all of us it was a learning process. Submissions came to me as senior editor. I then stripped them of all pointers to attribution, and the four editors read the papers under the common guidelines of blind peer review. Many articles, if I recall, lacked the requisite scholarly attributes clearly stated in our submission guidelines. But slowly the first issues coalesced.

One concession we all agreed on was that given the very nature of haiku as an expression of poetry, the journals should have some sort of artistic flair in the form of haiga, with guest poets. Stephen Addiss penned a brief editorial essay on the ancient notions of haiga in *JuxtaOne*. To my mind, the beautiful haiga Stephen has consistently provided has enhanced the look and feel of the scholarship immeasurably.

The first year, admittedly, was a steep learning curve for all of us. Our notion that we would get enough submissions for an every two months journal simply never materialized, and eventually we came to realize even a biannual journal, spring and fall, might be a challenge. As things turned out, and perhaps for the best, we settled into publishing *Juxtapositions* as a free, online, often-250-page annual, with a paid print publication fee via Amazon. As with most academic-leaning publications, everyone who worked with us worked as a dedicated volunteer. But these annuals were consistently full of a variety of interesting, sometimes challenging, scholarly insights.

By *JuxtaThree* Aubrie Cox had stepped away, and Ce Rosenow stepped up as a member of the board. I remained senior editor through the first five annuals, 2015–2019. So many amazing articles came over the transom in those intervening years. From “A Scholar’s Library of Books on Haiku” covering the first hundred years of serious haiku scholarship in *JuxtaOne*, to *JuxtaFive*’s wide focus on women in haiku, the level of scholarship throughout was consistently of the highest quality. I am so grateful to Jim, Ce, Aubrie, Stephen, Randy, and Bill for their stalwart dedication, camaraderie, insights and hard work. I finally became a very minor haiku scholar myself through their wide knowledge and hard-won historical perspectives in their collective years of service to haiku.

Today, *Juxtapositions: Research and Scholarship in Haiku* remains in exceptional hands, with Ce Rosenow as senior editor and a whole

new board doing amazing work. Jim, bless him, remains managing editor under The Haiku Foundation imprint. Let me end where I began. By the time I returned to work as dean in 2015 after my sabbatical, my provost who had granted the leave had moved on to become university president of CalState LA. I sent him a copy of *JuxtaOne* with a thank you letter for his generosity in letting me take the time off to start a scholarly journal. He emailed me back promptly saying that in all his years as an academic administrator, seeing an academic such as myself actually produce an academic journal in the allotted sabbatical time was a first, Bravo! I had to confess that I was just a lucky newbie, and that my publisher and editorial board were the real pros. Enjoy *JuxtaTen*!

Peter McDOONALD
Senior Editor Emeritus

THE **JUXTA** AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE
IN HAIKU RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP

Owen Bullock
University of Canberra

is the recipient of a **JUXTA** Award for

“Synesthesia and Haiku”

from *Juxtapositions* 9. The adjudicators were Janine
BEICHMAN, Cheryl CROWLEY, and Toru KIUCHI.

The **JUXTA** Award is a cash stipend granted to
the author(s) of the article deemed “best of issue”
in each iteration of *Juxtapositions*, and is made
possible by the generosity of an anonymous donor.



Poet: Pietro TARTAMELLA / Artist: Ion CODRESCU
(see page 194)

JUXTA

Articles

autumn
arises -
a
giraffe's
face at
my
ear



Jon Codrescu

Arima Akito

Poet: ARIMA Akito / Artist: Ion CODRESCU
Translation: Phillip KENNEDY (see page 199)

Found in Translation:

The Kon Nichi Translation Group, *Gendai* Haiku, and the Rise of Avant-Garde Haiku in English

Jennifer HAMBRICK

ABSTRACT: Between its founding in 2003 by Dr. Richard Gilbert, Kumamoto University, and its final publications in 2020–21, the Kon Nichi Translation Group published English translations of hundreds of haiku by some of Japan's most noted contemporary poets writing in an avant-garde (*zen'ei*, 前衛) or modern (*gendai*, 現代) style. This study examines the history, translation process, and translated work of the Kon Nichi Translation Group in light of Japanese *gendai* haiku aesthetics and the history of English-language haiku and haiku style. The Kon Nichi group introduced to the English-speaking world translations of some of the younger members of the current generation of women *gendai haijin* and enriched the available English translations of haiku by contemporary *gendai* poets of earlier generations, including the decorated *haijin* Kaneko Tohta and the radical female poet Yagi Mikajo. The group's published translations constitute a body of haiku literature that has the potential to enrich the artistic depth and emotional power of English-language haiku.

If the first Japanese haiku had not been translated into English in the late nineteenth century, the English-language haiku tradition—however comparatively brief it may be—arguably might not have come about.¹ That those early haiku translations quickly inspired poets to write haiku-like poems in English reflects not just the historical circumstances of the Meiji restoration and Japan’s opening to the West; those translations are testaments to the power of the free exchange of ideas across the divide between quite dissimilar cultures to inspire new ways of thinking, to bring about whole new modes of creative expression, and to influence the cultural futures of entire societies.²

1. For a detailed overview of the history of English-language translations of Japanese haiku, see Brett B. Bodemer, “The Unexpected Import: A Disquisition on the Days of Proto-Haiku,” *Modern Haiku*, 1999, pp. 57-80. https://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1051&context=lib_fac, Accessed 13 February 2024. The very first haiku published in English may or may not have been translations of haiku by Japanese poets. *A Grammar of the Japanese Written Language* (1877) by William George Aston, a British diplomat to Japan in the early years of the Meiji Restoration and, later, a prolific Japanologist, contains the first haiku published in English. Three haiku—which Aston calls “*haikai*”—appear in the “Prosody” chapter of Aston’s *Grammar*, each below a version in *rōmaji*. In his research note on Aston, Charles Trumbull remarks, “Aston does not name the authors” of these poems, and because the poems “are not among the canonical works of the Japanese masters,” Trumbull speculates Aston might have written and translated the poems himself. If so, then it is not possible to know whether Aston wrote the poems first in Japanese or in English and, thus, which language is the original and which the destination. (Trumbull, “Research Note: W.G. Aston, p.60; Aston *A Grammar of the Japanese Written Language* (1877) cf. Footnote 2).

2. Aston’s *A History of Japanese Literature* (1899) was a significant influence on haiku composed in English by Imagist poets, including Amy Lowell, Kenneth Rexroth, and Ezra Pound. As poets continued writing haiku native to English, translators continued translating Japanese haiku into English. Notable early contributors of translations include the Greek-born journalist Lafcadio Hearn; the Japanese poet Yone Noguchi, who translated Bashō’s poems and encouraged Americans to write haiku in English; R. H. Blyth, whose zen-infused volumes on haiku had an enormous influence on the Beat Poets; and Kenneth Rexroth, who famously translated hundreds of haiku. (“Aston, W.G. Works 1899 – 1905” and Noguchi).

The tradition of translating Japanese haiku into English continues well into the twenty-first century, bringing stylistically varied bodies of haiku literature into the Anglophone sphere and influencing the style of haiku written in English. Between its founding in 2003 by Dr. Richard Gilbert, then on the Faculty of Letters at Japan's Kumamoto University, and its final publications in 2020–21, the Kon Nichi Translation Group published English translations of hundreds of haiku by some of Japan's most noted contemporary poets writing in the avant-garde (*zen'ei*, 前衛) or modern (*gendai*, 現代) style that emerged fully in the decades after World War II.³ The Kon Nichi group's haiku translations followed in the footsteps of the thousands of other Japanese haiku that had been translated since the late 1800s. At the same time, they diverged greatly from their predecessors in intention and offered the Anglophone world radically different stylistic possibilities for haiku in English in the twenty-first century. Running concurrently with, but not emerging from, Gilbert's work translating *gendai* haiku, his first critical essays on the Japanese haiku tradition and his seminal essay (2004, 2023) and later book (2008, update 2013, reprint 2020) *The Disjunctive Dragonfly*, further enriched the context of the Kon Nichi group's then-emerging translations of *gendai* haiku and the group's instances of translating haiku written in English into Japanese.⁴ Many first encountered the Kon Nichi group's translations and critical studies at the website

3. For a discussion of the roots of *gendai* haiku in the New Rising Haiku movement before and during World War II, see Itō, "New Rising Haiku."

4. Gilbert, Richard. "The Disjunctive Dragonfly: A Study of Disjunctive Method and Definitions in Haiku." *Kumamoto Studies in English Language and Literature* 47, Kumamoto University, Japan, 2004, pp. 27-66. The article was later published in *Modern Haiku*, 35:2, 2004, pp. 21-44. The most recent revised version of the article appears in the *Routledge Global Haiku Reader*, ed. James Shea and Grant Caldwell, Routledge, 2023, pp. 197-224. The expanded book-length study was published as *The Disjunctive Dragonfly: A New Approach to English-Language Haiku*. Red Moon Press, 2008, and an updated version was published in 2013, and a reprint was made available in 2020.

gendaihaiku.com, which Gilbert launched and still maintains, and in Gilbert's *Poems of Consciousness: Contemporary Japanese and English-language Haiku in Cross-cultural Perspective* (2008, 2020 reprint), making the group's work widely accessible to a global Anglophone audience.⁵

This study examines the work of the Kon Nichi Translation Group in the context of the history of English-language haiku and haiku style, and in light of the history and aesthetics of the Japanese *gendai* haiku tradition. In excerpts included here from the nearly 15 hours of interviews I conducted with Gilbert during Fall 2023, Gilbert and I discuss the founding of the Kon Nichi Translation Group, the philosophies and aesthetics of some leading contemporary *gendai* poets—including members of the current generation of women *gendai haijin*—and the Kon Nichi Group's process of collaboration. We also discuss the specific challenges and other considerations Gilbert and his group faced in translating poetry from the Japanese into English, including the angst involved in removing a poem from its original language and replacing it—still as a poem—into a quite dissimilar language, the firm but blurry boundary between translation and interpretation, and the limitations that boundary placed on the group's work. Our discussions of the Kon Nichi group's translations of specific *gendai* haiku reveal a rich body of cutting-edge Japanese haiku now available in translation to Anglophone readers and writers and, as with previous generations of translated haiku, ready to inform the English-language haiku tradition.

A note on terminology: In English-language haiku discourse, Japanese haiku that cannot with certainty be called stylistically "traditional" seem generally, though with dissatisfaction, to be

5. Gilbert, Email communication, 10 March 2024. In addition to haiku translations, *Poems of Consciousness* (2008, reprint 2020) contains Gilbert's 2004 "Disjunctive Dragonfly" essay; the essay "Plausible Deniability: Nature as Hypothesis in English-language Haiku," an investigation of *kigo* and seasonal reference; and "Stalking the Wild Onji," among other critical essays.

called *gendai* haiku.⁶ The Japanese word *gendai* means “modern,” a descriptor that can encompass an extremely broad range of temporal, aesthetic, and stylistic considerations. The dissatisfaction arises from the implication that *gendai* takes on a more specific meaning when applied to Japanese-language haiku written in the generation of Shiki’s followers through the present day that may not include *kigo* (a traditional season-word), part ways with or reframe realism, give voice to unapologetic subjectivity, and/or do not adhere to the 5-7-5 metrical structure of classical haiku.⁷ Though important, the question of what to call the styles and techniques of such “non-traditional” Japanese haiku is not the main focus of this article.⁸

Gendai Haiku and Theories of Translation

A thicket of lexical, semantic, and hermeneutic problems threatens to confound any effort to transport a text out of one language and into another. A few well-known translators of our era offer insights into the complexities and strategies of translating. Though a language far removed from modern Japanese, the Hebrew of the Hebrew Bible offered noted translator Robert Alter many of the same translation challenges the Kon Nichi Translation Group faced in translating late twentieth- and twenty-first-century Japanese haiku. In the introduction to his translation of the Hebrew Bible, Alter describes some aspects of the job of translator

6. See Sato, “*Gendai Haiku*,” p. 36.

7. For a more nuanced view of the 5-7-5 meter of Japanese-language haiku from the standpoint of Japanese metrical phonology, see Gilbert and Yoneoka. “From 5-7-5 to 8-8-8.”

8. I use the term *gendai* here to refer to Japanese-language haiku on the avant-garde end of the style spectrum, to be consistent with how this study’s interview subject, Richard Gilbert, uses the term in the interview transcripts presented here and the work that appears on Gilbert’s website gendaihaiku.com. My use here of the term “*gendai* haiku” is also in keeping with the term’s common, if begrudging, use in English-language haiku circles.

as what amounts to a balancing act among faithfulness to the word choice, style, and diction of a text, while maintaining a respectful distance from the text's assertion of its meaning in its original language.⁹ If the tightrope is too taut — if the language hews too closely or literally to the original — then fidelity risks devolving into a hyper-scrupulousness from which the original text may tumble. If the tightrope has too much slack — if the language of the original is too often approximated, glossed, or interpreted in the translation — then the original text risks becoming something altogether different: an icon of its former self, made in the image of its translator.

The goals for translators of the Bible (and of all texts generally) amount to a tense dialectic between fidelity to the original text's language, and fidelity to what might be termed — however insufficiently — its *meaning*. In other words, the principal options for translators are to translate the text as literally and as closely to the original language as possible, or to produce a translation that may say something similar to what the original text says, but in a manner or style quite different from the original text's way of speaking.¹⁰

In the process of translation, words in the original language do bump into and scuffle with words in the target language. For Pulitzer Prize-winning author and translator Jhumpa Lahiri, this often uncertain, usually imperfect process of transformation also involves a degree of interpretation. Though her work writing

9. Alter, trans. *The Hebrew Bible*.

10. Alter, pp. 35 and 52. In discussing the different levels of diction in the Bible's original Hebrew, Alter asserts another translation goal: to capture the musicality of the biblical Hebrew, as well as the lexical precision and depth and the syntactical expressiveness unique to the language. The rhythms of the original Hebrew in the Bible's prose as well as its poetry — its passages pulsing with repeated words, the emphatic feel of poetic rhythms — imbue the text with the *feeling* of its words, not just with semantic value, and potentially aids the storytelling.

stories, books, and essays in Italian and translating the work of contemporary Italian authors into English is a more recent development in her career, Lahiri, who was raised speaking English and Bengali, claims she has always been a translator translating not just language but also culture.¹¹ She was born, in her words, “into a linguistic world split in two” and has pursued a career “writing short stories in English about characters who talk Bengali” in her head.¹² In her essay “*Lingua/Language*,” which she wrote in Italian then translated into English, Lahiri maps out the bumpy road from one side of that split linguistic world to another, and weighs the baggage of additional layers of meaning that often go along for the ride:

Translating means understanding, above all, how words slip and slide into each other, how they overlap, how they end up producing a fertile lexical promiscuity. Even the meaning of synonym, from the Greek [*σύν/syn*] (to express, identify) and [*ὄνομα/onoma*] (name), suggests a type of translation, for a translation does nothing but give a different and, at the same time, fundamentally equal meaning to a pre-existing text. A translation, like a synonym, literally creates more pathways and more sense.¹³

In a different essay, Lahiri finds an apt metaphor for the work of the translator and for the transformative senses that result from translation in a deep reading of the myth of Echo and Narcissus, as told in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.¹⁴ To begin with, according to Lahiri, “all translations must be regarded first and foremost as a metamorphosis: a radical, painful, and miraculous transformation in which specific traits and elements are shed and others are

11. Lahiri (“Introduction,” *Translating Myself and Others*, p. 2) considers the stories in her debut collection, *Interpreter of Maladies*, to be examples of “cultural translation,” specifically, “translating India” into English.

12. Lahiri, *Translating Myself and Others*, p. 2.

13. Lahiri, “*Lingua/Language*,” *Translating Myself and Others*, p. 134.

14. Lahiri, “In Praise of Echo: Reflections on the Meaning of Translation,” *Translating Myself and Others*, pp. 44-59.

newly obtained.”¹⁵ Departing from the idea that a translation of a literary work is often considered a ‘mere echo’ of the original,¹⁶ Lahiri situates the once vocally exuberant Echo in the sisterhood condemned for Jupiter/Zeus’ concupiscence. At the same time, she sees the mountain nymph’s punishment to repeat the words of others as the noble “starting point for the translator’s art.”¹⁷ As the work of translation unfolds, the translator pursues the inner workings of the text, chases after its language, desires to enter ever greater depths of meaning:

Like Echo, who in Ovid ‘sees and burns for him [Narcissus], furtively following his tracks’ [. . .], a translator comes to know an author’s work by literally following its tracks, by pursuing it attentively. [. . .] One might say that a figurative hunt is involved, represented not only by the inevitable toil of hunting down the right words to re-create the text, but by a stealthy shadowing — the result of countless readings and reflections upon the work itself — in order to best understand its form, its structure, its meaning.¹⁸

15. Lahiri, “In Praise of Echo,” p. 46.

16. Lahiri, “In Praise of Echo,” p. 46: “Translation has always been a controversial literary form, and those who are resistant to it or dismiss it complain that the resulting transformation is a ‘mere echo’ of the original — that too much has been lost in the process of traveling from one language into another.”

17. Lahiri, “In Praise of Echo,” p. 47. A summary of the myth of Echo and Narcissus, as in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*: Jupiter conscripts the mountain nymph Echo, a noted singer and talker, to chat with and distract his wife, Juno, while he consorts with other nymphs on the mountainside. Juno uncovers the plot, and places a curse on Echo, limiting her voice to repeating the last words spoken by others. Echo sees the beautiful hunter Narcissus and, hot with desire, pursues him, but deprived of her own words, she cannot call to him or share her thoughts. Narcissus falls in love with his own reflection while drinking from a pool and, locked in self-absorption, transforms into a flower. The mountain nymph Echo withers into a pile of rocks, leaving behind only the sound of her voice repeating and reflecting the words of others.

18. Lahiri, “In Praise of Echo,” p. 48.

Ultimately, the translator aims to produce a text with a similar readability and feel in the target language as in the original. In this way, the translation is at once an echo of the original and also a text endowed with its own powers of expression, speaking its own language.¹⁹ Thus, for Lahiri, translation doesn't stop at transferring a text from one language to another; a degree of interpretation is also involved.²⁰

The line between translating and interpreting can all too easily blur when translating a poem between languages as different as Japanese and English. And the challenges aren't limited to linguistic ones; the translation ideally also carries a text from its original culture intelligibly into the ethnic and temporal culture of its target language. Fidelity to the text in its original language is poet and translator Hiroaki Sato's starting point.²¹ But in the realm of *haikai* (referring to the collaborative linked verse from which haiku emerged as an independent genre), subject matter and seasonal references (i.e. *kigo* or *kidai*, a seasonal reference or topic that is not necessarily a traditional season word), which "seem(s) culturally too limited to be transferred to another language without

19. Lahiri, "In Praise of Echo," p. 52: "Echo represents certain traits of the translator, true, but then so does Narcissus, in that a translation is both an acoustic and visual reflection of a text constituted in other words, something that must be both heard and visualized by the translator, a reflection that 'seems' to be the original while in fact being quite separate and distinct. The trick to a good translation is to be unable to recognize which is which. The minute a translation 'feels' or 'sounds' like a translation, the reader jumps back and accuses it, rejects it. The enormous expectation we place upon translation is that it sound 'true.' This is why the demands upon a translating are even greater than those placed on an original text."

20. Lahiri arrives at this conclusion by a different route in *The Clothing of Books* (17), a personal essay on the role of book covers: "The more I think about it, the more I am convinced that a cover is a sort of translation, that is, an *interpretation* of my words in another language — a visual one. It represents the text, but it isn't part of it. It can't be too literal. It has to have its own take on the book." [Emphasis mine]

21. Sato, *One Hundred Frogs*, p. 135.

explication,” can be particular barriers to literal translation. Those challenges, Sato asserts, should be explained in commentary on the poem, not in the poem translation itself.²²

As if to illustrate the dangers of embedding interpretation into a haiku translation, Sato devotes the title chapter of his monograph *One Hundred Frogs* to one hundred English translations of Bashō’s *furuike ya* (“old pond”) haiku. In his introduction to the translations, Sato reads the poem’s creation in its historical context, elucidates the technical challenges of rendering the original Japanese text into English, and assesses the effects those challenges might have on conveying the poem’s meaning in translation.²³ Ranging from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, the translations of *furuike ya* cross the invisible line between translating and interpretation in every way. The rampant addition of exclamation points, adjectives, and end rhyme, and the use of quintessentially English forms like the heroic couplet all point to the translators’ efforts to transport Bashō’s poem from his time and place to theirs, to get Bashō’s haiku to speak more like the poetry of their own culture. In the end, Sato’s collection of English translations of *furuike ya* says far more about the poem’s translators than about either Bashō or haiku.

The interview excerpts below offer insight into the Kon Nichi Translation Group’s efforts to retain fidelity to the spirit of the

22. Sato, *One Hundred Frogs*, p. 135: “In translating hokku, haiku, and renga I try, as with literature in any form, to remain as faithful to the original as I can. In content, this means I try not to add or change words.” [. . .] “. . . much of the subject matter of this genre seems culturally too limited to be transferred to another language without explication, although here the problem may be less cross-cultural than literary: many seasonal and other references in classical hokku are lost to the modern Japanese reader. I think both the intrinsic and cultural difficulties are more imagined than real. When they exist, however, they should be explained in a note, not in the translation. Adding explanatory words in translation strikes me as a fallacy, even where the poet’s own explanation might seem to make it justifiable.”

23. Sato, *One Hundred Frogs*, pp. 147-50.

language in the original haiku texts, and to avoid straying too deeply into *interpretation* during the process of translation. That translation process was exacting and led the collaborators into extremely detailed lexical, historical, and semantic conversations. But as deliberate and controlled as those conversations were, the Kon Nichi Translation Group itself, ironically, came about almost by chance.

Translating Coincidence: The Founding of the Kon Nichi Translation Group

On arriving in Japan in 1997, Gilbert had not planned to translate Japanese haiku into English; that opportunity literally knocked on his door. He had planned to launch an academic career, and so dug into research projects in educational software and in haiku.²⁴ In 2002, Gilbert began serving as fulltime assistant professor of English Literature at Kumamoto University. The following year saw two significant events: Gilbert wrote his article “The Disjunctive Dragonfly: A Study of Disjunctive Method and Definitions in Haiku,” a seminal work on avant-garde aesthetics in English-language haiku, which he would later expand into a book. While working on that article, Gilbert met the esteemed Kumamoto haiku poet Hoshinaga Fumio, whose *gendai* haiku were the first Gilbert would translate. Knowing very little Japanese at the time, Gilbert enlisted Kanamitsu Takeyoshi (“Takke”), who was a member of Hoshinaga’s local haiku group and had written haiku in English, to help translate Hoshinaga’s poems. Gilbert and Kanamitsu were also joined by the Dickens scholar Professor Masahiro Hori,

24. Gilbert’s foray into haiku research, the essay “Stalking the Wild Onji,” traces the history of the term “onji,” which Gilbert had seen in important works on haiku in English only to discover, once in Japan, that the term had long since died out from Japanese parlance. Gilbert, Richard. “Stalking the Wild Onji: The Search for Current Linguistic Terms Used in Japanese Poetry Circles.” *Poems of Consciousness*, 2008, (2020 reprint, amazon.com), pp. 265-92.

then serving on the faculty of Kumamoto Gakuen University. Gilbert had collaborated with Hori on translating and editing for publication Hori's then-forthcoming monograph on Charles Dickens' linguistic style.²⁵ Hori brought fluency in Japanese and English and an interest in haiku.

The group worked without a name until 2005, when Gilbert received the first of ultimately five grants from the Japan Ministry of Education (MEXT) for *gendai* haiku translation projects. From 2003 until the publication in 2020 and 2021 of the translations of haiku by women *gendai* haijin in the *Creative Blooms* series,²⁶ the Kon Nichi Translation Group, named after the influential *gendai haijin* Kaneko Tohta's book *Kon Nichi no Haiku (Today's Haiku)* would grow to seven members, including Kanamitsu who, with Gilbert, was a founding member.²⁷ Gilbert's translation with Kanamitsu and Hori of a selection of 100 haiku from Fumio's collection *Kumaso-Ha* (Honami Shoten, September, 2003), was in process when, out of the blue, Hoshinaga knocked on Gilbert's office door.²⁸

Richard Gilbert: He knocks on my door. This cute little round-faced guy just filled with energy, really intense eyes. And he starts speaking to me, and I cannot understand him at all. He's holding some papers. Somehow, almost instantaneously we vibe. There's a word in Japanese, *go'en*. It doesn't translate. Sometimes there are people and situations that are amazingly fortuitous, there's unbidden, fortunate luck, a blessing of the gods.²⁹ We had *go'en* from the beginning. Though I could not understand a word that he was

25. Hori, Masahiro. *Investigating Dickens' Style: A Collocational Analysis*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

26. Gilbert, *Creative Blooms*.

27. Tohta, Kaneko. *Kon nichu no haiku*. Tokyo, Kōbunsha, 1965 and 2002.

28. Fumio, Hoshinaga. *Kumaso-Ha*. Translated by Richard Gilbert. Honami Shoten, 2003. Some of the translated poems also appeared in Gilbert, "Hoshinaga Fumio."

29. *go'en*: ご縁, 御縁; fate, chance, affinity, connection, tie, verge, brink.

saying, I understood what he was talking about, and immediately knew he wanted me to help him translate some poems into English.

Hoshinaga is an internationalist, with a cosmopolitan sensibility. He's is an esteemed *gendai* haiku poet in Kumamoto. An absolutely unique person. I would call him a genius. He grew up in the southern part of our Prefecture, a child of the war. He recalls the wartime bombing, the firebombing of cities, including Kumamoto. His mother committed suicide shortly after the war ended. To quote him, "I was a child of the war, I believed in everything the government said." He described himself as a young fascist, somewhat like the Hitler Youth. And then at the end of the war he realized that everything was a lie. Everything he'd learned and been told, and grew up believing. It was all lies. One of the things he said to me was "I can't tell what is dark, what is light. I can't tell them apart. The fact that the sky is blue: I don't believe that." This is in the interview, online. And you can find this kind of thinking in the postwar avant-garde *gendai* poets.

Jennifer Hambrick: So Hoshinaga had grown up in an era of internationalism after World War II.

RG: Yes, in that generation, which became known as the vanguard generation (the *zen'ei* or avant-garde movement in postwar poetry). There was a strong rejection of nationalistic "so-called" *Japaneseness*—a real questioning, because nationalism and nationalistic cultural pride had ignited in fascism and resulted finally with atomic bombs. These immediate postwar poets were questioning whether they should write haiku at all, whether the genre was viable, being a traditional [Japanese] form. This potent critical examination was pointedly socially conscious, and these poets for the most part rejected ideology of any stripe.

The Americans had been giving out chocolate, doing some rebuilding, establishing a democracy according to the Marshall Plan, and things like that; many institutions were restructured,

including the educational institutions. The emperor had to renounce his divinity on the radio — which he didn't actually quite do — in Japanese. There's an interesting story about how the English translation read by the Americans was more definitive on some crucial matters.

Just taking the wartime era as context, there's a lot of cultural implication in modern haiku that can't be translated. All the resonances, and how they work through history. As well, often other poets are being referenced in the haiku space, the thought-space of the poem, or in the use of a word or phrase. Not only is Hoshinaga part of this movement, he's also a provincial poet (from Kumamoto, Kyushu), rejected by some in the Tokyo-centric haiku bureaucracy. There's a whole bureaucratic side to the haiku world. As far as the official *saijiki* (season-word compendia) are concerned, the whole country lives within the Tokyo (formerly named Edo) and Osaka (Kansai) areas. *Saijiki* are bureaucratic instruments of control; the terms within often don't refer to the festivals, locales, plants, or animals from the South of Japan, or from Aichi or Hokkaido, in the North. This is why Hoshinaga's *HI-HI* haiku group spent a decade doing research, and recently published the *Kumamoto Saijiki*. He himself has experienced discrimination, from central authorities, you could say. He's said to me on occasion, "I don't care at all about the center." In fact, Hoshinaga identifies with the Kumaso, the indigenous tribe of the Kumamoto region, and has reclaimed some of that ancient language and employed it in his haiku. I think he was focused on such issues over 50 years ago, long before identity politics became a focus of Western academic study.

At the time I met Hoshinaga (2003), I was working on my second longer academic article, "The Disjunctive Dragonfly: A Study of Disjunctive Method and Definitions in Haiku."³⁰ Other

30. Gilbert, "The Disjunctive Dragonfly: A Study of Disjunctive Method and Definitions in Haiku." *Kumamoto Studies in English Language and Literature* 47, Kumamoto University, Japan, 2004, pp. 27-66.

than interviewing Hoshinaga, and studying Japanese, I had no knowledge of haiku techniques, aesthetics or concerns that I hadn't previously discerned in America. So, my first paper devoted to haiku-in-English theory wasn't influenced by *gendai* haiku theory or criticism in Japan. I think this is an important point to be made in retrospect: there's nothing in "The Disjunctive Dragonfly" that has to do with emulation of modern Japanese haiku elements. My deeper understanding didn't arrive until I began translating Hasegawa Kai in 2006. Throughout my critical papers, I've sought to focus on terms and approaches that can be sourced from the target-culture (English) background, so as not to employ purposefully obfuscating technical Japanese language — to whatever extent possible.

So, this provincial poet, a kind of radical even among other *gendai haijin*, knocks on my door, in 2003. He's wanting several of his poems translated into English. This is how I first began translating haiku — by chance. And, I was asked.

JH: Why did Hoshinaga want his poems translated into English?

RG: Considering the intention of a strong poet, or artist — this is a part of a problem in Japan — a desire to communicate to a greater audience than that within your own country. And Japanese is spoken by few people in the world.

JH: The spirit of internationalism was really strong, then.

RG: I think so. Hoshinaga is something of an internationalist. This has been true for all the poets that I met within *gendai* haiku circles, which is to say involved in modern progressive haiku. This would be somewhat in opposition to traditionalist schools, like *Hototogisu*. Kaneko Tohta expresses strong criticism, concerning "birds-and-flowers haiku" in this regard (as does Hasegawa Kai toward haiku of literalist realism, which he terms *garakuta*: "junk haiku.")³¹

31. Takahama Kyoshi coined the phrase *kachōfūei* (花鳥賦詠) — poems of birds and flowers — to describe the season- and nature-driven subject matter of most

So then these progressives, starting from a radical position of questioning whether the genre of haiku should exist, completely reformulated ways of thinking about and composing haiku. They embraced topics that were traditionally outside prescribed norms for haiku, topics not allowed in birds-and-flowers haiku, and also addressed the relevance of social consciousness.³² They also embraced *muki-haiku*, haiku composed without a *kigo*.³³ Historically speaking, this actually wasn't as much of a departure as it seems. Many of Shiki's haiku composed in the late nineteenth century didn't contain *kigo*. But after Shiki's death, *Hototogisu* was taken over by Takahama Kyoshi, who was basically authoritarian, and *kigo* was determined to be a fixed requirement, a rule.³⁴ A much more conservative movement was implemented, partly in reaction to the rapid arrival of influences from the West and elsewhere, through the Meiji (1868–1912) and Taisho (1912–1926) eras. There was a lot of open-mindedness, occurring along with an influx of European ideas. From the Meiji era on you have to think

of his own haiku. Kyoshi served as editor of the journal *Hototogisu* from 1898 until his death in 1956. On Hasegawa Kai's coinage "junk haiku" (*garakuta-haiku*), see Hasegawa's video presentation "Introduction to Realism and Bashō." 32. Nakatsuka Ippekirō (1887–1946) and Kawahigashi Hekigodō (1873–1937) were leading proponents of the modern free-form haiku aesthetic in the generation after Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902). Hekigodō and his friend Takahama Kyoshi (1874–1959) were the two main followers of Shiki. Hekigodō continued Shiki's haiku reform efforts, embracing a haiku aesthetic free of the 5-7-5 formal construct and aiming to convey human subjectivities of modern experience in colloquial language. Kyoshi continued to embrace a season-driven *kachōfūei* aesthetic and the 5-7-5 form apt for traditional Japanese language.

33. In celebration of its fiftieth anniversary, in 2004 Japan's Modern Haiku Association (*Gendai Haiku Kyōkai*) published a five-volume *saijiki*, the fifth volume of which is a dictionary of *muki-kigo*, or non-season season words. Kaneko Tohta's introduction to that volume is translated in Gilbert et al., "A New Haiku Era." For a sample of entries in the *muki-kigo saijiki*, see Gilbert, "The Heart in Season." And for essays on a range of other topics related to the *gendai haiku muki-saijiki*, see <http://research.gendaihaiku.com/kigo.html>.

34. For a discussion of Kyoshi's haiku aesthetic in the imperial-fascist political context of Japan before and during World War II, see Itō, "New Rising Haiku."

of Japan as a fusional culture. Shiki was strongly influenced by realism in nineteenth-century French painting, for instance. He was looking to reform haiku and tanka (which he did), but then later, one might say there were a few streams of modernism that developed. On the one hand, things turned back in reaction, and on the other, there were proletarian and communistic haiku.³⁵

There were all the schools of Modernism as influences in the arts, and historical events, including the Russian revolution, advent of communism; and after World War II, the Cold War, etc. And at the time there was a youth movement wanting communism. It was violently put down.³⁶ And there was this kind of nationalistic conservatism, as a reaction to the possibility of a communist takeover. Before World War II, in the '20s and '30s, following the Communist Revolution there developed the haiku school of proletariat or workers haiku. There was a strong element of social consciousness and societal empathy. I think it's worth mentioning, if only to indicate that modern haiku history from the mid-nineteenth century in Japan is rather complicated. The book of Ippekirō translations influenced me, in my youth, also.³⁷

35. See Ippekirō Nakatsuka, *Cape Jasmine and Pomegranates*.

36. The Japan Communist Party had been suppressed before the end of World War II, but with its legalization during the postwar Allied occupation of Japan, the party rapidly gained new members. The death of University of Tokyo student Kanba Michiko in a clash between pro-Communist demonstrators and police marked what has been described marks the climax of the 1960 Anpo Protests (Anpo struggle (安保闘争, *Anpo tōsō*) against the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. See Berton, "The Japanese Communist Party and Its Transformations." See also Kapur, *Japan at the Crossroads*.

37. See Ippekirō, *Cape Jasmine and Pomegranates*. For a detailed overview of Japanese haiku history at the Meiji Restoration (1868) and later, see Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 88-187. For a recent discussion of the *Kaiko* (*Crimson Sea*) haiku descended from Hekigodō's free-meter haiku aesthetic and its embodiment in haiku composed by Japanese poets in U.S. incarceration camps during and after World War II, see Hong, "Nothing but My Own Whole Body."

So modern Japanese haiku was a fusional art influenced by these other countries and ideas, all intermixing. That was something that I started to learn almost from the beginning when looking into the questions, who are these poets? Where does this poetry come from? It can't be overstated: I was amazed by these poems — their brilliant, fresh, unique ideas and their level of intelligence, language, and skill. The understanding of history and interweaving of past, present, and future. The political aspects, imagistic statements that carried intellectual weight. There was nothing you could point to in English that was really in the same ballpark. So I began to understand why some people would say, “what they're doing in English is a hobby,” by contrast. English-language haiku doesn't rise to anything like the sophistication or layers of complexity and ideational diversity often found in modern Japanese haiku.

JH: So more or less informally you and “Takke” translated some of Hoshinaga's haiku.

RG: Yes. Takke was knowledgeable about haiku, and modestly bilingual (for speaking). We interviewed and translated Hoshinaga Fumio together, and I published two articles on his life and work, in 2004.³⁸ Talking with Hoshinaga and getting into his poetry really opened my eyes to *gendai haiku* in Japan. He was brilliant.

My interest was especially in meeting and discussing ideas of poetry and haiku with living poets. How to do that? And, what should we try to communicate? Through Hoshinaga, I first experienced contemporary, radical *gendai haiku* and a socially conscious poetry. Like this poem by Hoshinaga:

逃げ水へ戦後の父を追いつめる
nigemizu e sengo no chichi wo oitsumeru

toward the mirage of water
 the postwar fathers
 chasing after . . .

38. Gilbert, “Hoshinaga Fumio,” pp. 46-55.

So by 2003 I was writing the “Disjunctive Dragonfly” essay which appeared in *Modern Haiku*.³⁹ I had read no haiku theory at all in Japan. I had no contact with it. I had no contact with anyone except Hoshinaga, whom I was translating. And so what I was picking up about Japanese haiku was only through his poems and my interview with him. I didn’t have a translation team then. And I think it’s important because “The Disjunctive Dragonfly” contains the word “disjunctive,” and my entire concept of disjunction had nothing to do with Japanese haiku, that I was aware of. It was something that I was, in an English-language world, applying to English-language haiku.

My goal in writing that article [“The Disjunctive Dragonfly”] was to find the best examples [of haiku] written in English that could substantiate my ideas about disjunction in haiku. Because that would show that techniques of language use, or I guess you could say consciousness, paradox, that would deepen and layer haiku really already existed in English-language haiku. And I couldn’t find enough examples. I think I was only looking for three examples for each of the seventeen categories — now I’ve outlined twenty-four categories; at the time I had seventeen categories of disjunction — or techniques of disjunction, we could say. So this was my sort of angry howl, in a Ginsbergian sense, like, “Hey, you’re all wrong about juxtaposition-only, and the ‘one-image haiku.’” To be clear, I mean that Robert Spiess’ statement about “the necessity for the polar ‘juxtaposition of two [and only two] entities’” — is limited and misinformed.⁴⁰ These among other errors prompted

39. The details in the remainder of this section are from Gilbert, Interview, 11 November 2023.

40. Robert Spiess, “A Certain Open Secret about Haiku,” p. 60, as cited in Gilbert, *The Disjunctive Dragonfly*, 2016, p. 26: “The term ‘one-image’ is a bit of a misnomer, as in most cases the reader can find more than one image in such haiku. As applied by Spiess, ‘single image’ (1976, p. 27) or ‘one image’ haiku, imply something rather different than Pound’s sense of image-overlay, as discussed by Duplessis. One of the basic requirements for the English language haiku, as heretofore editorially determined, is the necessity for the polar ‘juxtaposition of

me to coin and illustrate ‘disjunction’ as a critical term in haiku. I wanted to clear a creative space, a critical space.

If you don’t look at the timeline, it might appear in retrospect that everything I wrote in “Disjunctive Dragonfly” or “Plausible Deniability,” etc. might look like I got all this stuff from Japanese haiku and translated it in my mind over to English-language haiku. It might seem that “he’s just emulating all this theory from Japan,” and that is completely not true. I had none of that in my mind. I didn’t know anything about it. Because I didn’t have that language, I couldn’t read those books. I needed a translation group even to modestly extract some critical ideas, which are highly technical, in their nature and language.

Introduction to the Kon Nichi Translation Group

The Kon Nichi Translation Group eventually numbered seven members and included multiple native speakers of Japanese and English, and professionals working in a range of literary and linguistic fields. Two members were Japanese researchers of English literature and brought with them native fluency in Japanese and deep familiarity with English. One of them was also a poet and a member of the *Gendai Haiku Kyōkai* (Gendai Haiku Association) and of Hoshinaga Fumio’s “Silent Snowfall” (*HI-HI*) haiku circle. Gilbert was later joined by three other native speakers of English, including published authors of fiction and non-fiction (in English), university EFL researchers and professors, and a Zen priest, who was a specialist and translator of koans. The professional biographies of the group’s members are given at the end of this essay.

two [and only two] entities’ (Spiess, 2001, p. 60); that is, objects or images in the poem. Single (or one) image haiku, and other types as well, do not accede to this juxtapositional requirement. The topic is next considered from the perspective of disjunction.”

In the interview transcript below, Gilbert offers a glimpse into the Kon Nichi Translation Group's working process between its earliest translations made in 2003, to the group's official founding in 2006 and the publication of its final translations in the *Creative Blooms* series published on The Haiku Foundation's website in 2020 and 2021.⁴¹ That overview leads into conversations about some of the group's poem translations. Those discussions illustrate how lexical choices based on the differences between Japanese and English, an awareness of a poet's worldview and aesthetics, and the desire to capture a poem's *feel*—not necessarily to say “meaning”—influenced the translations, while the translators walked the tightrope between translation and interpretation.

JH: The Kon Nichi Translation Group's members included three native Japanese speakers and four native English speakers. How did you all work together as a group to arrive at acceptable translations?

RG: It was years of painstaking work, and it's a bit complicated to describe, because things changed over time. Also, poems are all different, as is researching each of the contexts surrounding any given poem. But there was a general process. We worked like an academic research group, a team collaboration. There was a lot of reading for comprehension. Ninety-five percent of the poems we read we never translated.

Any poem was in flux for months as we considered it. Many, many, drafts of translations were developed through the process, which included group emails and meetings in my office for discussion. Our discussions involved topics and issues we were and are interested in, each in our own way. There was problem-solving on every level.

And there was individual intuition, inspiration and creativity. We shared and discussed our poem translation drafts. And although my English translations are the final result, the group discussed

41. Gilbert, Interview, 28 October 2023.

TEN

each draft I produced based on everyone's early translations and on our discussions — all the challenges of communicating across language and culture gaps — there was so much discussion.

And then, too, you can read our individual commentaries and essays, found in the book publications. The future reader of our translations and commentaries was always on our minds, as was to do our best, within limitations of time, to represent the authors.

In the end I synthesized everything, did assembly editing, polished all the final results in English, managed finances and publishing deals. Some of our most wonderful conversations were about the nature of language itself. Our different disciplines created a lot of synergy.

JH: You wrote in an email message to me, “I’m realizing the crux of my work has to do with how the poem leaves all language and culture in the translation process in a significant way before reentering languages and cultures within the further translation process.” So, the poem is leaving a language and a culture, entering into another language and another culture, another worldview with culturally inscribed biases and what have you. Baggage that it’s bringing to the poem. Could you talk about this idea of a poem’s “leaving all language and culture?”

RG: I think that a corollary to that comment is, every *poem* is a translation. I’m coming from that kind of paradigm. So it’s like saying, what is poetry? Then you say, well, what is the poetic? What makes something poetic? So it’s a very deep philosophical question. But I think every poet who keeps at it and is recognized enough to be published repeatedly could probably answer that in their own way — Why is it not prose? Why do you need to use words in this way or feel this way and have it come out in language this way?

But this gets back to something that I addressed in the book *Poems as Consciousness* (2018). There’s a section there on the theory of mind. And there are these two ideas about how we mentally think.

Is there what's called "mentalese" — is there a kind of "linguaging" that's going on in so-called mind or brain that isn't actually any spoken language, yet is some kind of language? And we can't really describe it, but it might have a certain grammar to it. But then there's a whole other theory of mind, part of which says, no, thoughts are not language at all. And if they were — if your thinking were to have any kind of grammar — your thinking would be way too limited.

As a translator I would say it this way: If I love a poem, does it really matter what language it's in if I love it? If I feel it so deeply that I go beyond language in some way, isn't that a translation?

JH: Right, I think it is. And this idea that there either is or is not a kind of "linguaging" going on in the mind that is "mentalese," before it is actually spoken or written — I think anyone who has tried to write exactly what they have thought understands that there both is and there isn't a "linguaging" going on in our thoughts, which is exactly where it sounds like the literature lands on this. And what intrigues me about poetry — and this is what you were getting to I think just a moment ago — is precisely this question of the elusiveness of language. There is very often a kind of elusiveness to good poems, whether they be haiku or poems in other genres. There is not only a sort of unsettledness with the point of the poem, the "meaning" in the poem, but also a kind of ambivalence of meaning. And some of the most effective poems I have read are poems for which the authors have, I will say, almost invented their own language for the poem. You can tell it's English, but it's English that is being spoken, if you will, in a very distinct way in and by that poem. It allows the poem to actually speak for itself.

RG: I think so too. I think it's almost a requirement.

JH: Among avant-garde haiku, certainly.

TEN

RG: You're right. There's a kind of traditionalist style that can only mean this or that, as a realist juxtaposition. Like there are two choices and that's all you get.

JH: Right, perhaps in more traditional haiku with "a meaning," if I can put it that way, with clear semantic value. But you see a lot of different kinds of imagery and disjunctive techniques going on in avant-garde haiku in English and of course in *gendai* haiku that, positively speaking, problematize semantic clarity and certainty.

And I'm getting *gendai* haiku primarily from the translations resulting from your work with the Kon Nichi Translation Group. So, I suspect I am a member of the typical audience for English translations of Japanese-language postwar haiku. In other words, most people in the English-language realm are not looking at these poems in the original Japanese. We are getting them through translations, which means that what we are getting is an entire literature in this style of haiku that was allowed to flourish after World War II. They're poems that are speaking, but they're speaking in a way in which they didn't originally speak. So yes, they are actually outside their language. They're actually outside their culture.

RG: Right. I think there are a couple of interesting points there. The first is, of course, the language difference, and using *kanji* allows for a lot of complex layers of meaning because of the ideographs and resulting permutations of *kanji* compounds. And then there's also the added aspect of an at least 400-year-old tradition of *haikai*, which has historical and literary referents when you use certain images or certain indications, plus all the cultural references — for this reason our translations are annotated.

Second, from my experience, in the bulk of postwar modern haiku, one of the most exciting things for me is that this is the relevant societal interest of the modern poet. The realm of the modern poet is our realm. It's a worldwide realm.

Translating World Haiku

While the bulk of the Kon Nichi Translation Group's work was directed at translating Japanese-language *gendai* haiku into English, for a brief period, the group worked in reverse. Gilbert had received from the American haiku poet Jim Kacian a copy of Kacian's haiku collection *Presents of Mind* (1996).⁴² Gilbert had earlier used Kacian's now well-known "my fingerprints" haiku as the principal example poem for his 2004 essay "The Disjunctive Dragonfly," the dragonfly in the poem's second line inspiring the study's title.⁴³ With a circle of colleagues equipped to translate poetic texts, Gilbert wondered if it would be possible to translate a collection of English-language haiku convincingly into the modern Japanese haiku style. Doing so would continue and reinforce the exchange of translated haiku in both directions between Japan and the Anglophone world. It might also raise the level of Japanese translations of English-language haiku, which at the time Gilbert thought was much in need.⁴⁴

Gilbert and the four other translators who, by this time, had joined the Kon Nichi group undertook translating Kacian's *Presents of Mind*.⁴⁵ That project was the translators' first major project as a formalized translation group and with a specific publication goal:

42. Jim Kacian, *Presents of Mind* (Red Moon Press, 1996). Long a leader in American and global English-language haiku, Kacian is the founder and president of The Haiku Foundation and founder and owner of Red Moon Press.

43. Kacian's poem reads: my fingerprints / on the dragonfly / in amber (Gilbert, *The Disjunctive Dragonfly*, 2013, p. 27).

44. Gilbert, Email communication, 5 March 2024.

45. Gilbert, Email communication, 5 March 2024: "I had this idea to try to present an English-language haiku poet as a powerful Japanese-language haiku modern poet. Could it be done? The group agreed it was a cool idea." The group members, in addition to Gilbert, were Itō Yūki, Hori Masahiro, Kanamitsu Takeyoshi, and the Latin and European theatre history scholar Higuchi Yasuo, then a scholar of European medieval botany and theatre history, and a professor in the Faculty of Law at Kumamoto University.

to present a book of English-language haiku by a noted poet as a collection of haiku in a modern style in Japanese translation. In the course of its work, the group grappled with countless translation issues, chief among them the need to reconcile contemporary English-language haiku with the literary allusions and elements, like *kigo*, firmly defined in the centuries-old Japanese haiku tradition.⁴⁶ Even the basic matter of making a haiku written in English convey the same things in Japanese was a struggle:

It was sometimes really hard to explain to the Kon Nichi Translation Group what was cool about the English — the pun, double-entendre, referential aspect, or even the sense of layers or imagery being conveyed. English grammar and syntax can have mysteries and play that Japanese doesn't, especially in excellent haiku examples. This mystery was really cool for Kon Nichi members. They enjoyed learning these things — I mean, we're all language geeks in the room, fascinated by all sorts of language aspects, semantic aspects, translation issues, and enjoying poetry.⁴⁷

The Japanese-language translation of the second edition (2006) of Kacian's *Presents of Mind* was the first book-length publication of the Kon Nichi group which, for that publication, Gilbert named the Kon Nichi Haku Circle.⁴⁸ The translation received a lukewarm reception in Japan, where, Gilbert posits, informed poets and critics may have been expecting the collection to read like modern haiku

46. Gilbert (Email communication, 5 March 2024) eventually concluded that complete reconciliation as not possible: “it’s hardly possible to translate English-language haiku into a 400-year-old Japanese-language haiku lineage, with all the literary reference and *kigo*, etc. ‘hardly’ because it’s case by case, poem by poem. [. . .] We confronted language issues at a complex level — the impossibility factor is much, much higher, trying to go from English to Japanese with haiku.”

47. Gilbert, Email communication, 5 March 2024.

48. Kacian, Jim, *Presents of Mind*, second edition. The Haiku Foundation Digital Library. <https://thehaikufoundation.org/omeka/items/show/43>. Accessed March 7, 2024.

dropped seamlessly into the Japanese haiku tradition.⁴⁹ The rest of the Kon Nichi group's work was devoted to translating into English the work of major Japanese *gendai* haiku poets, including that of Kaneko Tohta. Tohta is very often the poet whose work closes chronologically organized anthologies of “modern” Japanese haiku published in English.⁵⁰ With Tohta and his work, the Kon Nichi group essentially picked up where those anthologies left off.⁵¹

Translating Worldviews: Haiku of Kaneko Tohta

In the summer of 2010, Gilbert and the Kon Nichi Translation Group interviewed the noted *gendai* haiku poet and critic Kaneko Tohta (1919–2018). That interview and the group's subsequent translations of Kaneko's poems and criticism on them were published in a series of books, now collected in an omnibus edition published by Red Moon Press.⁵² By the time of the 2010 interview, Kaneko had been a leading *gendai* poet for decades, coming to prominence in the years immediately after World War II; had (beginning in 1983) served as the president of Japan's Modern Haiku Association (*Gendai Haiku Kyōkai*); and had received numerous national awards for his contributions to Japanese literature, the Asahi Prize and the Japanese government's designation as a Person of Cultural Merit.⁵³

49. Gilbert, Email communication, 5 March 2024: “The reception at the top level in Japan was basically tepid. And this not because individually the poems weren't good. I think we had done a good enough job to enter an uncanny valley, where the reception was that these were just Japanese haiku within the tradition. And one hundred percent considering them thus, they were all as a work too uneven in voice or style, in overcoming the issues. So they were Japanese, but I feel they read a bit too unevenly as a collection.”

50. See, for instance, Ueda, *Modern Japanese Haiku* and Stryk, *Cage of Fireflies*.

51. The transcript in the section that follows is taken from Gilbert, Interview, 28 December 2023.

52. Gilbert, et al. *Haiku as Life: A Kaneko Tohta Omnibus*. Red Moon Press, 2019.

53. Gilbert, et al. *Haiku as Life*, p. 15. For an overview of Kaneko Tohta's career

Several months before the interview, in October 2009, Kaneko delivered the lecture “*Ikimonofūei* — Poetic Composition on Living Things” at the annual conference of the Modern Haiku Association, in Tokyo.⁵⁴ In that lecture, Kaneko takes as his point of departure Takahama Kyoshi’s *kachōfūei* (花鳥賦詠), literally “birds and flowers,” aesthetic for haiku realism and expands on it, claiming that all living things (*ikimonofūei*), not just birds and flowers, are valid subjects for haiku.

From this idea springs forth a multivalent philosophy that extends well beyond writing haiku to consider the life, lifestyle, and thought of a poet in the modern world—a poet’s living into his or her particular stance (*shisō*; embodied personal philosophy)⁵⁵ as informed by the world and, regardless of the poet’s particular circumstances, living the life of a “wild ordinary person” (*arabonpu*) and a “real, raw human being” (*ama’namashii ningen*). That life brings with it a certain “settled wandering” (*teijū hyōhaku*) that, in the modern world, will certainly not resemble the physical itinerancy of Bashō or Santōka, but instead will manifest as a wandering of mind that enables a poem through its very subjectivity to reach depths that are also universal expressions of human experience. All of these aspects of Kaneko’s philosophy inform the unflinchingly raw juxtaposition of observations in the poem with which Kaneko begins his “*Ikimonofūei*” lecture:

as a poet, see pp. 23-24.

54. Gilbert (*Haiku as Life*, p. 32) discusses the impossibility of translating *ikimonofūei* from the Japanese characters Kaneko used for the term (生きもの) noting reluctantly and with caveats that “‘Poetic composition on animate things/beings’ may come closest to *ikimonofūei*.”

55. In Gilbert, *Haiku as Life* (75-76), Kaneko describes his concept of *shisō* in these terms: “. . . *shisō* is not, strictly speaking, philosophy or theory as such. *Shisō* can be considered a (personal) ‘philosophical organization,’ in Japanese. If you were to translate it into English, ideology would be acceptable, if as a philosophical organization, meaning conceptualized thought organized as a philosophy” [. . .] “Existentially (physically) embodied thinking. Especially, for this reason, we’re talking about very human thinking. This is what *shisō* is. This is *shisō*.”

華麗な墓原女陰あらわに村眠り
kareina hakahara jo'in arawa ni mura nemuri

splendid field of gravestones
 labia uncovered
 the village sleeps⁵⁶

In the interview transcript below, Gilbert and I discuss the Kon Nichi group's translations of two of Kaneko's well-known poems, taking into account how the poems embody Kaneko's personal philosophy as a poet and how the limitations of language also limit the transmission of cultural meaning from Kaneko's poems into English.

RG: Of all of the different themes that [Kaneko Tohta] has brought up, I think intellectual wildness, for me, is something that's the most lacking in English-language haiku. And that's a critical statement. That's actually, you know, drawing on his work. How if you're going to translate Kaneko, the idea of translating into conformity, normativity, is really highly problematic because he wasn't writing that way. And a lot of his poems directly confront you — like “labia.” It's raw, it's rude, it's obscene. And that's what he wanted there. And he does that a lot. It's the intellectual wildness. It means being free in your mind. It means allowing everything and not censoring yourself. And these are not unusual things to be discussing, but I think that when we think of free speech, we don't say wild, we think of wildness as something like anarchism — of a violent sword. Someone like Gary Snyder — he called it “the grain of things.” If you free your mind, there's a grain of things in nature, it's not anarchy in the sense of wildness — that we must destroy any structure, we must destroy any hierarchy, we must destroy any intellectual notion. I don't think that's what intellectual wildness is. Gary Snyder became a Zen Rōshi, studied Chinese and Japanese

56. Gilbert, et al. *Haiku as Life*, p. 33.

TEN

culture. And he drew this idea of the grain of things from that rooted context. And Kaneko also, I think, is drawing on something very deep that is in his culture. So that when he says “intellectual wildness,” we have to be really careful about how we view that, that it isn’t violent anarchy, but it is something wild. And I think that in Japanese culture, nature and culture are not as separated as they are in the West, you know, throughout what we would consider Western history, the idea that, for instance in the Judeo-Christian mold, a man has a soul and other creatures don’t. So it means that you can rape the land, in a sense. This has been brought up in ecocritical writing, that the idea of plowing the land, the land being feminine; the idea of piercing the iron-tipped plow into the soil and basically furrowing the earth. Well, if the earth is animated and has a soul, it’s damaged, there’s damage there. But if it doesn’t, you can extract what you need and you can use what you will, animals and the earth. So this is an ecocritical viewpoint of the power of removing soul or removing agency, removing animism from the earth and from creatures. It actually allows a great deal of freedom, for science, technology, and the extraction of resources.

But Kaneko is coming out of an animistic tradition in which nature and culture are much more blended, in various ways. And he’s talking about *ikimonofūei*—living things—and there’s an animistic sense to it, like, what is your raw being-ness? And that raw being-ness is not just you. I think it’s not just an autonomous you. I think that there is a wider empathic field of agency there that involves living beings and creatures throughout the ecosystem. So is that modern or ancient? It seems like both to me, that he’s drawing on a plenum. So the Japanese concept of wildness is more akin to what Gary Snyder was talking about.

JH: You interviewed Kaneko in July of 2010 and discussed in some detail what he meant by *shisō*, really what he meant by ideology, what he meant by maybe any number of other concepts in his worldview and aesthetics. That conversation helped you

understand his use of those terms and the concepts, and maybe the philosophy, if you will, behind those terms, which of course as you said were important underpinnings of his work. But when it came to translating his poetry, informed by what he told you — his understandings of those particular terms — did knowing that help in very many practical ways?

RG: Absolutely. I used perhaps his most celebrated signature poem right at the beginning of *Haiku as Life: A Kaneko Tohta Omnibus*. You know the one:

猪が来て空気を食べる春の峠
inoshishi ga kite kūki o taberu haru no tōge

a wild boar
 comes eats air
 spring mountain pass⁵⁷

This is totally raw. And it is wild. It's simple and not simple. But how to capture that rawness? I think “comes eats air” — that's my conclusion, I guess you could say — I'm not sure that, without the instrumental understanding of rawness, wildness, and *arabonpu*, I would have come to that translation. Now, I'm not saying it's the best translation. I'm just saying that that's as close as I feel I could come to what that wild rawness really is. To say a “wild boar comes eats air” is wonderfully raw and open and direct. And authentic.

So I think it really matters, actually, to understand the direction of the translation. If you can really imagine, on a spring mountain path, a wild boar. Then imagine what it's doing. It is the raw, strange, aliveness of that creature, because of the eating air. It's not eating bamboo. It's not eating an onion. It's not eating a berry. It's eating air, which actually also means “space” in Japanese. But it's also in the language “comes eats air,” which is a lot like the Japanese — there's a lot missing there. There's a lot of silence and

57. Gilbert, et al. *Haiku as Life*, p. 88.

TEN

emptiness between those three words — “comes eats air” — and the utter unexpectedness of that image is raw. It’s, in a certain way, an outrageous image. It’s surreal, but you believe it. It’s ordinary but extraordinary at the same time. And I think there’s a reason why it’s probably one of the signature haiku for Kaneko’s readership.

JH: You mentioned that one of the translation challenges in working with Kaneko’s poems was dealing with his coinages. We’ve discussed *shisō* — “embodied personal philosophy.” Another of his coinages is *ikimono* — “living things.” And of course, we’ve discussed *ikimonofūei*. It could be argued that haiku has for the last four centuries dealt with or even focused on living things. But Kaneko is getting to something very specific with this term. Kaneko wrote haiku in which nature imagery plays a role just as Shiki did, just as Buson did, just as Issa, and just as Bashō. But it seems to me that in some of Kaneko’s poems, at least, nature imagery is used as familiar elements of this world but ends up inhabiting different poetic worlds of Kaneko’s creation. I’ll use the example of his “*ume* bloom” haiku:

梅咲いて庭中に青鯨が来ている
ume sai te niwajū ni aozame ga kite iru

ume bloom
blue sharks appear
everywhere in the garden⁵⁸

It seems to me that this kind of world-building, this kind of cutting between our world and some other world of imagination, I’ll say, is something that in the English-language haiku tradition is still a bit of a tough sell. And the reason for that, I would suggest, is the deep adherence to the idea that haiku must be rooted in so-called objective reality. So inventing in a haiku a world in which blue sharks appear in a garden steps way outside the bounds of objective

58. Gilbert, et al. *Haiku as Life*, p. 348.

reality, if objective reality is taken to mean a literal sense of the actual material phenomena of this world. To make a point by way of comparison, I think the abutting, if you will, of two worlds or the stepping straight from one world indirectly into the next world in the “*ume* blooms” poem is stronger than in, say, the “wild boar” poem. With respect to the idea of “eating air,” because those are really the words that Kaneko uses, you have to ask, am I going to try to understand that literally? Am I going to try to understand that metaphorically? If you try to understand that literally, then you have to ask, how does a boar eat air?

RG: That’s right. It becomes a detective mystery or something.

JH: Right, but it doesn’t send me way into another world the way “*ume* bloom / blue sharks appear / everywhere in the garden” does.

RG: I think the poems have some similarities in terms of what you’re saying. They’re actually a bit similar in that strange fulcrum or crux between the detecting aspect of the literalness and the metaphorical thing—oh, that can’t be true, come on, blue sharks everywhere? Why everywhere, anyway? And what do you mean “in the garden?” These are creatures of the sea; the garden is in your backyard, come on. I mean, it’s completely ridiculous. So it’s surrealism, but what is he saying? And something different that I don’t get is, is he still dreaming? Is it a dream? Is he asleep? You don’t know.

Actually, there’s less literal reality to it, in a way, because it’s harder to get any kind of realist handle on it. It seems directly surreal. Whereas “eats air” is a bit more nuanced in that surreality, because we’re not hunter-gatherers. We’re not in the woods. We don’t meet wild boars. “I’m just a city boy” kind of thing, right? But “blue sharks everywhere in the garden” – come on, that’s strongly surreal. I think the only thing in the translation that is maybe not more surreal but differently surreal is that *aozame* (青鮫), which is “blue shark(s).” The blue shark is a type of shark. It says “blue shark(s),” but does it just mean that their color is blue, or does it

TEN

actually mean it's just a species of shark? Also, why the “s” [at the end of “sharks”]? That's not indicated in Japanese. You could go either way. It could be “a blue shark appears everywhere.” But how can a blue shark appear everywhere? That's where we talk about belief. I think belief is really important: do you believe the poem? I think it is a real question to ask because I could translate it that way and I wouldn't believe it. It becomes a weak poem because it's just too nonsensical. If I said “a blue shark appears everywhere in the garden,” I'd think that it's just a fantasy image. But if I say, “blue sharks appear everywhere,” it makes all the difference. And both are reasonable translations, in terms of just the language alone.

So when I think about that aspect of wildness or the power that's in this poem, knowing it's also a signature poem, to translate it in a way that would just create a nonce poem, a poem of disbelief, would be really savagely harmful. I wouldn't translate it at all. I'd leave it alone. I'd just keep it in Japanese. But if I feel like this poem is powerful this way and it's reasonable as a translation, I feel really lucky this actually seems to work well enough in English. But it's just that subtle.

RG: I'd like to discuss another one of Kaneko's haiku, in which there's really a lot going on. This poem is imagistically fresh and accessible, it offers a vivid glimpse of reality and, at the same time, an element of humor, and it offers a social commentary on dehumanization in contemporary work life. Here's the poem:

銀行員等朝より螢光す烏賊のごとく
ginkōin ra asa yori keikō su ika no gotoku

into the morning bank clerks glowing fluorescent as squid

RG: That's also quite celebrated.

JH: You were saying at the top of this conversation that Kaneko recognized that traditional haiku elements such as *kigo* were a bit

exhausted in the face of modern realities. What I love about this poem is that Kaneko is using in it this lovely and vivid image of the squid glowing in the sea and, at the same time, we also have this image of the gray-suited bank worker showing up under fluorescent lights and clocking in on the job, so to speak, on an average workday. And it's an image of modern reality that might not be as striking as the uncovered labia in the midst of desolation and devastation. But this image of the bank workers under fluorescent lights opens up on this bigger issue of modern jobs and how mind-numbing they can be, the whole machinery of working in an office, working in a concrete building in a city, working in a bank and handling other people's money, working to make a bank rich — all of these things about modern life that are potentially dehumanizing.

RG: And at the same time, there's this weirdly ornamental quality that he's drawing us to, because the fluorescence of squid can only be seen at night, in the deeper ocean. And in Japanese commercial fishing for squid, powerful lights are used on your boat at night. You shine lights down into the water, and then the squid come up. You see them glowing down in the black night of ocean. So it's a weird contrast with that morning — “into the morning.”

One thing I want to add is that the fluorescent lighting in Japan is so hideous. It's way worse than in the U.S. And when I first came here, I was getting headaches in my classrooms every single day. Within an hour, I'd have a headache all day. I finally kind of got used to it, but it's a very obnoxious blue-white, severely painful lighting. And everyone's used to it. In fact, people are so used to it that when you go into a lot of Japanese homes, it's incredibly bright in the house, like, with these fluorescents up in the ceiling. It's only recently that the newer homes might have more mellow, orange-colored yellow LED lights. But even now if I go to someone's house, often, everyone looks horrible. Everyone looks like sickly and dead. So it's really true. I think that this [poem] is so accurate.

TEN

So everyone knows this thing, even Japanese people. You go into the bank and it's like the zombie undead in there. So maybe [the poem] is playful. There's a humor in this, as well.

JH: Yes, I pick up on the humor. There's this quirky image of the idea of comparing bank workers with squid. It's hilarious, actually. But what makes the bank clerk unhuman is that the "squid" is in this fluorescent office — and it's actually even worse than I imagined, based on your description of the fluorescent lighting there. But he or she is thoroughly dehumanized. Kaneko has pointed out the dehumanization of humankind, human workers.

RG: Yeah, I would call this more than surrealism. I would call this absurdist. It's an absurdist poem. But at the same time, this is a *shakaisei haiku*, a social consciousness haiku.

JH: Yes, absolutely.

RG: But in the absurdist aspect seems to be the social consciousness aspect, at the same time. Like, this is what it means, the core of capitalism right here — money, the bank. And of course, we know also that's Kaneko's job. He's a squid, too. He's not excluding himself. In the realm of Japanese haiku, the biography of the poet is generally known and important to the context of the poem. So we all know that notably Kaneko is working at the Bank of Japan.

At the same time, I know that I'm using this word "belief," but I do think it's operative, at least for me. Let's say that you can have these layers or templates of the reality of the poem. There's a symbolic aspect — bank clerks as fluorescent squid. But then there's a kind of metaphorical thing that's somewhat overt, and at the same time it's, well, how do we take squid? Is a squid really symbolic of, as you said, a dehumanizing atmosphere? And are squid even fluorescent? Not really. They fluoresce, but it's not the same thing as the lighting of the bank. And what does it mean to imagine human beings as fluorescent squid, which I think is the absurdist fun in it? And at

the same time, those bankers, man, they are all fluorescent squid. Isn't that the point? I mean, it's hilarious, but you know, they're so serious and they've got all your money. All those things are boiling up in it, and yet it's very playful. And is it meant to be taken literally at all, this poem? What is the reality here? So it's just multi-layered, in a way, but playfully.

We've all had that banking experience. Younger people never go into banks anymore, though. That's going to be extinct soon, probably. So the poem is actually in a funny way going to be dated to an era, you know. It'll be consigned at some point.

JH: Well, it will be, but on the other hand, if we really are talking about only bank clerks going into their bank, the bigger point in the poem is the dehumanization of modern work life in so-called developed economies. People can put on a nice suit and get on the *shinkansen* and go to an office job. They can become one of the lifeless fluorescents in a vast bureaucracy, which can be totally dehumanizing, regardless of whether you're working in a bank, or a tech company or what have you. So yes, people are doing their banking online, and you're right, walking up to the teller counter is going to be obsolete probably soon. But this poem, I think, reflects a much larger picture of one of the essential and widespread issues of work in contemporary capitalist economies.

RG: Yes. A couple of things that popped in my mind from what you said. One is a cultural point: Banking jobs in Japan are hard to get, and they're pretty prestigious. So the bank tellers in Japanese banks — that's a pretty high-paid job, and you have regular days and hours, very importantly. If you do overtime, you get paid for it. And there are a lot of women in banking. It's a really good job for women in a very unequal society for work. So in a sense, it's skilled professional labor.

The other point is that if you think of a massive fluorescent squid — I think I'd go back to that fishing analogy — I think that the image

TEN

is possibly a little culturally closer to night fishing, that there are larger powers at work, and we're just all swimming around getting caught in the net. It even adds to that image of dehumanized work. It's like a cogs-in-the-machine image.

JH: Yes. From my perspective as an American who's never been to Japan and is reading an English translation of this poem, you could substitute "bank clerks" with really any type of office job, and you would have the same result. Because the poem is not about the difficulty of becoming a bank clerk in Japan. It's about work in an office or as part of a big corporate enterprise. You are the cog in the wheel. You are a faceless number. And I agree with you about the playfulness — it's a delight. And touching the idea, from a few minutes ago, of "into the morning" — that another day begins and here's the march of the bank clerks into their fluorescent office.

RG: And there's so much surprise in the imagery, too. And to go back to the idea of intellectual wildness, I think it's just a good demonstration of that freedom of imagination. I think the "blue sharks" haiku does that. For me, the "eats air" does that, too. I think that there are these different levels between metaphoric layerings and what the realism aspect of the poem is, or the sensate directness of the images. Here are the bank clerks right at the beginning, *ginkōin* — it's the first word in the poem. You're put into the bank right away. Every adult knows what that is pretty much right away. We all have to deal with that. And those clerks are anonymous. They all dress in suits, everyone's in the grey woolen skirt here. It's that assembly line-quality in the horrible lighting. And it just seems senseless, like the rats-in-a-maze feeling, in a way. I don't know anyone who comes out of a bank with a smile. There's a Kafkaesque quality to it.

JH: This question picks up on something that you mentioned toward the beginning of this conversation. In your essay "Translation in the Country of Modern Haiku," you write,

“Shiki, primogenitor of the modern haiku tradition, expressed grave doubts concerning the longevity of the renewed poetry he coined ‘haiku.’ One way to view the tradition is that it has died many deaths; yet there have occasionally existed poets who have overcome the entire institutional-historical matrix, adapting and redefining haiku conceptions—without losing haiku itself. In this context, the scope of Kaneko’s achievement has no easy analogue in English. A challenge for the translator concerns the representation of those bold, ingenious leaps of thought and language which break with or reformulate history as an expression of poetic dialogue.” (428-429)⁵⁹

In a sense this entire conversation has been about this challenge for the translator, but in a nutshell, in what particular ways did you find this translation challenge manifesting as you were working with Kaneko’s poems?

RG: That’s a really good question. I think that’s part of why it’s a translation group and not just me or me and one other person. It’s important to get a read on the culture of haiku, full stop. And so if you have three native Japanese speakers who all really are absorbed with different interests in haiku, everyone’s coming from a different perspective. You angle with the interests of the other four or five people, let’s say, in the group. And they may have different responses. For instance, one person might say, “that’s an unusual word here,” or “this is an unusual image, but it’s related to this one,” or “there was a poet in the 1920s who wrote like this.” So having that background of knowledge, having people who are really well read in the genre, since it is a 400-year-old genre, is important. Is it playing on something that came before? But then what if everyone in the group absolutely immediately says, “this poem is its own little mini revolutionary poem?” I think some number of Kaneko’s more well-known poems are like that. They’re just generally

59. Gilbert, et al. *Haiku as Life*, pp. 428-33.

TEN

acknowledged as being outré or very individualistic, unique. They push you to open your mind in some new direction or create some feeling-sense, or are painful in a socially conscious way, but, as I say, without the trappings of ideology. It goes beyond that.

Like the poem with the zombie-like women with exposed genitals and wandering around the graveyard – the village is the graveyard. It's just so horrible, it's so direct. But if you didn't know some of the background to that haiku, I don't know that you would get it. You have to know something about Wakimisaki village on Nomo Peninsula, and you have to know when that poem was written — in the '50s, that it was very soon after the Nagasaki atomic bombing at the end of the war. That area was all still ruined in the early '50s. And you have to know something about the history of that area, about the hidden Christians and their persecution. And that they had to step on the icon of Jesus and spit on it and forswear any Christian belief or their whole extended family would be killed immediately. So all that history of the hidden Christians is wrapped up in this poem. So that's a very different kind of haiku because it has a depth of social context to it.

But in another way, the fluorescent squid and the banks also has a great deal of social content. The topic of capitalism you brought up, maybe it isn't quite as historical, but I guess you could say the root of industrial capitalism — Henry Ford — at least go back to there, right? Go back to the assembly line. What makes a particular poem in an oeuvre stand out as being a real departure that opens people's minds to a new possibility? We could say that any good haiku does that, to some extent. But to have a poem be generally acknowledged as something really special, so that it achieves a notable aspect — it's touchy. It's not just that the poem does this thing or that thing socially, consciously, or not. It's got to touch a nerve. It touches something deeper. And then there's some realization of the achievement of the poet to have spoken in that way, to have brought this creation into being in such a unique way

and people feel it strongly. When someone does that repeatedly over decades of time, it's absolutely impressive. You respect that person's work. And I think after you read like 20, 30, 40, 50 of that poet's poems, you begin, I think, to feel that poet's mind. You know, like, who is this person? What is their achievement? What are they doing?

I think I would like to end with one comment that we didn't really talk about that much, but I think it's just as important as the other themes, which is *teijū hyōhaku* — we translated that as “settled wandering,” and I think that's fair enough, but it's Kaneko's idiosyncratic usage of these words too. Again, he took *shisō*, the idea of personal philosophy, and defined it in his own way. This term, *teijū hyōhaku*, is also very special, and it remains a bit mysterious because it's somewhat connected with the idea of the wandering poet, like maybe the ties to Santōka or to some of the other poets, not just Bashō. Those who wandered. Issa wandered quite a bit too in a way. But what I wanted to say was that it's not just an outer-world, external level; in other words, it's not just what you might do in your life or how you think in your imagination. It's also the poem itself is a wandering. And so when I was talking about belief, believing in the poem as I put it, or feeling so directly the poetic reality, I called that belief, which is my own use of the word “belief,” because I don't mean abstract belief. I mean you believe it before you can stop yourself; you know, it's like you already believe it, you already know it's true in some way. But there's a nuance to that idea of belief which I was trying to get at, asking not just do you believe *in* it, but what do you believe *more* in it? Is it more the metaphorical aspect of it that feels really true, or is it more, there's a garden and there's a shark in it that feels really real for you? I think all of those are possible at any one moment. You could feel, oh yeah, okay, I get it — sharks. Like my sudden fantasy just came that way. But I think that that is the wandering. There is a wandering in a good haiku. I think a good modern haiku, if I could say, evokes

TEN

a kind of belief like you're already in it. When you're in it, you're wandering in it. You wander between metaphor and fantasy and your own imagination, the imagination that comes to you from the otherness of the poem, the strangeness of the language, and it moves you through. You start, and it is a wandering, a meandering thing, and you jump around, but it isn't so important that you land on one meaning or another. I think what's interesting is that it's *wonder* that brings you to *wander* and, at the same time, the poem itself is settled. It's there on the page. It's part of a genre.

You know, what is the moment of originality? What is the moment that brings us beyond what's been done before? I would say actually it's probably in the wandering. And that a poem that brings us to wander well within the settledness, I think that's part of what Kaneko is urging us (poets or artists), in our society, to do — that settled wandering. He's saying, "look, it's real, it's a possibility, we need it. We need to wander."

We need intellectual wildness in order to wander. But it's *teijū hyōhaku* and also *arabonpu*, that rawness of the wild ordinary — I think these are useful. They're operative, they have energy and relevance.

What's interesting for me as a critic or as someone commenting and trying to, in my own way, push English-language haiku to new heights or new dares, explorations, or journeys, is that these are the kinds of things that aren't discussed, but that I think are really interesting to discuss. We talk about, this is dead realism or this is too weird for me. But to wander — why isn't there a book about that? What are these deeper themes? How are haiku beneficial? How does our poetic life heal, or in what way is it a therapy, a sanctuary, as I used that word? But maybe it's more than that, that wandering. What if, just in our soul, we long for that? There's a longing to wander, to travel, to move through new spaces, to adventure, and we get enriched by that? I mean, why do you write? Why do you write poetry? Why do you have to do that? Why don't

you do something else? I mean, isn't that *shisō* right there? You must get something out of it, and isn't it partly the wandering?

JH: And have you noticed that everything these days is a journey? It's really true. And yes, the wandering— not all journeys have a point A, and then you go to point B, and then you go to point C.

RG: That's exactly it. I think that's what wandering is. It doesn't have a point to it. It just is wandering.

JH: Right. And back to the fluorescent squids and the fluorescent bank clerks, there's a point to being a bank clerk. For some people it's a job to earn money. That's fair enough. And certainly, we who use banks need bank clerks who know how to do their jobs. It's an important job. Fair enough. But there is something to this idea that we weren't born wearing business suits. And I think that that is raw, that is wild, and that is wandering. And so there's a lot of overlap. You can't be raw, you can't embrace a stance or a sort of value system that values rawness and wildness, however construed, and not appreciate the wandering as an almost osmotic idea, if I can put it that way.

RG: Yes, and Kaneko was one of those squid for, you know, decades. Every day he punched the clock. He was a manager, whatever, and put on the suit. And look at his work. It's undeniable. There's a strange optimism in it, in a way. He could work for the Japan Bank and also be a leading light as a literary figure, writing pretty outrageous stuff— outrageous in a good way, or in a way that strikes people as outrageous. It's moments of surprise where you just look at these images and start to think about them and wander yourself. You think, this is really out there. This is really doing something for me in an interesting way.

Translating Subjectivity: Women *Gendai Haijin*

Translating Kaneko Tohta's haiku into English eventually led the Kon Nichi Translation Group to translate works by other *gendai haijin* of Kaneko's generation. Women poets are a significant presence among today's Japanese *gendai haijin*, a notable shift from previous generations of haiku poets, which were dominated by male poets. Today's women *gendai haijin* also follow in the footsteps of two notable women poets. Yagi Mikajo (1924–2014), who blazed trails as one of Japan's first female ophthalmologists, was one of the boldest *gendai* haiku poets of her era.⁶⁰ *Gendai* haiku poet Uda Kiyoko (1934–), recipient of the Japan Medal of Honor (2002) and a former president of Japan's Modern Haiku Association, called Mikajo “a pivotal innovator” in the postwar *gendai* haiku movement.⁶¹ Uda's own haiku explore and seek to halt the environmental destruction of the modern world. As such her poems bring the traditional birds-and-flowers imagery of previous generations of haiku into conversation with contemporary ecopoetry.⁶² These women remain standard bearers for younger women *gendai* haiku poets writing today.

On receiving a fifth grant from the Japan Ministry of Education, Gilbert focused the Kon Nichi Translation Group's next project on translating the work of contemporary women *gendai haijin*, an area Gilbert described as “the largest lacuna in both translation and cultural context” with respect to contemporary haiku.⁶³ The transcript below explores the Kon Nichi group's translations of poems by three women *gendai haijin*.⁶⁴ Yagi Mikajo gave voice in

60. For a brief overview of Yagi Mikajo's haiku aesthetic and an interview with Mikajo herself, see <https://gendaihaiku.com/mikajo/index.html>.

61. Uda, Kiyoko, “Yagi Mikajo,” pp. 3-4.

62. On Uda Kiyoko's environmentally driven haiku aesthetic see <https://gendaihaiku.com/uda/index.html>. For a selection of Kiyoko's poems, see <https://gendaihaiku.com/uda/uda-kiyoko-haiku.htm>.

63. Gilbert, Email communication, 11 February 2024.

64. Gilbert, Interview, 9 December 2023.

her haiku to an overtly female and unabashed sexual subjectivity. Tanaka Ami (1970 –) and Takatō Akane (born Kaneko Risa, 1985 –) write poems of evocative, even mysterious imagery and profoundly subjective expressions of female experience and the female body.⁶⁵ The work of each of these poets carries forward the tradition of the raw “intellectual wildness” and committed *shisō* Kaneko championed as central for poets and haiku in the modern age.

RG: Our group published this poem in 2020 in the Creative Blooms series.⁶⁶ The poem is by Tanaka Ami, and it reads:

胎内は河原の白さ日傘差す
tainai wa kawara no shirosa higasa sasu

And the translation we came up with:

in the womb's interior
 whiteness of that river-field —
 a parasol opens⁶⁷

It's an exquisite poem. And it's very feminine, I think we can say. But there's so much in it in its English translation for me and, as you pointed out, an ambivalent quality as to meaning. It's very hard to interpret what it actually says. So I don't even think that's the direction I would go — not “oh, it means this or that.” But we can certainly have our own deep feelings and experiences.

JH: Absolutely. And certainly, there's a difference between translating and interpreting. You can make a translation that is potentially more or less literal, or you can make a translation that is a little bit more, I'll say, invasive and that gets to what you think the poem

65. Takatō's subjectivity is at once operative by default and consciously chosen. In a video recording (“Takatō Akane: Evolution as a Haiku Poet”) from the Tokyo Modern Haiku Poet Symposium: ‘Four Generations’ (July 2010), Takatō says she always writes haiku from her own lived experience.

66. Gilbert et al. *Creative Blooms*.

67. Gilbert, et al. *Creative Blooms*. 12 May 2020.

means. But a poem like Tanaka's absolutely defies that. And I think that's extremely interesting. And this brings us into the territory of what Anne Carson says in *Nay Rather*, about language going silent and just refusing to be brought out or articulated into meaning.⁶⁸

RG: Yes, like a stubborn refusal of sound, as she mentions. In the poem, to retain this in some way, or to be *attentive* to silence.

JH: Exactly. And I think that this particular poem that you just read — it's certainly not a silent poem — as you said, there's exquisite and very mysterious imagery there. So this is a poem that at once beckons us in, but then closes the door on us a little bit. So it just leaves us in a sort of suspended state of mystery.

RG: Yes, "a suspended state of mystery." I think that's really a key to a lot of modern haiku, at least from Japan, and I would argue that that's something that is the poetic, in the sense that when you ask, "well, what do we mean by the poetic?" A suspended state of mystery in haiku, particularly, is important and so is that silence. It seems similar to what Carson was discussing. It is silent because there's no language for it. It brings us out of language or takes us out of the abstract meaning, you know, that we could voice. It's voiceless.

JH: Right. It's silence in a particular sense, and I'll refer again to Carson's *Nay Rather*. In that book, there's a passage about Joan of Arc's trial "transcripts" — and I'm putting "transcripts" in scare quotes because so much of them were so loosely translated into jurisprudential Latin that also contains some falsifications of what Joan said during her trial. But Joan of Arc is asked again and again about the voices she hears in her mind — "What are these voices telling you? What do these voices mean?" — and she tries to deflect the question in any number of ways.⁶⁹

68. Carson, Anne. *Nay Rather*. Sylph Editions, Center for Writers and Translators, The American University of Paris, 2013.

69. Carson, *Nay Rather*, pp. 8-10.

RG: Yes, “Ask me next Saturday” was one of her responses.⁷⁰

JH: Right, exactly. She tries to deflect. So she’s using words as a door that she is closing just enough so people can’t walk through all the way. Or maybe the metaphor is that there’s a door with a window where you can see through, but you can’t actually see everything. I think a similar sort of thing is going on with Tanaka’s poem, and others your group translated.

RG: I think so. I’d like to look a little bit closer and show you a process of translation. I’d like to first look at the hyphenated word “river-field” in the poem. I’m not going to say that this collocation is idiomatic or that it’s a neologism, but it’s probably pretty close. I think it’s really unusual. And then the question is, why did I do that? It’s my own interpretation. Let’s say that’s something I stuck in there. But then you could ask, what is it in Japanese? What does that mean? And then the question is, what does it even mean in English? Like, what’s your image of a river-field? What is that? Actually, isn’t there a weirdness to it?

JH: Yes, there is. Definitely.

RG: Okay, so if it’s weird, what is that? Is it water? Or is it kind of water? Is it, like, a rice field? But it’s a river that’s big, perhaps. Why? As a translator I want to linger on that. If I translate the Japanese literally, it would make this image completely clunky. Here’s one of the closest literal translations: “dry riverbed.” Okay, so: “in the womb’s interior / whiteness of that dry riverbed—/ a parasol opens.” To me that’s just completely destructive. It just, to me, kind of destroys everything about what’s cool about the poem. Now, anyone can disagree with that and say, “Oh no, you should just use the literal, you should just use the most literal thing.” But this is about rhythm, feeling, mystery. *Kawara* (河原) — “dry riverbed” — has an evocative poetic expression within the poem. Words in a poem are not used in a normal way — we

70. Carson, *Nay Rather*, p. 10.

know that — and it's haiku, so you have to be really open. And this is the thing about languagelessness in your own deep vibing into the experience. So for me, “dry riverbed” is unsuitable. But then what is that feeling there? It's the womb's “interior whiteness of that river-field.” That's what I came up with. It's not right or wrong. It's a feeling that is transmitting with the goal of creating a powerful haiku that is, as you said, in a new language.

Our published notes to the poem may be informative. In part: “The word *kawara* (river-field) connotes or implies ‘*sai no kawara*,’ a kind of hell where recently-dead children go. If we believe the poet is referencing ‘*sai no kawara*’ then this may indicate an abortion. If not, then the work is deeply sexual. Here, *kawara* may indicate 河川敷 (*kasenjiki*), a river floodplain. The water seems a sexual symbol . . .”⁷¹ There is no perfect way to make it what it is in Japanese. *Tainai* (胎内) — why does it say “interior?” Well, that that second *kanji*, “*nai*,” (内) means “inside.” So it means inside the womb's inside, or within the womb — you can phrase that how you like. But why “in the womb's interior?” Well, listen to the language, the rhythm of it. Then, okay, *shirosa* (白さ) — that's “whiteness.” That's pretty clear, but the *kanji shiro* (白), which is “white,” can also imply transparency or purity. That's the thing that's interesting. “Whiteness of that river-field” takes it out of realism. But her poem is like that, too, because “dry riverbed's whiteness” also is completely out there. So you could say that both have that almost mystical, deep-layered interior that explodes, blooms into something very special. And so the question is how to retain that? That does not come from any one word; it comes from not doing the easy thing. The easy thing is just to make a literal translation and try to match it up somehow.

The last thing I want to talk about is *sasu* (差す) at the very end. It's *higasa sasus* (日傘差す) that's the verb at the end. She is using a *kanji sa* (差) which, for me, is a little unusual. It may not be, for a native Japanese speaker. The first translation that comes up is

71. Gilbert, et al. *Creative Blooms*. 12 May 2020.

“to shine.” The second is “to be visible.” The third is “to be tinged with.” “To flow in.” “to rise,” as in water level — “to rise up” — but also with umbrella, “to hold up,” “put up,” “to raise,” which is how she’s using it: “parasol raise.” So even just from the dictionary, you have these choices. So why “opened?” Why not “rises up?” You always have all these different choices. And why “parasol?” That’s *higasa* (日傘), so that’s correct. If you said “a parasol shines,” and having the relationship with womb and the real — “opens” is just perfect for me. Our note reads: “The parasol (*sasu* 差す), taken at face value, seems sufficiently provocative. In movies, an umbrella opening is an image used to indicate scenes where intercourse takes place (and as well, the image of a flower, blossoming). This image is also present in Japanese as well. We have changed the last line from the more literal ‘puts out a parasol’ for this reason.”⁷² It’s just the best we could come up with. So in each case, I would say it’s like a puzzle that has to do with a deep poetic feeling, but it’s never really finished. You just do the best you can, and there are always questions. You could endlessly have further discussion, and you could come up with three or four different translations that would all make this poem really quite different from how this particular translation appears.

But I think, in the end, we have three basic images here, and they flow with each other and they deepen. They have a profound effect on me. I do feel that they resonate with her — I don’t want to say intention, because I don’t know what her intention is — but with some aspect of the heart of her expression in Japanese. She might disagree or agree, but I think she would say, “not bad.” That would be the best compliment. “You didn’t do too bad.”

Let’s talk about one more thing. Why is modern haiku so cool? Why am I annoyed by the very conservative traditional thing? It’s because of poems like this, because of the subject area. It’s because it’s a woman’s poem about the womb. You feel, how do you know

72. Gilbert, et al. *Creative Blooms*. 12 May 2020.

that? I think that lines like “whiteness of that river-field” — riverbed, a parasol opens. I think it’s a deeply female expression, and I don’t find this very direct female expression much within English-language haiku. And so I think, in a sense, it’s educational. It opens the mind. It opens in the poet’s mind to possibility, reading a poem like this. It’s intercultural sharing, as though to say, “hey look, this is being done. Look at all these different ways in another language and culture that people have thought about using haiku to express something so deep and powerful.”

JH: You know, even though in the first line of this poem there is a concrete image of the womb, that line takes us immediately into the sort of *sanctum sanctorum* of a woman’s body. And it is impossible to have a first-person account of being in the womb. So with all the mystery that women’s hidden sex organs bring with them, this is a poem that, yes, does invite you in, but closes the door after a certain point. So I would agree with you that this is very much a woman’s poem and not just because of the mention of the womb in the first line. But having brought us there, into the womb, as readers, the poem then doesn’t give us much at all in the way of a full picture. We get a handful of mystery, which is actually very, very idiomatic, if you will, to the subject matter. So the language, in other words, embodies the subject matter to the extent that the subject matter will let it. And I think that’s what’s really fascinating about this poem. But the language does go silent on itself.

RG: It does. It’s like, what do you get out of this? Mystery. But then I think in the last line — that, to me, is an absolutely stunning last line to add to that really mysterious middle line. But what we see is that the first and second lines form a complete image, but then the third one is really cut. A parasol opens. And, is that the blooming of life, that she’s expressing? Is she talking about conception? Is she talking about the cycles of a woman’s body? Is she talking about birth and death? Whatever it could be, it says something to me that relates to that whiteness, to that blankness, in a very positive way.

Because *sasu* as a verb is really close to *saku* by sound. And *saku* is “to bloom,” “to blossom.” Is that my interpretation? Well, yeah, it’s just really close by sound. She ends with that verb, “to shine,” “to be drawn out.” It’s a beautiful poem because it has that nuance where, by sound you’re just subtly linking to, as I said, it means also “to be visible,” “to become visible.” So it’s very close to “bloom,” and a parasol is an opening, which is like a blooming. So I feel it’s deeply poetic that way. And there’s the Richard Wright poem with the umbrellas, his Parisian poem — “Just enough of rain / To bring the smell of silk / From umbrellas.”⁷³ He also he gives to the sense of smell a perception of blooming. It’s like a blossoming. So I feel like there is a female-positive sense here that’s important, and that Tanaka is addressing something really deep. That maybe, as you said, it could be private or embarrassing, and she’s expressing something tremendous. So I just wanted to add that the last line shifts even the question of barrenness or blankness or all-ness or unknown-ness into something extremely vast and blossoming with elegance, that parasol. Usually we get clinical: you know, the womb, it’s like a clinical thing, but here, this is not the direction. I think that’s very beautiful.

JH: The next poem is by Yagi Mikajo, who actually was a medical clinician in her professional career — she was an ophthalmologist. From his commentary on Yagi Mikajo’s haiku that appears on gendaihaiku.com, your website, Mikajo’s son, Dr. Shimoyama Akira (writing under the name Shiwa Kyōtarō) writes that Mikajo’s various writings “were attempts to express existence (*Existenz* in the German) in extreme/boundary conditions (*Grenzsituationen*).” That can refer to a liminal space, a space between two worlds, or may be understood not so much as something that separates spaces, but instead is a blurring of the boundaries between spaces typically

73. See Gilbert, “Haiku in English — A General Guide to Genre Distinction,” 2016; <https://livinghaikuanthology.com/poets-on-haiku/defining-haiku/2867-haiku-in-english-%E2%80%93-a-general-guide-to-genre-distinction.html>

considered discrete. And I think we see some of that blurring of boundaries in Yagi Mikajo's full bloom poem.⁷⁴ Here's the poem:

満開の森の陰部の鰓呼吸
mankai no mori no inbu no era kokyû

full bloom
 in the forest's genitals
 respiration of gills⁷⁵

RG: This is just one of the signature poems in all of modern haiku, I think. Arguably, if you're involved in *gendai* haiku study in Japan, I think you would probably come across this poem. Yagi Mikajo was mentored by Hirahata Seitō and Saitō Sanki in the early '50s, so she's the first postwar generation. This haiku was published in her first book, *Benitake* (*The Scarlet Mushroom*), which was published in 1956. She opened the first female-founded and -owned eye clinic in Japan. She was a founder of the Yosano Akiko Museum. So her accomplishments in life as a woman within a patriarchy are significant. I would say she's a leader, she's a forerunner. She also witnessed the complete destruction of the environment, in the city of Sakai (near Osaka) where she lived. Coincident with postwar development, all the water got really polluted and all the trees were cut down, and so on. It was the era of hyper-development. So she was a witness to that darkness. And I think that that boundary condition or that edge condition is often seen in a lot of modern haiku. And there's a sense of, is it light or is it dark?, as Hoshinaga

74. Gilbert and Itō, "On the Life and Works of Yagi Mikajo." Gilbert's and Itō's commentaries draw heavily on "A Commentary on Yagi Mikajo zen kushû." [*Collected Haiku of Yagi Mikajo*], Chūsekisha, 2006, and Shiwa Kyōtarō (a.k.a. Professor Shimoyama Akira, Ph.D.), "Yagi Mikajo as female 'avant-garde' haiku poet" [*Joryū "zen'ei" haijin to shite no Yagi Mikajo*].

75. Gilbert et al., *Creative Blooms*. 11 August 2020. Yagi Mikajo's "full bloom" haiku is also translated at <https://gendaihaiku.com/mikajo/commentaries.html>.

commented. Is it getting light or is it getting dark? Well, maybe both at once.

That's a really hard thing to confront. It's a hard thing to write about. If haiku is a kind of nature poetry, where we relate to the environment, what do you do when everything is being destroyed? When you look at the nearby mountain and there's a microwave tower on it and another tower and another tower? Or Fukushima [the Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant] discharging radioactive water into the ocean — how do you write haiku about that? I think that such issues were occurring from the beginning of the postwar period. And that's an interesting thing about Yagi Mikajo.

In the poem, one thing in the language that's striking are words like *inbu* (陰部) for “genitals” and *kokyû* (呼吸) for “respiration.” These are medical terms. They're technical. They're terms that a doctor would use. And so, it's a really disruptive poem, just the conceptual integration of a very scientific kind of terminology. Absolutely outrageous imagery. And the thing that really, to me, ties it together is the way she uses the *no* (の), which is a possessive. So it's *no mori no inbu no era kokyû*. We've got those three *no*'s, like one thing is inside another, inside another, inside another. And you can't quite pull that off in English. The syntax doesn't quite work that way.

Mankai is “full bloom,” but *mankai no mori* means the “forest full(y) blooms” — “in the genitals of the forest full bloom,” “within the respiration of the genitals,” “within the gills of the respiration of the forest.” So the possessives keep playing back and forth. Plus, there is no plural or singular in the nouns. They're loose. I think in the English you notice it's “forest's genitals,” like the genitals of the forest, which is correct for the *no*, for the possessive there. And then the “respiration of gills” — that's the trouble, right? You can't say “genitals” and then an apostrophe [genitals']. How could you have “genitals' respiration” and “gills?” I think it takes the reader

TEN

too far out of the image to ask the reader to imagine a “forest genital” is having “gills.” I don’t know what that would be like. It seems just too weird.

But then the second line — it’s still a cut. If prose, it’s a kind of “weird realism”. So if it was in the forest genitals, and then there’s a cut, and then “respiration of gills”; but it’s more, you feel like somehow there’s a body, somehow there’s some strange, living fascia that’s connecting everything because it’s all the *no*’s, all those possessives are in there. In Japanese it’s smooth, seamless, but in English it creates a strange image that isn’t really what’s in the poem in the original, although it remains a really fascinating poem. It’s a very odd medical language combined with these really smooth, rounded possessive marks, in *hiragana*. And it moves you along. It creates this really strong rhythm: *mankai no mori no inbu no era kokyū*. It just rolls along. It’s kind of brilliant. I think that looking at it poetically, how did anyone ever come up with that? Where do you get these images from, and how do they go together?

But then you look at what is she saying, like, what is this about? And I think if we compare the two poems [Mikajo’s “full bloom” and Tanaka’s “in the womb’s interior”], I think you could say that, as you pointed out, the first line of Tanaka’s poem is a kind of realism. As you said, it brings you right into the subject. But what about with Mikajo’s poem? What is the subject? Where is the subject? There’s a brilliance to it. There’s a reason why this is a mind-blowing poem. I think it shows you a limit, in English or in Japanese. The Japanese shows you the medical, scientific language that isn’t quite included, although we have gills, we have genitals, we have respiration, they’re not quite as clinical feeling as the *kanji*, but the translation still has it. And so you can’t say that this is just a language game. This is not just playing with language. There’s a deep poetic conception.

So let's talk about, as you said, existence or a "boundary condition." I think [Mikajo's] poem exemplifies that, but also shows you that the poem isn't merely clinical. In the way she took something clinical and made it absolutely embodied life, it's living being. It's the depth of living in some way. But what is the subject here? Is it me? Am I the real subject? I mean, a forest doesn't have genitals.

JH: Right, exactly. And on this subject of the blurring of boundaries and border situations or what have you, what I wonder, you know, might be in the poem is that a forest sort of becomes embodied, almost a sort of embodied human. And there's also possibly a collapsing of time here. Maybe this forest is still in the primordial sea. One way or another, there's a blending of environments that seems to happen across the *kire*, which at once cuts and blends together the worlds before and after it.

With this speculation, this question of translation versus interpretation rears its head again. On the one hand, you may say as a translator, there's a limit to what I should do to bring this poem or any other poem out of its language and into ours. On the other hand, we all want to try to understand and relate to the poem. If translating a poem out of one language and into another language doesn't jump completely across the chasm, then where does that leave us, but also where does that leave the poem? With Tanaka's poem you can get a sense that it is dealing with the mysteries, as it were, of women's experience, sexual or otherwise, painted with a very broad brush. As intriguing and enticing as I find the language of Mikajo's poem, I wish I could crack this nut even to the still incomplete extent to which one can read Tanaka's poem. This poem by Yagi Mikajo keeps me coming back because I want to try to work the lock, and it just resists me.⁷⁶

76. Roland Barthes (*Empire of Signs*, 81) asserts that the desire to derive meaning from reading haiku stems from a Western mindset: "The haiku's task is to achieve exemption from meaning within a perfectly readerly discourse (a contradiction denied to Western art, which can contest meaning only by rendering its discourse incomprehensible), so that to our eyes the haiku is

RG: I think that's really true. That's part of why it's so amazing, because it just feels absolutely real and true in some way, but I don't know what that way is. Of these two poems, the one that's by far easier to translate is Mikajo's, and that's because it's so clear. But it's completely difficult in Japanese. So in a way, I think it's a successful translation because it's amazingly obtuse, and yet the images are completely clear. And you cannot mistake *mankai* (満開), as well. You could say "fully bloomed," or you could say "blooming full." *Mori* (森) is "forest" or could be "wild woods" — you can get into that, but it's just a forest. It's a wild forest as opposed to maybe a cultivated forest, which is *hatake* (畑). But *mori*, that's wild. And the same thing with *inbu* as "genitals" and *kokyū* — "respiration of gills" — maybe it's "a gill respiration" or something "respiring," but it's almost exactly the same. So actually, finding the nouns in this poem and putting them in some order — okay, there's an ordering question, and I've ordered it a certain way — I always try to put translations in the order that I call the "image-story." I want the image story in English as much as possible to follow the image story in Japanese, even though Japanese is an S-O-V [subject-object-verb] language and English is S-V-O. So of course, I had to think about that. But realizing how the *no*'s work, realizing what are the choices there, how do I work with the possessives? That was the difficulty. It wasn't so much in the nouns in the language, or the basic concept.

First of all, I thought, do I really understand what this is? Are these truly the words that she's written? The expression that comes up for me is "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny," the celebrated expression

neither eccentric nor familiar: it resembles nothing at all: readerly, it seems to us simple, close, known, delectable, delicate, 'poetic — in a word, offered to a whole range of reassuring predicates; insignificant nonetheless, it resists us, finally loses the adjectives which a moment before we had bestowed upon it, and enters into that suspension of meaning which to us is the strangest thing of all, since it makes impossible the most ordinary exercise of our language, which is commentary."

of evolutionary biology, which is if we watched the gamete develop into a fetus, we see that the gills appear on the fetus on the sides of the neck, so that there is a kind of recapitulation of our animal evolution. I know that up to a certain point in fetal development you have a hard time distinguishing between the fetus of a pig and a human. You know, in our maturation of fetal development, there is the respiration of gills, in a sense. Mikajo's a scientist, a doctor. She published original research. She's knows that. And you could say, in consequence, "Okay, how important is it to know about the poet and their life?" Well, in this case, I would say it's probably fairly important. So maybe one hint would be to say, well, it is completely mysterious, but she uses medical language, which isn't quite so clear in English. But when you know something about her life and her mind, I think you realize that these are familiar thoughts to her — such as ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. I mean, it's right in the palm there.

But I think that one thing that is completely out there and outrageous, especially for when this poem was written, is that it's utterly sexual. It's almost like saying nature *is* sex. That is life. That we are that and this is what we come from. This is who we are at all times. We are all of that evolution in full bloom — I'm not saying that's the meaning of the poem. But it is strange and remote, because of the symbolic language of forest genitals. And yet, what if that's actually the best and most apt description, in some way, and that we just don't feel the sexuality? Like as moderns we're just too far abstracted from the sexual nature of nature, or something like that?

JH: Yes, and, of course, you don't get this kind of approach to nature in traditional haiku, so in this sense, taking your read on this poem, that all nature really is just sex all the time, it stands to reason . . .

RG: Yeah, yeah, outrageously so.

TEN

JH: . . . that it isn't a sanitized version of nature, in this poem. So that's extremely interesting, and it's a brave poem in that sense.

RG: Right, I agree. I think it's incredibly brave and outrageous. And I think that the idea or the sense that a haiku could reflect the mind of the writer — when you talk about genius, it's not just because a haiku is good. This is to me goes beyond that, because there is a conceptuality here. There's a genius of thought and feeling and poetry here. And I'm sad that her collected works are not translated, or at least some greater number of her haiku, but they're hard to really capture. And I think this one is representative, and we have a few other translated poems in the online commentary.

JH: The idea of subjectivity — that a haiku can reflect the mind of its writer — is hugely important in any consideration of *gendai* haiku, and it's also one element that, I think, remains greatly misunderstood about Shiki's *shasei* aesthetic, at least among poets writing haiku in English. There's another really beautiful and brave example of a haiku's revealing its writer's mind among the Kon Nichi group's translations at gendaihaiku.com.

RG: This poem was written by Takatō Akane. She was born in 1985, and I think it was about 10 years ago when she read this poem, so she probably wrote it in her early 20s, as a young woman. The poem is:

シャツ脱いで私の続きは初夏の海
shatsu nuide watashi no tsuzuki wa shoka no umi

taking off my shirt
the rest of the story of myself
early summer sea⁷⁷

What do you feel from this one?

77. Gilbert's translation of Takatō's poem is published at <https://gendaihaiku.com/symposium/ku+bios.html#Akane>.

JH: Again, I'm coming to all of these translations as my first experiences with the poems, but this is a poem that for me is much more accessible than the other two we've discussed from the standpoint of understanding what it "means" — and understand that, to me, "accessible" is not a dirty word. Immediately there's a kind of transparency that the other two poems we've discussed here don't right away have. In this particular poem, there's a young woman who is by the sea, "early summer sea" is in the final line. She's taking off her shirt — "taking off my shirt / the rest of the story of myself / early summer sea" — and I love this middle line because it's a nice pivot line that goes with the first line and the third line: "taking off my shirt the rest of the story / of myself" — taking off my shirt in a literal sense, then "the rest of the story of myself." And, of course, she's exposing her breasts, which is sensitive and a bit daring, perhaps, for a young woman. "The rest of the story of myself / early summer sea" — those two lines go together in a really loose, alluring, and elusive way, as well.

But the picture that I'm getting here is one of just of a young woman perhaps recognizing a sense of comfort in her own skin, right in the middle of summer, which is the season of full bloom. But it seems to me that *zengo no kire* (literally "before and after cutting") gives the poem some of its power. In a relational and perhaps somewhat literal reading, as I said, taking off her shirt, a woman bears her literal and figurative breasts. There could be literal and metaphorical scars there that are being revealed to the other. And as much as the situation is erotically charged, there is for some women a fear of relenting to the gaze with not even a piece of cloth to shield her from it. So jumping from clothing and relative comfort the moment before the speaker removes her shirt to exposure to an objectifying gaze the next is to plunge from one psychological landscape to another. But the speaker in this poem jumps quite boldly from the clothed state to the unclothed state. The speaker takes that risk seemingly with assurance, allowing

TEN

herself to embody her own story. The third line, early summer sea, brings us to an expansive image with overtones of female sexuality beginning to swell, to emerge, or of a woman beginning really to feel at home in her skin. What happens at the end of line 3? A few beats of silence in which maybe we hear the ocean waves receding us back into our present reality. So before-and-after cutting brings us into this thrill and fear of a moment of sexual awareness, maybe even sexual intimacy, and it takes us out of this moment on a warm, wet wave.

RG: Nice, I like it. The idea of the early summer sea as a kind of swelling, and also of the woman becoming a woman or feeling a woman's body and developing — I think that's really interesting. I didn't think of that myself, but I think that makes sense. And "early summer sea" is a good example of how English can work in a way that adds something of rhythm and feeling in the poem that isn't really in the Japanese because of the assonance and the languid sense of "early summer sea." I mean for me, that's the poetic part. That's when you say, "what is this language? What could this language be?" Because it's just the *kanji* or just early summer. What do you do with that early summer's ocean? "Early summer sea" is a little bit of an oxymoron because early and sea don't go together; in the Japanese there's a possessive indicating "summer's" — but strictly speaking there's no such thing as an early summer sea. The phrase is left a little ambiguous. And the rhythm — one word is leading into the next. For me that was really satisfying as a translator to find that.

Another point about the poem in the translation is this difficulty: *shatsu* (シャツ) is in *katakana* and it's a modern way of saying "shirt." And *nuide* (脱いで) is "to undress." So "to bear" isn't quite right, but if you just look at all the language together, literally, it would just be "shirt undress." But with "taking off my shirt," the trouble is, how do you say, "take off shirt" without "my?" So the trouble is, there is no "my" in the poem. There is just *shatsu nuide*, and *nuide*

is a continuous verb form, so it's "shirt undressing" — that's what you could say it means literally. And it's grammatical in Japanese. So that's *shatsu nuide*. It's perfectly "go-on" [literally, "five on," or mora, "sounds"].

Then the next part, *watashi no tsuzuki wa* (私の続きは). Eight [on]. So she's got 5, 8, and then *shoka no umi* (初夏の海) is 5. So it's close to 5-7-5. So in this sense, it's relatively formal. It's got a *kigo*. But in English, unfortunately, I couldn't find a way of saying "taking off," "undressing my shirt," so to speak, without the "my." But she does have *watashi no* which is "myself," so that's there. It's a case of a translation choice where, by having the "my" there and having it be a normal expression, there's an innocence and organicity. And I feel like this poem, in a way, has very ordinary language, that's part of the beauty of it. It's just, *shatsu nuide*. That's just exactly what we would say: "takin' off my shirt." It's the most commonplace way to say what is in the Japanese, even though it's not literal.

And then *watashi no tsuzuki wa* is tricky: In the image-story of the Japanese, it's "my continuation," "my succession," "my sequence." It's really pretty evocatively unclear, that *tsuzuki* — "to continue, to go on," "to further." It could mean so many different things. So "the rest of the story of myself" is probably a very poetic interpretation of what she actually wrote — I recall that Itō came up with this brilliant phrase — and just to mention, over our decades of translation he has achieved great expertise. And the *wa* at the end means "regarding," you could say. So "regarding the rest of the story of myself /early summer sea," which you already picked up on, as you said, that's like her coming into the future, her becoming a woman. She's becoming a woman or feeling that she's coming into her own youthful bloom, coming into her own.

So how do you get all that for the poem? One thing, I think is, I know who she is. She was a delightful young woman, when I met her. But she's young — I get that from the poem. I don't need to

TEN

know about her, but I already do know her. I feel that this is the poem of a younger woman. It could be an older woman, but “the rest of the story of myself” is the unknown, the unknowingness of life, or the feeling of what does the future hold?

JH: And that, I think, might connect with the idea that, having decided as a woman — of any age, really — I’m going to take off my shirt, that is not just a statement of coming into oneself. It’s a statement of, “here I am.” It’s a statement of bold self-acceptance and freedom. To have found that much freedom of expression about the beauty of embodying one’s female form, I think, is remarkable. And this poem really makes this statement all the more powerfully because its language is so clear.

RG: Yes, and this poem is different than the other two. And one of the ways it is different is that it’s an I-poem. It’s clearly a statement about oneself. And it’s very direct. I think that directness strikes very fast with the first two lines. And there’s something about the rhythm of those lines, the irrevocableness, the power of that absolute statement, “the rest of the story of myself.”

Also, there’s a history of the I-novel in Japan — the novels that are mostly by women or maybe there are some celebrated novels by women. The genre became very popular, a very important subgenre.⁷⁸ So I think it’s playing against that in a certain way or making it a little more outrageous because it isn’t like “me and another person,” exactly. Like you said, it’s just this complete directness in in her psychology and also in her actual embodiment. As well, what’s so interesting: it’s strongly narrative. It exactly tells a story. It’s not metaphor — I mean, the last line is metaphorical. The middle line is metaphorical in a psychological way, but we know exactly what she’s saying. And yet, there’s that mystery. And so she comes at that idea of mystery and question in a uniquely fresh way. So I think this might reveal a difference between, say, someone

78. See Hijiya-Kirschner, *Rituals of Self-Revelation: Shishōsetsu as Literary Genre and Socio-cultural Phenomenon*.

like Yagi Mikajo or an earlier era. But I feel also there's purity and innocence in it, in a way too — the nakedness of innocence or the innocence of nakedness, something like that.

But now, if we look at all three of these poems as just modern haiku by women, I would say each one is incredibly brave in its own way. And I don't mean that, just because it's women writing the poems, it's being brave. I mean it's just poetically brave. There's risk involved, whether it's the subject matter, whether it's the use of language, whether it's the directness of narrative. And I think it would be challenging, if you go into English-language haiku and try to match these poems up with some other really brave haiku written by English native speakers — can we find them?

Now, I think these are exceptional poems, so I'm not saying that every Japanese haiku is great like these are or brave like these are. But I think they each show this outrageous investigation, a way of exploring through haiku, because they're written by women of different generations, actually, so it presents a lineage. You're not going to find a difference [between Japanese-language haiku written by women and those written by men] in the language itself. It's in the image. It's actually in the poetic exploration. It's in this outrageous bravery and these areas of topical interest, and I just don't think that men could write this way. These poems are absolutely within the scope of feminism and possibly couldn't have been written without the rise of feminism in Japan. Starting with Yagi Mikajo (we could go back earlier of course), women being able to write haiku — it was quite a battle. I think that haiku was considered as being only for men and that kind of thing. And I think just these three examples show the reason why it's so fantastic that women fought to enter the haiku world and to have their voices be heard, be acclaimed, and then follow each other and create a lineage. I chose these (haiku) to discuss with that feeling — like, look how different they all appear. Look how they take on completely different imagery, different rhythms, different

topics; but they're all really strongly female. And I think that these poems speak to anyone else in the world, anyone who can read them in whichever language. They are clear. They are cogent. I think they're just amazing artistic achievements, each one.

Translation, Haiku Style, and the Future of English-Language Haiku

In matters of translation, style—how a poem's manner of expression in its original language is or is not carried over into a target language—is always a central issue. The Kon Nichi Translation Group's English translations of Japanese *gendai* haiku have major implications for English-language haiku style. The group's translations make accessible to the Anglophone world an entire haiku literature written by the most recent generations of Japanese *haijin* in an avowedly modern aesthetic and in a range of associated styles. The avant-garde aesthetic in English-language haiku today can be said to be informed by any number of factors, including the tradition of disjunctive poetics in English broadly speaking, the emergence among relatively early generations of Anglophone *haijin* of haiku poets (e.g., Marlene Mountain)⁷⁹ with distinctly modern voices, and the multiple versions of Gilbert's seminal "Disjunctive Dragonfly" essay and, ultimately, book, which shed light on disjunctive stylistic possibilities for poets writing in English. The publication of journals and anthologies with editorial philosophies that favor, or at least accept, haiku on the avant-garde end of the style spectrum has also sustained forums for experimentation and stylistic boundary-pushing in haiku.⁸⁰

79. Self-published in 1976, Marlene Mountain's [Marlene Morelock Wills] debut haiku collection, *The Old Tin Roof*, still reads as groundbreaking. The Haiku Foundation describes Mountain as "the doyenne of English-language haiku." (The Haiku Foundation Digital Library, <https://www.thehaikufoundation.org/omeka/items/show/60>).

80. *Heliosparrow Poetry Journal*, ed. Richard Gilbert and Clayton Beach; NOON:

The extent to which the Kon Nichi group's translations of *gendai* haiku can be said to have influenced the writing of “avant-garde” haiku in English, and thus ELH (English-language haiku) style, has not yet been assessed. What can be said is that the translations further contribute to the repertoire of stylistically adventuresome haiku available to the Anglophone world and attest to the vibrancy of *gendai* stylism in Japanese haiku to the present day. And while among English-language haiku poets there exists a great deal of misunderstanding and under-appreciation of the Japanese *gendai* aesthetic, the English-language “avant-garde” aesthetic, and the connections of both with the classical Japanese haiku tradition, the Kon Nichi group's translations put all of the pieces in place for a more nuanced understanding of how these stylistic strands intertwine throughout the history of haiku.⁸¹ The extent to which the group's published translations might influence greater numbers of poets, editors, and publishers to embrace “avant-garde” English-language haiku as an integral and significant aspect of haiku style and English-language poetics more broadly remains to be seen.⁸²

journal of the short poem, ed. Philip Rowland; *Kingfisher Journal*, ed. Tanya McDonald, *Password*, ed. Melissa Allen; and the *Haiku 20XX* anthology series, ed. Lee Gurga and Scott Metz, and published by Modern Haiku Press are among the venues that today publish haiku and other types of short poems in explorative styles. Although no longer publishing new work, the full archives of the journals *is/let*, ed. Scott Metz, *bones*, ed. Johannes Bjerg, *Moongarlic*, ed. Sheila Windsor and Brendan Slater; and *Roadrunner*, ed. Scott Metz and Paul Pfleuger, Jr. are still accessible online. The anthologies *Haiku 21: An Anthology of Contemporary English language Haiku*, ed. Lee Gurga and Scott Metz, (Modern Haiku Press, 2011), and *Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years*, ed. Jim Kacian, Philip Rowland, and Allan Burns (Norton, 2013), are pioneering classics.

81. Clayton Beach (“*Gendai* Haiku,” p. 55) argues convincingly that, “Despite what some might believe, *gendai* haiku is not a widely divergent, incomprehensible oddity from a historical viewpoint, but rather a vital part of the haiku tradition, well rooted in pre-modern *haikai*—through Bashō, to Buson and Issa—but primarily derived from Masaoka Shiki's original conception of haiku as a distinct poetry; *gendai* haiku is a genre that is both forward looking (modern) and retrospective (traditional), and in the decentralization of the myriad approaches it contains, it can also be considered ‘post-modern,’ to a certain extent.”

82. Gilbert claims that the intended audience for English translations of Japanese

As the Kon Nichi group's translations of the work of women *gendai haijin* illustrate, subject matter also marks *gendai* haiku as stylistically complementary to traditional season- and nature-driven haiku. The foregrounding of the female form and its connection to female identity are but two examples of the feminine subjectivity given voice in the poems translated and published in the *Creative Blooms* series. As Gilbert further notes, the women poets' bold embracing of sexual subject matter—from the mysterious inner workings of the womb, to the extravagant sexuality of all nature—expand well beyond the birds-and-flowers imagery of Takahama Kyoshi's *kachōfūei* aesthetic. The *Creative Blooms* poems are notable contributions to the range of human experience explored, by way of translation, in haiku in English, a literature in which male or gender-neutral worldviews predominate and for which editorial and organizational authority is still most often vested in men. Through their sexual subject matter, these translated haiku offer writers of haiku in English examples of the intellectual wildness of the authors and their aesthetic forebear Kaneko Tohta—a glimpse of the emotional power of haiku in which bold images spur readers on to forge daring, even startling connections between self and world, flesh and idea, dream and reality, thought and word, mind and heart.

haiku expands well beyond contemporary poets writing in English and includes students at all educational levels. To this end, Gilbert and Kon Nichi translator David Ostman collaborated on *Earth in Sunrise*, a compendium of haiku in English and English translation from over 40 countries, and created as “an EFL/ESL textbook using international haiku as the primary learning content.” (Gilbert, Email communication, 4 March 2024.). The book includes a number of the Kon Nichi group's haiku translations and, according to Gilbert, “the whole concept of using intercultural haiku in language education was an outgrowth and . . . expansion of the Kon Nichi process.” (Gilbert, Email communication). The topically organized coursebook is “designed to be accessible to any international student studying English as a second or foreign language, whether in the classroom, or through independent study.” (Gilbert, *Earth in Sunrise*, vii.)

That intellectual wildness, that boldness of poetic and linguistic sensibility, if embraced as an integral aspect of contemporary ELH style, could bring ELH more closely in line with the aesthetic priorities of “mainstream” poetry in English. The poems published in haikai-specialist journals and granted awards in the major haiku competitions are indications that a more traditional season-driven style continues to dominate ELH. The needle on this situation has not moved since at least 2012, when an essay in the Haiku Society of America’s journal, *Frogpond*, exploring the influence (or relative lack thereof) of Japanese *gendai* haiku stylism on English-language avant-garde haiku in American haiku journals, defined “American journals” as encompassing *Modern Haiku*, *Frogpond*, *Acorn*, and *The Heron’s Nest*.⁸³ Then as now, these journals publish primarily or entirely haiku on the traditional end of the style spectrum, even

83. Miller, “Haiku’s American Frontier.” Miller doesn’t mention the quality or quantity of English translations of *gendai* haiku as potential obstacles to reader understanding and acceptance of poems in this style, nor does he mention that the level of poetic awareness a reader brings to reading *gendai* haiku could be a factor limiting the style’s broader acceptance among poets writing haiku in English. His argument in assessing *gendai* haiku’s influence on American haiku is based solely on the assumption that the style of certain *gendai* poems may be so reader-resistant as to make the poems impenetrable and, thus by implication, all of *gendai* haiku inaccessible. In addition, his rejection of *gendai* haiku that contain “direct similes or metaphors,” of “poems that directly tell a poet’s message,” of poems that pose “obstacles in the way of (my) understanding,” and of poems seemingly written from deeply subjective points of view (“private poems”), would seem to reject much of the type of languaging and subjectivity that English-language poetry broadly construed has embraced for more than a century. The question then becomes not what does the American ELH community accept as haiku, but instead, does the community accept that English-language haiku is legitimately part of the larger body of English-language poetry and should participate stylistically as such? An exploration of the shared territory among haiku and other types of poems is beyond the scope of this study. However, see Rowland, “From Haiku to the Short Poem.” See also Natsuishi (“Future of World Haiku,” 324), who writes, “I must say that an excellent haiku must be an excellent poem, in spite of shortness, for an excellent poem called haiku must build up a marvelous universe made of few words.”

though by the time of this essay, avant-garde English-language haiku had been making inroads in *Roadrunner Haiku Journal*, in the original “Disjunctive Dragonfly” article (2004) and its later incarnation as a book (2008), and elsewhere. But the question arises: what might ELH look like in the future if more nuanced translations of *gendai* haiku and criticism were to make that haiku tradition ever more linguistically and conceptually accessible to the Anglophone world?

Gilbert’s estimate that the Kon Nichi group members translated around five percent of the poems they read in the course of their work points up the challenges in making good English translations of Japanese *gendai* haiku, the large number of *gendai* haiku in the Japanese literature, and the need for continued work translating today’s living tradition of *gendai* haiku. That only a tiny fraction of *gendai* haiku have been translated into English means that the Anglophone world’s picture of contemporary Japanese haiku and haiku style is by any measure woefully incomplete. In addition to the relative paucity of translated *gendai* haiku, very little of the haiku criticism by contemporary Japanese *gendai haijin* has been translated into English. More English-language translations of contemporary Japanese haiku and haiku criticism can only add much-needed nuance to the poetic and critical activity in the realm of contemporary English-language haiku.⁸⁴

To be sure, English-language haiku poets and critics need not look to Japan for inspiration, much less permission, to establish their own aesthetic priorities. The Anglophone world also need not be schooled by Japan or any other nation or region in how to handle

84. Writing in 2006, Charles Trumbull also noted the dearth of translations of Japanese haiku journals and “other information” about contemporary Japanese haiku, and the significant problem the absence of those translations creates: “It cannot be said that Western haiku poets can find enough journal translations and other information about contemporary Japanese haiku and criticism to keep up adequately.” Trumbull, Charles. “The American Haiku Movement: Part II,” p. 3.

the issues and associated poetic themes unique to each country represented in the global ELH sphere. But a younger tradition can always learn from one of earlier origins and longer duration. At present, the *gendai* haiku literature and the insightful tradition of critical commentary on that literature from the birthplace of haiku remain largely linguistically inaccessible to the English-speaking world. The style of English-language haiku will continue to change, grow, enliven, and renew itself to the extent fresh ideas enter into circulation in the ELH realm. The Kon Nichi Translation Group's published translations of *gendai* haiku demonstrate that, as in the earliest days of haiku in English, good translations of haiku can enrich English-language haiku today and into the future.

APPENDIX A

Gendai Haiku Poets Translated by the Kon Nichi Translation Group

Hoshinaga Fumio

Hasegawa Kai

Uda Kiyoko

Tsubouchi Nenten

Yagi Mikajo

Onishi Yasuyo

Kawana Tsugio

Maeda Hiroshi

Morisu Ran

Ikeda Sumiko

Oi Tsuneyuki

Takatō Akane

Kōno Saki

Tanaka Ami

Satō Ayaka

Tsugawa Eriko

APPENDIX B

Kon Nichi Translation Group Member Biographies

Richard GILBERT, Ph.D., is Emeritus Professor, Graduate School of Social and Cultural Sciences, Department of English Literature, Kumamoto University. He founded the Kon Nichi Translation Group in 2004. Books on haiku include *Poetry as Consciousness: Haiku Forests, Space of Mind, and an Ethics of Freedom* (Keibunsha, 2018, 304 pp.) and *The Disjunctive Dragonfly* (Red Moon Press, 2013, 132 pp.). “Disjunctive Dragonfly,” the original 2004 article (*Modern Haiku* 35:2, pp. 21-44), is revised in *The Routledge Global Haiku Reader* (Routledge 2023). Recent essays and translations appear as “Creative Blooms,” (*The Haiku Foundation*; tinyurl.com/creative-blooms). He is founder and senior editor of the *Heliosparrow Poetry Journal* (heliosparrow.com). Translation activities include *Presents of Mind* (Japanese/English; Jim Kacian, Red Moon Press, 2006), awarded the 2007 Haiku Society of America Mildred Kanterman Award for International Collaboration; he served as a consulting co-translator of *Gasenshū: The Systematic Compilation of Kōans in Zen Buddhism* (Ningen Zen Kyōdan, 2006, 192 pp.). Subtitled video interviews with noted haiku poets are online (gendaihaiku.com); a four volume series on Kaneko Tohta (Red Moon Press, 2011 – 2013) was awarded the Touchstone Award for Distinguished Criticism; collected and revised in *Haiku as Life: A Kaneko Tohta Omnibus — Essays, an Interview, Commentaries and Haiku in Translation* (Red Moon Press, 2018, 524 pp.) winner of the Touchstone Distinguished Books Award 2019. In 2008, his first book on haiku theory, *Poems of Consciousness: Contemporary Japanese & English language Haiku in Cross-cultural Perspective* (Red Moon Press, 306 pp.) was awarded the 2009 Mildred Kanterman Award for Haiku Criticism and Poetry. He has served

as a judge of the Kusamakura International Haiku Competition, and his haiku are anthologized in *Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years* (Kacian et al, Norton, 2013, 2016, 464 pp.) and *The Living Haiku Anthology* (livinghaikuanthology.com).

MASAHIRO Hori, Ph.D., is Professor of English Linguistics and Stylistics, Kumamoto Gakuen University, Japan. He became a founding member of the Kon Nichi Haiku Translation Group in 2002. His *Investigating Dickens' Style: A Collocational Analysis* (Palgrave, UK, 2004, 251 pp.) was awarded the Corpus Linguistics Association Prize (Japan) in 2005. Recent books and articles include: *Can Japanese Culture be Translated into English? Has Zen Buddhism Taken Root in European Culture?* (Japanese; Hitsuji Shobo 2024, 210 pp.), *Natural and Accurate English through Collocations* (Japanese; Shogakkan Square, 2023, 208 pp.), *English Stylistics* (Japanese; Taishukan, 2019, 272 pp.), *English Collocations Learned through Exercises* (Japanese; Kenkyusha 2011, 209 pp.), *Introduction to Collocation Studies in English* (Japanese; Kenkyusha 2009, 240 pp.), *A Chronological and Comparative Study of Body Language* (ed., Kaitakusha, 2018, 180 pp.), *Stylistic Studies of Literature: In Honour of Professor Hiroyuki Ito* (ed., Peter Lang 2009, 257 pp.), *Chronological Approaches to Collocation: New Perspectives in Studies of English and Japanese* (Japanese; co-author, Hitsuji Shobo 2009, 224 pp.), *Handbook of English Grammar for Writing* (Japanese; co-author, Kenkyusha, 2008, 317 pp.), “Can Zen Koans be Translated?: The World of Zen Seen through Linguistic Analysis” (Japanese; 2005); and, “Can Japanese Culture be Translated?: The Case of Musashi Miyamoto’s *The Book of Five Rings*” (Japanese; 2008). He has also co-authored the series *My Word* (Shamrock in the Sky Books, 1995, 1996, 1998, 95 pp.), and co-translated (into Japanese) Tobias Smollett’s *The Adventure of Roderick Random* (Aratake, 1999, 501 pp.).

Itō Yūki, Ph.D., is Associate Professor at Josai University, Japan. At age sixteen he began writing haiku, contributing to the magazine, *TILL*. One of the judges of its “Haiku Corner,” noted poet Morisu Ran, invited him to join the Saien (Dithyrambs) haiku circle. In 2001, he joined the Modern Haiku Association. That same year, he joined HIHI (Silent Snowfall), the haiku circle led by noted poet Hoshinaga Fumio. In 2002, he became a founding member of the Kon Nichi Haiku Translation Group. He received his Doctorate in Literature from Kumamoto University in 2011, for his dissertation, *The Double War: Yeats’s Philosophy and Sense of National Identity in Evolution, from John Sherman through ‘Meditations in Time of Civil War.’* Publications include *New Rising Haiku: The Evolution of Modern Japanese Haiku and the Haiku Persecution Incident* (Red Moon Press, 2007); revised and republished in *The Routledge Global Haiku Reader* (Routledge 2022); the noted translation series on Kaneko Tohta in four volumes (Red Moon Press 2011-13), now compiled and revised as: *Haiku as Life: A Kaneko Tohta Omnibus—Essays, an Interview, Commentaries and Haiku in Translation* (Red Moon Press 2019); and the ESL/EFL textbook, *Grammar Discovery* (Cengage Learning, 2013). After working as an Adjunct Lecturer of English at several universities in Kumamoto, he accepted an editorial position in academic publishing in Tokyo, and now works for the English and liberal arts program at Josai University.

David OSTMAN, Ph.D., is Associate Professor in the Department of English, Faculty of Foreign Studies at Kumamoto Gakuen University, Kumamoto, Japan. He received his doctorate in Literature from the Graduate School of Social and Cultural Sciences, Kumamoto University, in March, 2019. In 2009, he became a member of the Kon Nichi Haiku Translation Group. His dissertation, *Gaining Intercultural Competence through Literature: A Contemporary Curriculum for the University Classroom*, introduced a narrative-literature based and empathy centered approach to facilitating

cultural understanding and pro-social attitude development in university EFL education—topics on which he presented and published extensively, 2017–2024. He received his MA from the Faculty of Information Studies, Kumamoto University (March 2008), after obtaining a BA in East Asian History, University of Alberta. His MA thesis (in Japanese), *Japanese Editorial Representation of the Japanese/Korean Relationship*, utilizes corpus-collocation software to examine how the Japanese media has framed the historically troubled relationship between the two countries.

Koun FRANZ, MFA, completed his graduate studies in Creative Writing (Fiction) at Eastern Washington University, and in Counselling Psychology at Yorkville University. He is a Soto Zen priest and founder of Thousand Harbours Zen in Halifax, NS, and former editor of *Buddhadharma: The Practitioner's Guide*. He was the Resident Priest of the Anchorage Zen Community (2006–2010) and a full-time Lecturer, teaching Buddhist Studies and Japanese Language at the University of Alaska, Anchorage (2006–2010), as well as an Adjunct Lecturer at Alaska Pacific University (2008–2010). Koun became a member of the Kon Nichi Haiku Translation Group in 2009. Koun's Zen lectures in English can be found on the Thousand Harbours Zen podcast and on *YouTube*; his writing can be found at *nyoho.com* and *lionsroar.com*. He served as a Special Lecturer to the Shōgoji (Temple) International Open Ango (an intensive monastic training period), Kikuchi, Kumamoto (2005–present), and has worked at various temples in Japan as a priest, lecturer, and interpreter. He was a consulting co-translator of *Gasenshū: The Systematic Compilation of Kōans in Zen Buddhism* (Ningen Zen Kyōdan, 2006, 192 pp.), and is currently completing a translation of Echū Kyūma's *Kesa no Kenkyū* (*Great Robe of Liberation: A Study of the Kesa*) with Yuko Okumura.

Tracy FRANZ, MFA (Creative Writing), is the Instructional Design and Curriculum Manager for the Department of English Language Studies at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, Canada, where she designs, develops, and delivers courses for English language learners and teaching professionals. She became a member of the Kon Nichi Haiku Translation Group in 2011. She has previously taught EAL and writing at Sojo University (Kumamoto, Japan), University of Alaska (Anchorage, USA), and Shokei University (Kumamoto). Her essays have appeared in *Lotus Petals in the Snow: Voices of Canadian Buddhist Women* (Sumeru), in *Lion's Roar* (magazine), and *Tricycle Magazine*. Her memoir, *My Year of Dirt and Water: Journal of a Zen Monk's Wife in Japan* (Stone Bridge Press, 2018), was a *New York Times Book Review* Editor's Choice selection.

KANAMITSU Takeyoshi, was born in Kumamoto, Japan, graduating from Ryukyu University with a BA in Japanese Literature. In 2002, he became a founding member of the Kon Nichi Haiku Translation Group. Living in Tokyo, from 1992, he began composing and publishing haiku in English, first under the instruction of Catherine Urquhart. "Takke" has read widely in Japanese haiku culture, literature and history. His haibun, *The Hot Season of Thailand and Cambodia*, was published by The Meguro Fellowship (1998).

APPENDIX C

Richard Gilbert : Translation-related works in Summary

“The Disjunctive Dragonfly: A New Approach to English-Language Haiku.” Gilbert, Richard. *The Routledge Global Haiku Reader*, James Shea, Grant Caldwell, eds. (Revised, updated 2004 essay) (Routledge, June 30, 2023, 344pp.). ISBN: 9781032272658

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“Creative Blooms 12: Satō Ayaka (Part 2).” Kon Nichi Translation Group. *The Haiku Foundation* 1(12) July 2020 <https://thehaikufoundation.org/creative-blooms-12-sato-ayaka-part-2/>

“Creative Blooms 11: Satō Ayaka (Part 1)” Kon Nichi Translation Group. *The Haiku Foundation* 1(11) June 2020 <https://thehaikufoundation.org/creative-blooms-11-sato-ayaka-part-1/>

“Creative Blooms 9: Tanaka Ami (Part 2).” Kon Nichi Translation Group. *The Haiku Foundation* 1(9) May 2020 <https://thehaikufoundation.org/creative-blooms-9-tanaka-ami-part-2/>

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“Creative Blooms 3: Kōno Saki (Part 1).” Kon Nichi Translation Group. *The Haiku Foundation* 1(3) February 2020 <https://thehaikufoundation.org/creative-blooms-3-kono-saki-part-1/>

Haiku as Life: A Kaneko Tohta Omnibus—Essays, an Interview, Commentaries and Haiku in Translation. Kon Nichi Translation Group (Red Moon Press, March 2019, 516pp.) ISBN: 9781947271401

Poetry as Consciousness: Haiku Forests, Space of Mind, and an Ethics of Freedom. Gilbert, Richard. (Keibunsha, March, 2018, 304pp.). ISBN: 9784863301894 http://www.keibunsha.jp/books/9784863301894_english.html

Earth in Sunrise: A Course for English-language Study. Gilbert, Richard, Ostman, David. (Red Moon Press, Feb, 2017, 2022, 152pp.) ISBN: 9781936848867

The Disjunctive Dragonfly: A New Approach to English-Language Haiku. Gilbert, R. (Red Moon Press, 2013, 2022, 136pp.) ISBN: 978-1533612403

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“How *Presents of Mind* as a Bilingual Book, and Performance, Came to Be.” Gilbert, Richard, text; Kacian, Jim, Kanamitsu Takeyoshi, Cairns, Jeffery, spoken-word recording and original music. *The Living Haiku Anthology*, March 2014. <https://livinghaikuanthology.com/readings/haiku-presentations/2745-presents-of-mind-by-jim-kacian,-jeff-cairns-and-takke-kanamitsu.html>

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The Poet's AHA

Shelley BAKER-GARD

ABSTRACT: An overview of the history, activities and mission of the American Haiku Archives.

A poet has many ways to become enlightened. One way is to be aware of the American Haiku Archives (AHA), a unique organization dedicated to the advocacy and preservation of haiku and related Japanese influenced poetry forms. The AHA has stored and cataloged the largest public collection of haiku related documents outside of Japan at the California State Library in Sacramento. This is not a stagnant collection as the AHA librarians and volunteers continue to archive hundreds of mostly English manuscripts, articles, photographs, letters of haiku poets and much more (Welch “Striking Gold”), and each work is carefully enclosed in state-of-the-art preservation materials. The library has restricted access to the AHA materials as detailed in the following summary.

The archives are not open for browsing as they are considered part of the library’s special collections, and no item can be checked out. Currently, little of the AHA collection is digitized. However, the library staff does catalog each item received and the California State Library website has a modern easy to use “Online Catalog” search tool. For example, a search on the word “haiku” brought up over 6,000 results; a refined search on “Far Beyond the Field haiku” had three results. Like other library catalogs, each search result provides a link to a detailed description of the material archived. It should be noted that the search results will include not only the AHA materials but also books owned by the California State Library. Some of their materials are online in a digital format and hard copies. However, only California State employees can check them out. AHA materials are clearly indicated in the details of the search results.

Researchers and haiku aficionados are encouraged to make an in-person trip to the library to view the AHA collection. Currently, the library requires an appointment to be made three days in advance which can be accomplished from the library website.



California State Library, 900 “N” Street, Sacramento (American Haiku Archives).

Once there, visitors must request the AHA document or book from a staff librarian who will lead the visitors to the history room and bring the item to them. The library staff has also posted on its Tumblr account sample haiku from multiple AHA haiku books superimposed on photographs they thought matched the subject of the haiku. Anyone is able to view these haiku online by clicking on the library’s social media link for Tumblr which is the “t” that appears at the bottom of the library’s homepage. Once on Tumblr, one can use its search tool and query for “haiku” — this will display the selection entitled “Glimpses from the American Haiku Archives.” Each haiku that rotates onto the screen includes the poet’s name and source information. After viewing these haiku and using the library’s catalog, there is no doubt that the haiku poet community is fortunate the California State Library has been willing to house this extensive collection since 1996.

TEN

The history of how the American Haiku Archives became part of the library is also illuminating as it is emblematic of the passion many poets feel toward this short form of poetry. The English-language haiku genre began at the turn of the 20th century. Between 1902 and 1904, three articles written by Basil Hall Chamberlain, Sadakichi Hartmann, and Yone Noguchi respectively, introduced the English-speaking poetry community to Japanese poetry forms. Noguchi's article that appeared in the 1904 edition of *Reader* was titled "A Proposal to American Poets." He wrote about the short *hokku* form (now known primarily as haiku) and encouraged "long-winded English-speaking poets" to "Pray, you try Japanese *hokku*, my American Poets!" He also provided multiple examples



An example of a haiku on the California State Library's Tumblr account. This one was written by Arakida Moritake (1473–1549) from the anthology *A Little Treasury of Haiku* stored at the AHA.

of his own *hokku* in English. These articles piqued the interest of the imagist poets who were composing short poetry that according to Ezra Pound reflected a moment in time. In 1913 Pound wrote a two-line poem, “In a Station of the Metro” using a haiku-like style (Baker-Gard et.al. 187-189). In the following decades, the interest in composing haiku in English continued to grow throughout North America.

By the 1960 poets had many tools at hand to delve into Japanese influenced poetry forms. The Asian historian, translator and haiku theorist R.H. Blyth had published multiple volumes on the history and form of Japanese haiku. Poets writing haiku had developed guides on how to compose them; three of the earliest guides were written by Harold G. Henderson, Asataro Miyamori (as a section in *Haiku Poems, Ancient and Modern*) and Kenneth Yasuda (Baker-Gard et.al. 187-189). Haiku in English increasingly appeared throughout the land in chapbooks, anthologies, and journals (In 1963, *American Haiku* was the first English-language journal published.). The increasing popularity of the form motivated a team of New York poets to organize the Haiku Society of America (HSA) in 1968 (Welch “AHA Inauguration-1996”). As the HSA continued to grow with an international membership, so did the number of English publications of haiku and other Japanese influenced poetry. By the 1990s the HSA collection of these works, which were being stored by HSA officers, had become large enough to need an official library to house them and discussions began as to where it could be located (Welch).

In 1995, a committee consisting of Jerry Kilbride, Garry Gay, George Olczak, and Michael Dylan Welch actively began promoting California as a home for the HSA collection, especially after Kevin Starr, the State Librarian at the California State Library, suggested to his friend and haiku poet Jerry Kilbride that the collection be stored at the California State Library in Sacramento. The officers of the HSA began to consider Starr’s offer as the library had state of the

art archival processes and enough room to allow for future growth of the collection. In addition, Elizabeth Searle Lamb worked with Kilbride to donate her personal library of haiku materials (larger than the HSA collection), to the project which Welch proposed be called the American Haiku Archive (later Archives). Gay, Kilbride, Olczak and Welch enlarged their committee to form an advisory committee. The additional members were Tom Clausen, Elizabeth Searle Lamb, Ce Rosenow, and George Swede and all had unique perspectives that helped move the proposal to a reality. Additionally, the Haiku Poets of Northern California group (based in San Francisco) and the Yuki Teiki Haiku Society (based in San Jose, California) added their voices and efforts to support the project. However, a few HSA members were not convinced Sacramento was the best location partly because the Haiku Society of America (HSA) was founded by New York poets and the West Coast was a long way away from cities where many HSA members resided. Yet, there did not exist any viable alternate location for a haiku library. Welch convincingly pointed out in his essay “Striking Gold” (1995) the advantages of the California State Library and the fact that the HSA collection was in jeopardy of deterioration due to the lack of proper storage. He distributed the essay as a handout at the October 1995 “Haiku Chicago” conference convened by the HSA and the Haiku International Association. This essay and the AHA committee members were able to persuade the majority of the HSA officers that Starr’s offer was a tremendous opportunity to create a haiku library that could grow in a secure and protected environment (Welch). In January of 1996, the HSA executive committee voted unanimously to house the HSA collection at the California State Library.

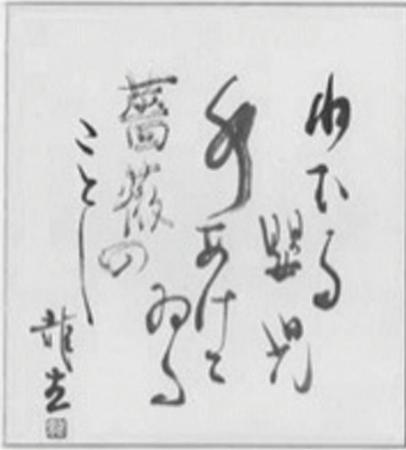
The AHA advisory board quickly worked on the details with Starr. On July 12, 1996, the American Haiku Archives was inaugurated with fanfare. A celebration was held at the California State Library with around 70 people attending including Hiroshi Furusawa

the director of the Consulate General of Japan, HSA president Barbara Ressler, and Kathleen Kimura the president of the Japan Society of Northern California (Welch “Inauguration”). The AHA was established with an advisory board that works with the public and library staff on questions and concerns regarding the collection. A complete list of the current board members and their responsibilities is found on the AHA website.

The AHA also has an honorary curator position which the AHA board announces on a yearly basis near the July 12th anniversary of its inauguration. The first curator (from 1996 – 98) was Elizabeth Searle Lamb who had generously donated her large collection of haiku texts and materials to the new archives. However, this was not the reason she was chosen as Searle Lamb was an accomplished haiku poet, past president of HSA, and an editor of the HSA journal *Frogpond*. She was also a fascinating woman with many life experiences she incorporated into numerous essays on travel, music, and life in general. The AHA website has a link to a brief biography of her written by Miriam Sagan. Lamb was an excellent first choice for curator (American Haiku Archives Curators). The AHA advisory board criteria for selecting the curator is detailed on the AHA website but it basically must be a haiku poet or scholar who lives in North America and has made significant contributions promoting haiku and related forms to the world. All the curators have a biography on the AHA web site listing their accomplishments. There are no responsibilities for the honorary curator, although each new one is featured prominently on the AHA website, and recent curators have also presented virtual web readings of their poetry. The current curator (2023 – 24) is Fay Aoyagi who has greatly enhanced the body of knowledge on haiku including publishing multiple books of her own haiku, creating a blog site with over 5,000 haiku translated from Japanese into English, and serving as the HSA president from 2016 through 2019 (American Haiku Archives).

TEN

Besides the HSA and Elizabeth Searle Lamb collections, the AHA also received significant donations of books from other donors who are listed on the Major Donors link of the AHA website. One of the most interesting and beautiful portfolios at the AHA is twenty-four *shikishi* (haiku written in Japanese calligraphy on special art cards made for poem inscription) that were a gift from the Museum of Haiku Literature in Tokyo. This is perhaps the most valuable holding at AHA as it has been estimated that as a set, they are worth as much as \$500,000 (Welch “Touching the Moon”). Their value reflects the fact that the haiku on the *shikishi* were composed by well-known and respected haiku poets in Japan. Renowned Japanese haiku critic Kenkichi Yamamoto (1907–1988) and Japanese poet Sumio Mori (1919–2010), who was also an editor of the Japanese haiku journal *Kanrai* (*Cold Thunder*), presented the *shikishi* to the Haiku Society of America at a 1978 HSA meeting in New York. This was also the tenth anniversary of HSA, so it was a special occasion and both Yamamoto and Mori were guest speakers at the meeting. They also brought with them 500 copies of a small green book *Haiku Selected for Shikishi* translated by Hiroake Sato that contained all the haiku in English. These books were given to each of the attendees and new HSA members until depleted. Over the years, the *shikishi* were displayed at multiple events and in 2006 were sent to the American Haiku Archives. Michael Dylan Welch wrote an essay on these *shikishi* in 2018, “Touching the Moon: Twenty-four Shikishi” which can be found on his Graceguts.com website and includes pictures of all twenty-four *shikishi*. The essay was first published in the HSA winter 2018 issue of *Frogpond* (75–86). In this article, Welch and Emiko Miyashita provided new and vibrant translations of the haiku. Exhibitions of replicas of the *shikishi* took place at the California State Library from December 2017 to April 2018 (Welch “Touching the Moon”), and at the 2018 Seabeck Haiku Get-a-way in Seabeck, Washington.



飯田 龍太

Iida Ryūta, 1920–2007

ねむる嬰兒水あけてゐる薔薇のごとし

nemuru yaya mizu akete iru bara no gotoshi

like a cut rose

drawing up water

sleeping newborn

Picture of one of the *shikishi* in the collection with an updated translation (Welch “Touching the Moon”).

Finally, it’s enlightening to realize that gifts and donations to the American Haiku Archives do not necessarily need to be “valuable” because of course that is a relative term and as Starr stated “. . . let history decide its value” (American Haiku Archives). Donations of haiku related poetry books and other materials is ongoing. If anyone desires to make a donation, the AHA website has a link and form to fill out on how to do this. Before filling out the form, one should also check the California State Library catalog to see if a particular text is already archived. The AHA advisory board members can also be contacted for suggestions and advice. There is no question that, as the years have gone by since the American Haiku Archives was established in 1996, it too has increased in value as a perfect location to securely store, preserve, and share with the world its amazing library of haiku poetry.

TEN

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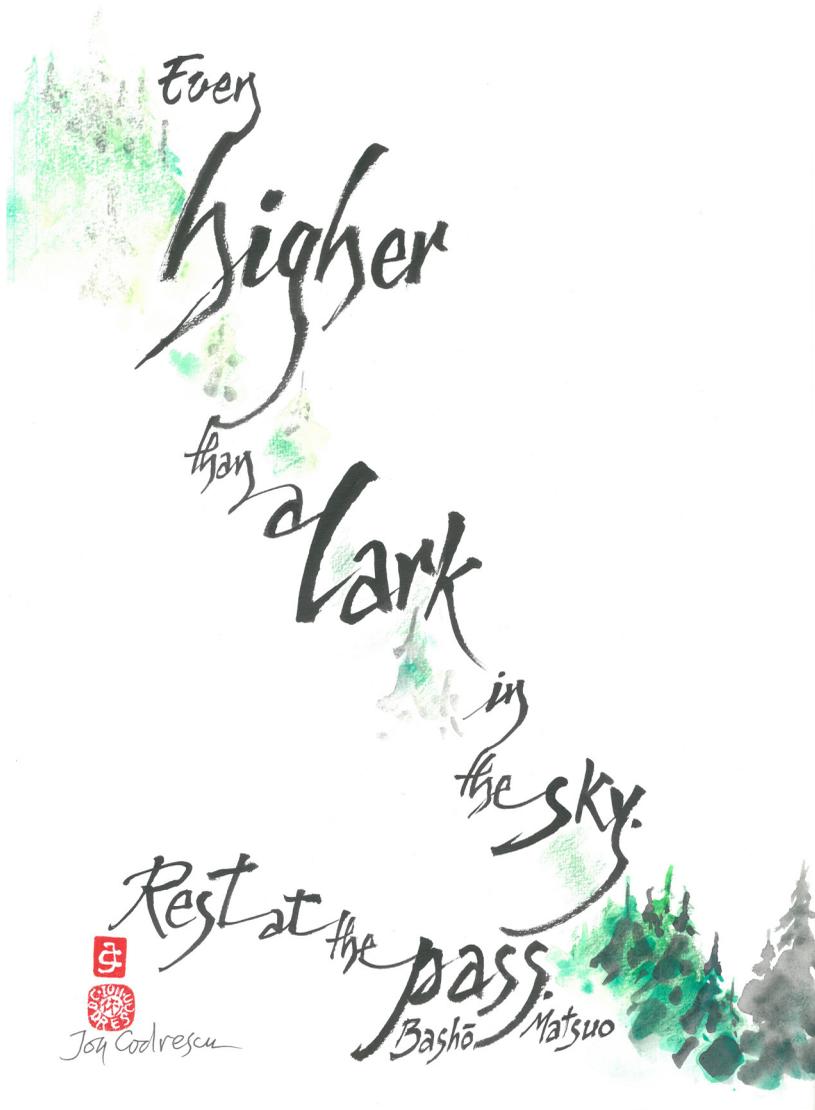
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Poet: MATSUO Bashō / Artist: Ion CODRESCU
Translation: Klaus-Dieter WIRTH (see page 240)

JAPANESE HAIKU METER:

A Comparative Linguistic Approach

BO ZHAN

ABSTRACT: Although premodern and modern Japanese haiku are distinct types, they are considered to share the same meter (or rhythmic structure). However, controversy persists regarding the rhythmic unit and prosodic structure of Japanese haiku (Asano; Gilbert and Yoneoka; Kawamoto “The Poetics”). Moreover, discussions on haiku prosody and its adaptations are predominantly conducted in English-language contexts, with limited exploration within the East Asian linguistic group. To address this gap, this study adapts a comparative linguistic framework, triangulating poetic data from three languages to explore the meter of these two types of haiku. The paper begins by examining changes in poetic form and prosody from premodern to modern haiku, based on an analysis of poetic anthologies. It then explores differences in the meter of Japanese haiku, Chinese recent-style verse, and the English sonnet. Finally, through specific examples, the paper discusses how haiku has been adapted into Chinese and English contexts while retaining features of its original rhythmic structure.

The findings show that although some changes have occurred in modern Japanese poetic forms, Japanese poetic meter has remained consistent to this day. The dominant rhythmic unit has not changed, the distribution

of special mora remains random, and the 5-7-5 pattern continues to be the standard. The adaptation—or "translation"—of Japanese haiku into Chinese and English demonstrates the emergence of hybrid poetic forms that integrate linguistic features from different languages. In Chinese, haiku (hanpai) takes a conservative approach, merging the 5-7-5 Japanese poetic form with traditional Chinese elements such as tonal regulations and end rhyme. In English, early adaptations of haiku followed a short-long-short syllable structure, often featuring two trochees or iambs per line with a syntactic break after the fourth foot, resembling the classical "heroic couplet" of the English sonnet.

0. Introduction

It is well-known that haiku is a traditional Japanese poetic form that has gained popularity worldwide. Its simplified meter has been adapted—one might even say translated—into different languages, including English and Chinese. Meter is exclusive to metrical or regulated verse, in which each line follows a consistent rhythmic structure, so one may wonder whether Japanese meter can be translated at all. Following Martin, haiku in this study is defined as a traditional form of Japanese poetry consisting of three groups, with seventeen rhythmic units per verse arranged in a pattern of five, seven, and five units per group. However, historically, at least, there are actually two types of haiku: the premodern haiku, or *hokku* 発句, and the modern haiku, which was invented by Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902). *Hokku* serves as the first stanza in a sequence of linked verses and refers to works by poets like Matsuo Bashō (1644–94). Although sometimes treated as “traditional haiku,” it is not a stand-alone poetic form like haiku itself. Kern makes a pointed differentiation between haiku and *hokku*, claiming the former is a “modern form of global poetry,” while the latter is “one or more stanzas of witty linked-verse sequence, played as a literary word game, . . . with roots going back yet further into the mists of antiquity” (xxxii).

However, the distinction between the two types of haiku is rarely made when discussing their meter, as many studies assume that there are universal rules applicable to all types of haiku. More specifically, most haiku follow the 5-7-5 pattern on the surface, although there are disagreements on what counts as the rhythmic unit and what is the underlying structure. The idea of underlying and surface structures can be traced back to Chomsky & Halle, in which they argue the deep structure, or the underlying meaning of the sentence can be expressed in different surface structures, or the phenetic representations of the sentence. When discussing

the rhythmic unit of haiku, some claim that it is the mora (Asano; Cole and Miyashita; Aroui; Ryan), while others claim that it is the syllable (Halle and Keyser “Meter in General”; Kawamoto “The Poetics”, “Onsūritsu”). Additionally, an 8-8-8 metrical pattern with phonological silence is used in haiku reading to account for the 5-7-5 *-on* (“sound”) and other *-on* counts (Gilbert and Yoneoka; Asano; Kawamoto “The Poetics”), but the location and length of the silence varies among scholars. Setting aside the underlying pattern of haiku, if the rhythmic unit cannot be verified first, it may be difficult to understand the haiku meter accurately. Fundamentally, does the rhythmic unit change in the two types of haiku, as the Japanese language evolves? Unfortunately, there are rarely any studies that examine the haiku meter statistically, let alone its change from the premodern to modern period.

Furthermore, although there are many discussions on haiku meter from the perspective of the English language (e.g., how to emulate the haiku meter into English, or the Japanese mora to English syllable), very few studies are conducted from the perspective of the Chinese language, despite its strong influence on Japanese poetry. According to Marra, “It was exactly the assimilation of Chinese poetry that made the Japanese poets aware of their own particular tradition, urging them to define rules and techniques in which the raw material of their own linguistic peculiarities could be organized” (27). Before haiku was developed, there are in fact *kudai waka* 句題和歌, poems that are created based on a line in a Chinese verse.¹ Another Chinese influence is the number of units per line, and some claim that the 5-7-5 pattern was created based on the heptasyllabic and pentasyllabic structure of recent-style Chinese verse. (Tsuchida; Higa). If so, is the meter of Chinese recent-style verse similar to that of Japanese haiku? If not, what are the differences? On top of that, what will a comparison among

1. *Waka* is the classical Japanese poetic form, which “was the standard genre for almost a thousand years” and haiku “originally developed from *waka*” (Kawamoto 711).

regulated verses in Chinese, Japanese, and English deepen our understanding of Japanese haiku meter?

To answer the above questions, this paper adapts a comparative linguistic framework to explore the meter of Japanese haiku through the following two approaches: 1) comparing it with not only English regulated verse (e.g., English sonnet), but also Chinese regulated verse (e.g., Chinese recent-style verse); and 2) examining its adaptation in English and Chinese haiku, mainly from its form rather than content. This study will triangulate poetic data from three languages, in the hope to get a better idea of the original Japanese haiku meter, and where it might be headed in the future, as well as how to render the meter into English.

The study begins by introducing basic linguistic concepts (e.g., syllable vs. mora) relevant to haiku prosody, and compares their status in Japanese with that in English and Chinese. Next, it examines the changes in poetic form and prosody from pre-modern to modern haiku based on data analysis. Following this, the paper will explain the differences among the meter of Japanese haiku, Chinese recent-style verse, and the English sonnet. Finally, by providing specific examples, it will discuss how haiku has been adapted in Chinese and English contexts while preserving features from both metrical systems. By conducting this comparison, the study will shed new light on our understanding of Japanese haiku.

1. Syllable and mora in Japanese, Chinese, and English

Syllable is a universal prosodic unit that is incorporated to the prosodic hierarchy of various languages. Prosodic units are organized in a prosodic hierarchy in which higher-level units dominate lower-level units. (1) shows a standard prosodic hierarchy, which may have different variations across languages.

(1) A Standard Prosodic Hierarchy (Féry 36)

v	Utterance	(corresponds roughly to a paragraph or more)
ι-phrase	Intonation Phrase	(corresponds roughly to a clause)
Φ-phrase	Prosodic Phrase	(corresponds roughly to a syntactic phrase)
ω-word	Prosodic word	(corresponds roughly to a grammatical word)
Σ	Foot	(metrical unit: trochee, iamb . . .)
σ	Syllable	(strings of segments: CV, CVC, . . .)
μ	Mora	(unit of syllable weight)

According to Féry, the lower-level units, including foot, syllable and mora, are “rhythmic” categories that are relevant when discussing meter (37). Mora plays an important role in Japanese language, while it is less important in English and Chinese. According to Féry, in English language, although there is an association between syllable weight and stress, the syllable is the stress-bearing unit. Similarly, the syllable is the tone-bearing unit in Chinese. The mora is only a covert unit that does not function in Chinese at all (Zhang).

Tsujimura claims that a mora in Japanese has one of the three realizations: 1. (C)V; 2. The first part of a long consonant; 3. Syllable-final, or nasal /n/ (66). Labrune further divides it into two types, as shown in (2).

(2) Two mora types (Labrune 116)

a. Regular

- i. CV *ka* ‘mosquito’, *michi* ‘way’, *chōsha* ‘author’
- ii. V (except non-initial *i*) *e* ‘picture’, *kaori* ‘fragrance’

b. Special

- i. Moraic nasal (/N/) *hon* ‘book’, *shinde* ‘to die and’
- ii. Second part of a long vowel (/R/) *tō* ‘tower’, *oniisan* ‘older brother’
- iii. Non-initial *i* *kai* ‘shell’, *marui* ‘round’
- iv. First part of an obstruent geminate (/Q/) *motte* ‘to hold and’,
kappa ‘river imp’

TEN

Kubozono argues for the importance of mora in Japanese, as it carries accent: the loanword accent rule places the accent on the third-to-last mora of the word (“Mora and Syllable”). This is shown in (3), where the letters in bold indicate the location of the accent (or the place where a high pitch is applied).

(3) Examples of loan word accent rules: an accent is placed on the third-to-last mora

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------|
| a. ka.p.pu.ke.e.ki | “cap cake” |
| b. ma.i.ku.ro.so.fu.to | “Microsoft” |
| c. te.re.bi | “TV” |

Labrune questions the universality of syllable by going further to claim that Tokyo Japanese is a “mora-counting mora language,” although the two types of mora, regular CV mora and special mora should be distinguished (114). Sato supports Labrune’s view by arguing that the prosodic hierarchy in Tokyo Japanese contains the mora but not the syllable. The consensus is that mora plays a significant role in Japanese prosody, since it is the basic prosodic unit of Japanese. As Labrune puts it, mora is “the unit of rhythm and of prosodic measurement of the Japanese language” and “the metrical unit of Japanese in poetry and singing” (115). This is because the mora is also considered an isochronous unit, with each mora taking the same length of time.

Conversely, Kubozono (“Mora and Syllable”), Kawahara, Ito and Mester (“Japanese morphophonemics”), and McCawley acknowledge the existence of syllables in Japanese and claim that a syllable in Japanese can be either light (has one mora) or heavy (has two mora). In some cases (e.g., recent loan words), super-heavy syllables that contain three moras are also acceptable.

(4) Syllables in Japanese (Labrune 116; Kawahara 170)²

a. light syllables

- | | |
|--------|------------------------------------|
| i. V | <i>i</i> ‘stomach’ |
| ii. CV | <i>te</i> ‘hand’, <i>cha</i> ‘tea’ |

b. heavy syllables (the syllable in bold is a heavy syllable)

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| i. First half of geminate /Q/ | <i>kitte</i> ‘stamp’ |
| ii. Moraic nasal /N/ | <i>hen</i> ‘strange’ |
| iii. Second part of long vowel /R/ | <i>tō</i> ‘ten’ |
| iv. Second part of diphthong /I/ | <i>ai</i> ‘love’ |

c. super heavy syllables

- | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|
| i. CVVN | <i>sain</i> ‘sign’ |
| ii. CVRQ | <i>kaatinkaatto</i> ‘blow one’s top’ |

However, the syllable plays only a limited role in Tokyo Japanese (Kubozono “On the University”, “The syllable”; Haraguchi; McCawley). For example, when the loan word accent rule illustrated in (3) does not apply.

(5) Examples of loan word accent rules: an accent is placed on the syllable containing the third-last mora (Kubozono 43)

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------|
| a. ro -n.do-n | “London” |
| b. su. pa -i.da-a | “spider” |
| c. pe -e.pa-a | “paper” |
| d. so -k.ku.su | “socks” |

In (5), it is not the third-to-last but the fourth-to-last mora that carries the accent. However, if the syllable is regarded as the unit

2. For the CVV structure, according to Starr and Shih, if VV represents either a long vowel or Vi sequences, it is counted as one syllable. If VV represents different vowels (e.g., Kao), the first vowel along with its consonant (e.g., ka) counts as one syllable and the second vowel (e.g., o) forms a separate syllable. Although it is still controversial on whether Vi should be treated as the rime of a single syllable or two separate syllables, it tends to be considered as forming a single syllable compared to other VV sequences that consist of different vowels.

that bears the accent, (3) and (5) can be unified under one rule: “place an accent on the syllable containing the antepenultimate mora” (Kubozono 43).

When discussing the minimal abbreviated loan words in Japanese, Ito and Mester also refer to the syllable instead of the mora, since they claim that the structure of loan words consists of at least one binary foot, a foot and a syllable, or at most two feet (“Weak Layering”). McCawley goes as far as to claim that Japanese is a “mora-counting syllable language,” since an accent in Japanese cannot always fall on a mora. For example, the “N” in “hoN” cannot carry an accent.

According to Starr and Shih, when discussing the prosodic unit in Japanese, it is also salient to consider “potential differences among the strata of the Japanese lexicon” (2). According to Ito and Mester, there are four lexical strata of Japanese based on their historical origins: “Yamato,” “Mimetic,” “Sino-Japanese,” and “Foreign” (“Japanese Phonology”). Because English and Chinese are syllable-based languages, Starr and Shin claim that the influence of the syllable as a prosodic unit could be stronger in Sino-Japanese (of Chinese origin) and Foreign words (of English origin) when compared with words from the Yamato strata (of Japanese origin).

In fact, the analysis of poetic forms and text-setting (when text is arranged to fit into the rhythmic structure of a song) demonstrates that in Japanese, the syllable is a relevant prosodic unit (Starr and Shih; Takayama; Shibata). After analyzing data from English-translated and native Japanese songs, Starr and Shih found that although syllabic setting is found in all strata of the Japanese lexicon, it is more preferred in translated songs and foreign words.³

3. A syllabic setting indicates when a syllable consisting of multiple moras is assigned to only one note. A moraic setting indicates when a mora (including a special mora) is assigned to one note. For example, a moraic setting assigns two notes to the word hoN (ho-N), while a syllabic setting assigns one note to the word hoN.

There is also an increase in syllabic setting observed over time, which may suggest the rise of its salience in Japanese. Takayama claims that both the mora and the syllable can be the prosodic unit in Japanese modern tanka. Take the following example in (6) (Takayama 22). The letters in bold indicate where two moras are counted as one rhythmic unit.

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| (6) <i>i.ma</i> | <i>i.chi.ban</i> |
| now | the most |
| <i>i.ki.+ta.i</i> | <i>to.ko.rō</i> |
| go+ want | place |
| <i>i.t.te.+go.ran</i> | |
| say+ try to | |
| <i>i.ki.+ta.i</i> | <i>to.ko.ro+wa</i> |
| go+want | place+is |
| <i>a.na.ta.+no</i> | <i>to.ko.ro</i> |
| you+'s | place |
- “Tell me where you most want to go right now.
The place I want to go is where you are.”

In (6), both the syllable (e.g., *ban* in the first line) and the mora (e.g., *ma* in the first line) serve as a rhythmic unit. Takayama claims that from a native speaker's ear, this tanka sounds rhythmically well-formed, and it is only through this type of counting, the poem fulfills the 5-7-5-7-7 pattern of tanka.

Additionally, after researching the perception of *jiamari* 字余り (hypermeter) lines in Japanese senryū, Shibata claims that the Japanese rhythmic unit may have shifted to the syllable instead of the mora among younger generations (born in the Heisei period 平成, 1989–2019).⁴ Her findings indicate that these younger

4. According to Kern, senryū “was the predominant mode of haiku,” which is also a “seventeen-syllabet verse.” Opposite to the case of haiku, which is “a serious poem by a named poet about nature,” senryū is “an anonymous comic verse about human nature, with no season word or cut” (1-li).

generations tend to perceive some syllables with two moras (e.g., *tte*) as light syllables with only one mora, which might imply the emergence of the syllable as a prosodic unit in the Japanese language.

2. The prosody of premodern haiku and modern haiku

2.1 The aim and the methodology

Regardless of the prosodic change, no previous work has statistically examined the prosodic change from hokku to haiku. Does the poetic form change, and how? Does the rhythmic unit change? In fact, most studies assume the rhythmic unit of haiku and hokku to be the mora by providing only a few examples.

Even if the rhythmic unit proves to be the mora, examining the *jiamari* (hypermeter) lines in haiku and *hokku* should show whether the syllable can function as a secondary rhythmic unit. *Jiamari* lines are lines that have excessive letters. Although these deviate from the 5-7-5 pattern, they are still considered acceptable. According to Takayama, Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 discovered a feature of *jiamari* lines in *waka* from *Kokinshū* 古今集 (914) until *Kinyō Wakashū* 金葉和歌集 (1127) and *Shika Wakashū* 詞花和歌集 (1154): there is always a single-vowel syllable in the middle of the sentence.⁵

(7) *Jiamari* lines contain single-vowel syllables (Takayama 32, a *waka* from *Kokinshū*)

*to.shi.no.u.chi.ni/ ha.ru.ha.ki.ni.ke.ri/ hi.to.to.se.wo/
ko.zo.to.ya.i.ha.mu/ ko.to.shi.to.ya.i.ha.mu*

“In the span of a single year, spring has come once more. Should we call it the old year?

Or should we call it the new year?”

5. The single vowels, are /a/, /i/, /u/, and /o/, but not including /e/ (Takayama 32).

Although the first and fourth lines have one extra unit, they are still acceptable because the extra vowel attaches to the previous syllable, forming one rhythmic unit. However, not all single-vowel syllables undergo that change. For example, the fifth *i* in line four remains separate from the previous syllable, although the meaning of *ya.i.ha.mu* is identical in line four and line five.

This difference (treating *ya.i* as either two moras or one syllable) shows that during the time of *Kokinshū* (914), both the syllable and the mora are considered rhythmic units. Old Japanese was a syllable-timed language, and mora was introduced into Japanese during the period of Early Middle Japanese (800 – 1200) (Frellesvig 84). On the other hand, in Takayama's modern *tanka* example in (6), *jiamari* lines are permitted, and both the syllable and the mora continue to serve as rhythmic units.

So, what is the actual case in haiku and its predecessor, *hokku*, especially since both were established after the mora was introduced to Japanese? How many lines are *jiamari* lines? How many *jiamari* lines become regular under a syllable counting like in (7)? When the rhythmic unit is the syllable, it is possible to examine whether there is a distribution pattern of heavy and light syllables. If such a pattern can be found, it may suggest the future direction of Japanese haiku meter. Therefore, a comparison of not only regular lines but also *jiamari* lines in *hokku* and haiku should show prosodic changes from the premodern to the modern period, therefore providing a comprehensive view of the meter of haiku.

As for the methodology, first, a mora-counting and syllable-counting methodology following Starr and Shih are conducted on both premodern and modern haiku to confirm their rhythmic unit. Under a syllable counting, a special mora as defined in (2b) combines with the previous vowel is counted as one syllable. A /vv/ sequence that consists of the same vowel is also counted as one syllable because of the similarity it shares with a long vowel. In

TEN

addition, /vi/ and /vv/ sequences across word boundaries are also treated as one syllable if pronouncing the two vowels together does not change the meaning of the line. (8a) shows such an example of a /vv/ sequence and (8b) shows an example of a /vi/ sequence. The letters in bold are counted as one syllable.

(8) Examples of /vi/ and /vv/ sequences across word boundaries but counted as one syllable (Ozawa 342, 58)

- a. *fōku chū **ni** itsu*
fork mid-air in frozen
- b. *aozame ga **kite** iru*
sharks have come

Second, a syllable-counting are conducted on all the *jiamari* lines to see how many of them can change to regular lines. Next, the distribution of heavy and light syllables of those lines are examined to see whether there is a certain pattern. Last, how poetic forms change from the premodern to modern haiku are documented.

2.2 The data

The data is all from poetic anthologies based on the following three requirements. First, to ensure a correct counting of rhythmic units per group, it was important to have romanized Japanese of the original poem with line breaks, which excluded haiku anthologies published only in Japanese, since very few of them include line breaks.

The second is to ensure that the data can be regarded as representative examples of haiku. The two anthologies in this study were selected, because they are collections containing poems were selected by renowned scholars and poets as representative ones. The premodern haiku in this study were sourced from Faubion Bowers's compilation, *The Classic Tradition of Haiku: An Anthology*, published in 1996. The haiku in Bowers' book were selected and

translated by a variety of top-tier scholars in the field. The modern haiku in this study are sourced from Minoru Ozawa's book, *Well-Versed: Exploring Modern Japanese Haiku*, published in 2021. The haiku were selected by Ozawa himself, who is a leading haiku poet in the field and serves as the editor for the haiku journal, *Sawa*. The translator of these haiku is Janine Beichman, who is a scholar specializing in Japanese poetry and has published biographies of renowned poets, such as Masaoka Shiki and Yosano Akiko. Moreover, the two anthologies cover an assortment of poems and poets. Bowers' book includes 231 verses by 48 poets, and Ozawa's book selects 300 haiku by 300 different poets.

The last requirement is the relevant time span. The poems in Bowers' book cover a broad time span from the time immediately after linked verse fully developed (1488) until the death of the Japanese poet Shiki (1902), who invented the term haiku. That said, modern haiku data must additionally cover the time period after Meiji and up to the present era because of the prosodic change Shibata has observed among young generations born after 1989. Ozawa's book fulfills this requirement the best since its selection includes the most recent haiku.

Since the data analysis targets a three-group structure, any haiku that does not fulfill this requirement is not included in the dataset for this paper. 230 verses are incorporated in the dataset from *The Classic Tradition of Haiku*, given that one haiku (in the pattern 7-7) does not follow this requirement. In *Well-Versed*, there are three verses that are composed with either more than three lines or fewer than three lines (patterns 7-3-4-5, 3-4-7-5, and 9). Therefore, only 297 haiku from this compilation are incorporated in the dataset.

2.3 The result

Aligning with previous studies, the rhythmic units in both *The Classic Tradition of Haiku* and *Well-Versed* are confirmed to be the

TEN

mora. Compared with a syllable-counting, the percentage to get a regular 5-7-5 pattern is much higher when conducting a mora-counting: 78.4% and 81.4% of total poems in the two anthologies, respectively.

(9) Results of conducting a syllable-counting and a mora-counting in *The Classic Tradition of Haiku* and *Well-Versed*

Poems	<i>The Classic Tradition of Haiku</i>		<i>Well-Versed</i>	
	Mora-counting	Syllable-counting	Mora-counting	Syllable-counting
Regular (5-7-5)	181 (78.7%)	82 (35.6%)	242 (81.4%)	84 (28.2%)
Irregular	49 (21.3%)	148 (64.4%)	55 (18.6%)	213 (71.8%)

The syllable serves as a secondary rhythmic unit in both anthologies, since some *jiamari* lines turn into regular lines under a syllable counting. However, the status of the mora might be strengthened in modern haiku, which is opposite to Shibata's claim. This is because compared with premodern haiku, the percentage of regular lines under a mora-counting in modern haiku is higher; although the two anthologies have about the same percentage of *jiamari* lines, it is in modern haiku that a smaller percentage of these lines turn into regular ones under a syllable counting.

(10) A syllable-counting of *jiamari* lines and word category in the two anthologies

	<i>The Classic Tradition</i>	<i>Well-Versed</i>
<i>jiamari</i> lines in total	48 (6.79%)	62 (6.9%)
lines become regular w/ syllable-counting	18 (37.5%)	14 (17.7%)
<i>jiamari</i> lines consist of yamato words only	38 (79.1%)	41 (66.1%)
<i>jiamari</i> lines contain Sino-Japanese/foreign words	48 (6.79%)	62 (6.9%)

It is also important to highlight that, in both anthologies, *jiamari* lines containing Sino-Japanese words and foreign words are few. Moreover, although modern haiku includes more of those words, the percentage that *jiamari* lines turns to regular lines has decreased. Therefore, the incorporation of more diverse vocabularies in modern haiku does not challenge the status of the mora as the dominant rhythmic unit.

(11) shows the place and frequency at which a special mora occurs within *jiamari* lines that become regular lines under a syllable counting.

(11) Distribution of special mora in regular lines under a syllable-counting

Location	Second part of a long vowel		Nasal coda		First part of a double consonant		/i/ in a /vi/ sequence		Second vowel in a /vvi/ sequence		Total	
	CTH	WV	CTH	WV	CTH	WV	CTH	WV	CTH	WV	CTH	WV
Second		1	2	2	1	1	1		1		5	4
Third	2					1		2	2	1	4	4
Fourth	1		1				1	2	1	2	4	5
Fifth	1	1	1			2					3	2
Sixth			3					2	1		4	2
Seventh		1				1				1	0	3
Eighth										1	0	1
Total	3	3	7	3	1	4	4	6	5	5		

Overall, a special mora occurs slightly more frequently in the even positions (the second, third, fourth, and six positions in *The Classic Tradition of Haiku*, and the second, third, and fourth positions in *Well-Versed*). Since a heavy syllable is formed by incorporating a special mora and its previous syllable, a heavy syllable in a line tends to occur slightly more at odd positions. However, this can only be seen as a tendency rather than a pattern because it is based on very limited data.

In addition, although all types of special mora occur in both *The Classic Tradition of Haiku* and *Well-Versed*, the nasal coda occurs more in *The Classic Tradition of Haiku* and the /vi/ sequence occurs more in *Well-Versed*.

TEN

As for the poetic forms, within all types of poetic forms, the one with *jiamari* lines occur the most frequently, followed by ones including other types of lines and *jitarazu* 字足らず (lack of letters) lines, as shown in (12).

(12) irregular poetic forms in *The Classic Tradition of Haiku* and *Well-Versed*.

<i>Jiamari</i>	Premodern	Modern	<i>Jitarazu</i>	Premodern	Modern	<i>Others</i>	Premodern	Modern
8-7-5		1	5-6-5	2	1	10-5-6		1
7-8-5		2	4-7-5		1	8-7-4		1
7-7-5	3	5	5-5-5	1		8-5-6		1
6-7-6	2					7-7-4		1
6-8-5	3	2				5-8-4		1
6-7-5	21	16				5-5-9	1	
5-11-5	1					5-5-7	1	1
5-9-5	1	2						
5-8-8		1						
5-8-7	1							
5-8-5	10	5						
5-7-6	3	13						
Total	44 (89.7%)	47 (85.4%)		3 (6.3%)	2 (3.6%)		2 (4%)	6 (11%)

The 6-7-5 pattern is the most frequent in both anthologies, which indicates a preference for a *jiamari* line to appear in the first line of a verse. However, the second most frequent pattern differs in the two anthologies. The 5-7-6 pattern is the second most frequent in *Well-Versed*, while the 5-8-5 pattern is the second most frequent in *The Classic Tradition of Haiku*. This reveals that the third line is more likely to be a *jiamari* line in modern haiku, whereas the second line is more likely to be a *jiamari* line in *hokku*. In addition, modern haiku seems to have more patterns that do not fit into the framework of either *jiamari* or *jitarazu*. Some examples include the 10-5-6 pattern, the 8-5-6 pattern, and the 7-7-4 pattern. None of these patterns contain even one regular line in the corresponding location as in the 5-7-5 pattern. Ozawa states in his preface to his book that “one of the salient features of modern haiku is its great variety” (6). Given his fascination with varied and experimental haiku, it is possible that he intentionally selected unique forms of the verse that supported his interest. Nonetheless, the selection

of such modern haiku suggests that their form may have become freer than those of the early modern period.

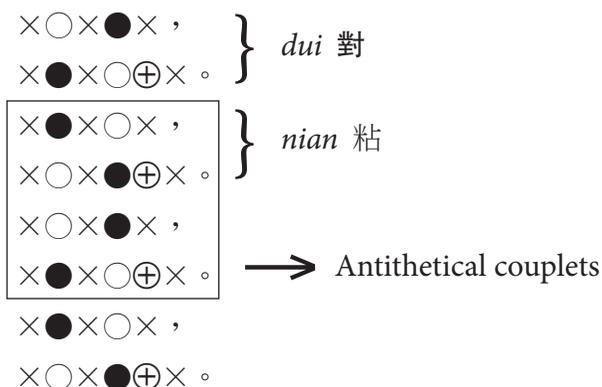
In sum, although some changes occurred in modern Japanese poetic forms (e.g., the modern haiku is less restricted to the regular 5-7-5 pattern and a special mora occurs more flexibly overall), Japanese poetic meter remains the same to this day. This is shown in the following aspects: its dominant rhythmic unit does not change, the distribution of special mora remains random, and the 5-7-5 pattern is consistently the mainstream.

3. The comparison between the meter of Japanese, Chinese and English

3.1 The meter of Chinese recent-style verse

Chinese recent-style verse is a highly schematized poetic form that emerged in the Tang dynasty, which takes the form of five or seven characters per line, and strict tonal regulations for each character. Since each Chinese character corresponds to one syllable, a five-character line is also referred to as a pentasyllabic line, and a seven-character line is referred to as a heptasyllabic line. Based on the number of lines per verse, the recent-style verse can be divided into three categories: *jueju* 絕句, which is made of four lines, *pailü* 排律 is made of more than eight lines, and *lüshi* 律詩, which is made of eight lines. The eight lines of *lüshi* 律詩 can be further divided into four couplets, or two quatrains. The four lines in the middle of an eight-line poem then must form two antithetical couplets. This entire structure is indicated in (13).

(13) The structure of *lüshi* (○ and ● indicate different tonal categories, and ⊕× indicates a rhyme)



Here, each line of the verse follows a fixed tonal pattern, which consists of the alternation of a *ping* 平 (level) tone and a *ze* 仄 (oblique) tone. A consistent rhyme (usually characters with a ping tone) is implemented at the end of the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth lines. The second, fourth, and sixth characters within the same couplets have opposite tones, which is the requirement of *dui* 對. Meanwhile, the second, fourth, and sixth characters in the last line of a prior couplet and in the first line of the following couplet should have the same tones, which is the requirement of *nian* 粘.

In an antithetical couplet, two lines form a symmetrical structure at three levels. The first is the level of tonal pattern fulfilled by *dui* and *nian*. The second is the level of rhythmic pattern, in which two lines should have the same syntactic structures. The third is the level of lexical antithesis: the first is that the corresponding characters have the same part of speech; the second is that characters are selected from “the same category as prescribed by tradition” (Barnstone and Chou lxiii).

3.2 The comparison between the Chinese and Japanese meter

Although previous studies indicate the Chinese influence on Japanese poetry, the meter of Chinese recent-style verse and Japanese haiku are in fact very different: the rhythmic units are

different; they also do not share the same rhythmic/metrical patterns. In Chinese recent-style verse, the rhythmic unit is the syllable.

As shown in (13), it is the contrast between the second and fourth positions within a line and a couplet level that rhythm structure is formed. There is not a fixed tone for each position, and the verse is well-formed as long as the contrast is maintained. In other words, when ping tone occupies a second position, a ze tone must occupy a fourth position, and vice versa. Additionally, rhyming at the end of a sentence for the second line within a couplet is required. However, in the case of Japanese haiku, there is no rhythmic patterns within a line or a couplet, and the distribution of mora is random rather than following certain rules. There are no requirements similar to the antithetical couplet, and the use of an end rhyme is avoided according to Hayata.

However, both Chinese recent-style verse and Japanese haiku have either five or seven rhythmic units per line. It is possible that the Japanese people were inspired by Chinese poetic forms when creating their own. However, the difference between the symmetrical poetic form in Chinese and the asymmetrical poetic form in Japanese is more likely due to the linguistic feature of the two languages. Chinese is a tonal language, and the syllable is the tone-bearing unit. Therefore, when syllables with different tones alternate, it creates a rhythmic contrast between a steady tone contour (the *ping* tone) and a dynamic tone contour (the *ze* tone). Conversely, the rhythmic unit in Japanese haiku is the mora, and its meter can only be based on the numbers of moras. This is because, first, pitch-accent is not a possible candidate, since the mora is not the only unit carries accent in Japanese. Additionally, it is difficult to make the locations of the high pitch and the low pitch occur in fixed positions like the case of Chinese. Even if those poems are produced, according to Kawamoto, it “can only be described as a bizarre specimen of Japanese,” which shows an “unnatural

TEN

wrenching of normal Japanese intonation” (Kawamoto 189). An example is shown in (14).

(14) Yamada Bimyō’s pitch-accentual verse in a trochaic heptameter

Oki/ NO ka/ MO me/ NI ko/ TO zu/ TE ta/ No mu

“Bobbling gulls upon the waves, I pray you pass these words on”

KAta/ WAre/ BUne/ TO mi/ O na/ SHI ha/ Tete.

“Wrecked, alone I sit and wait, a boat upon the shoreline.”

Second, the meter cannot be based on syllable weight. If the rhythmic unit is the syllable, the alternation between a light syllable and a heavy syllable (syllables differ in their weight) might become possible. As long as the rhythmic unit is still the mora, its meter must rely on the number of moras per line. Odd numbers like seven and five per line are convenient for consistently creating a contrast between groups with an even number of moras and those with an odd number.

3.3 The meter of English sonnet

It was William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616) that established a standard for the English sonnet, which is also known as the Shakespearean sonnet. Its meter is iambic pentameter, with each line made up of five iambic feet, each containing an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. Besides the rhythmic pattern within a line, the sonnet also consists of three quatrains and a couplet with a rhyme scheme of ABAB CDCD EFEF GG.

(15) An iambic pentameter line from Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* (Kawamoto “The Poetics”)

184) ~ indicates an unstressed syllable, and ´ indicates a stressed syllable, and | indicates a foot boundary.

˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ /

In sooth | I know | not why | I am | so sad.

W S W S W S W S W S

However, the structure in (15) is idealized and relatively rare, even in verses following the strictest rules. In most cases, lines deviate from the standard pattern in terms of both the number of syllables per line and the placement of stress. Among deviations only some can be accepted as metrical. For example, although a stressed syllable can occur in a weak position, a strong position should be occupied by a stressed syllable, especially when it is the lexical stress of a word. Syntactic breaks (after a comma, a semicolon, or a period) can associate with some admissible deviations, too. However, in general, the association between a weak position and an unstressed syllable, and between a strong position and a stressed syllable, should be maintained.

3.4 The comparison between the English and Japanese meter

As shown in (15), the rhythmic unit in English sonnet is the foot. The features of its meter are the alternation between strong and weak positions, and the association of a stressed syllable with a strong position and an unstressed syllable with a weak position. As a stress language, in English, there is always a primary stressed syllable in a word consists of more than one syllable. The alternation and association are possible, since the primary stressed syllable can be associated with the strong position, while others can be associated with the weak positions, and the stressed and unstressed syllables alternate to appear.

On the other hand, some argue that Japanese poetic meter resembles the English one. They argue an 8-8-8 underlying template of haiku (Cole and Miyashita; Asano; Kirikoshi) , in which the metrical pause (covert mora) can be associated with the weak position and

the overt mora can be associated with the strong position. However, phonetic experiments do not seem to reach an agreement on the location and duration of pauses when reading a haiku. Like Sagara argues, there are always differences exist per individual readers.

As mentioned in 3.2, after the rhythmic unit of Japanese haiku becomes the syllable, it is possible that its meter makes use of the contrast between heavy and light syllables. Furthermore, it is confirmed in section 2.3 that there is a tendency for heavy syllables to appear in odd positions, similar to how different types of syllables occur in relatively fixed positions in Chinese and English. However, this is still a tendency instead of a pattern, and it only occupies a very small number of lines in the dataset. Moreover, based on the analysis of the dataset, the status of the mora as the rhythmic unit is strengthened in modern haiku compared with premodern haiku. The results, therefore, indicate that it is unlikely the contrast between heavy and light syllables contributes to the Japanese haiku meter, let alone its similarity to the English meter.

4. The adaptation of haiku in Chinese and English

4.1 The adaptation of haiku in Chinese

The history of Chinese haiku can be traced back to the 1980s, although as early as the May Fourth Movement in 1919, there were already people such as Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978), writing Chinese haiku without labeling it as such (Wang). The first Chinese haiku was composed by Zhao Puchu (1907–2000) in May 1980, when he was welcoming the visit of the Japanese haiku poets' delegation to Beijing. Zhao was the president of the Buddhism Association of China and the vice president of the China-Japan Friend Association. In (16), Zhao named the Chinese adaptation of the 5-7-5 poetic form as *hanpai* 漢俳 (as shown in the last two characters in line three), therefore marking the origin of the term.

(16) The first Chinese haiku composed by Zhao Puchu in 1980 (here, “v” indicates a *ze* tone, while “-” indicates a *ping* tone).

綠陰今雨來 / 山花枝接海花開 / 和風起漢俳。

Lvyin jinyu lai, shanhuazhi jie haihua kai, hefeng qi hanpai

v - - v - / - - - v v - - / - - v v -

“Today’s rain arrives with green shade, mountain flowers reach out to meet sea flowers in bloom, a gentle breeze stirs the Chinese haiku.”

The poetic form of *hanpai* follows the Japanese structure of 5-7-5, although the rhythmic unit is the syllable instead of the mora.

The tonal pattern in (16) strictly follows the tonal regulation of recent-style verse except the requirement of *dui* and *nian*. The second position and the fourth position in line one and line three, together with the second, fourth, and sixth position in line two all have opposite tones; the last character in all three lines has a *ping* tone and ends in the /ai/ sound. On the other hand, all the second position in the three lines has a *ping* tone, while all the fourth position in the three lines has a *ze* tone, therefore does not fulfill the *dui* and *nian* requirement. Due to haiku’s three-line format and the differing number of units in the second line compared to the first and third lines, it is difficult to form couplets similar to those in Chinese recent-style verse. Therefore, the Chinese haiku keeps all the other features from Chinese recent-style verse but must abandon the *dui* and *nian* requirement.

According to Jing, there are four types of *hanpai* form. The first follows strict tonal regulations and has end rhyme. The second has end rhyme but does not follow strict tonal regulations, while still maintaining a classical literary style. The third uses colloquial language and follows neither tonal regulations nor end rhyme.

The fourth resembles the third but does not even follow the 5-7-5 pattern. Since almost all the *hanpai* in *Kanhai shusenshū* 漢俳首選集 (“the first anthology of *hanpai*”) belong to either the first or second type, these two are considered the mainstream of *hanpai* (291).⁶

On the other hand, Wang argues that a playful spirit, a light, graceful, and transcendent aesthetic system is significant to *hanpai*, since poets should embody the mindset of a haiku poet. He claims that the concept of *ji* 寂 (‘*sabi*’) is essential to *hanpai*’s aesthetic. *Ji* is a personalized understanding of Zen Buddhism’s “enlightenment” spirit, a playful artistic attitude that is detached from worldly concerns; it is also a poetic method of viewing and depicting life. Wang claims that the most suitable themes for *hanpai* are the following four: sketching from life, self-expression, satire, and poetic exchange. Different from a Japanese haiku, *hanpai* usually has a title. (17) shows one satire *hanpai* composed by him.

(17) 網購如網戀/相知相交不相見/一見傻了眼 — 《網購》

Wanggou ru wanglian/ xiangzhi xiangjiao bu xiangjian/ yijian shaleyen

v v - v v/ - - - - v - v/ v v v v v

“Online shopping is like online dating: you know each other without meeting in person, and you’re left speechless when you finally meet.” — Online Shopping

This *hanpai* does not follow tonal regulations but has an end rhyme on /an/. The playfulness is reflected in the metaphor comparing online shopping with online dating. Although the colloquial

6. *Kanhai Shusenshū* 漢俳首選集 (1994) is the first anthology of *hanpai*, featuring 300 *hanpai* written by 33 poets. It includes an inscription by Zhao Puchu and a preface by the famous *hanpai* poet Lin Lin 林林 (1910–2011), and it was highly regarded among scholars.

language cannot be applied in classical poetry, it showcases a playful spirit in a humorous and satirical tone; thus, as Wang claimed, vulgarity is transformed into elegance.

In contrast, Li argues that composing such humorous poetry is challenging because it requires maintaining the coexistence of vulgarity and elegance within the same verse.

- (18) 爺將硬豆吐/ 屈指歪頭將數數/ “粒粒皆辛苦!” — 《四歲小孫女》
Yejiang yingdou tu/ quzhi waitou jiang shushu/ lili jie xinku

- - v v v/ v v - - - v v / vv - - v

“Grandfather spits out the hard beans, bending his fingers, tilting his head, and counting each one — every grain requires hard work!”
 — Four-year-old granddaughter

Li’s example achieves the balance between vulgarity and elegance by combining classic literary with colloquial language. It vividly depicts what the granddaughter sees before her: her grandfather counting the hard beans and quoting an ancient verse (the last line). It is the juxtaposition of this slice of life with the quote that showcases the playful spirit inherited from Japanese haiku.

4.2 The adaptation of haiku in English

This section will summarize the findings from previous studies and analyze the prosody of English haiku created in America at different stages, as defined by Ross.

According to Machmiller, there are six forms that English haiku can take. The first, the traditional or earliest form of haiku, is the 5-7-5 syllable form. Some noted poets, such as R.H. Blyth and Harold Henderson, adapted this form, allowing room for variations (Gilbert and Yoneoka). The second, “Modified Traditional (Syllabic) Form,” illustrates these variations from the traditional

TEN

form by using forms such as four-six-four and three-five-three syllable structures. The third is the “Modified Modern (Accented)” form, which has a two-three-two rhythmic pattern. The fourth is the “Free Verse (Accented)” form, in which the structure matches the subject matter, as different effects are created with lines that have varying beats.

Machmiller’s last two forms are much more deviated from the first four. The fifth form is called the “One-Line Form”. Like the Japanese haiku, haiku in this form consists of only one line. The last is the “Unique Forms,” which are usually accompanied by visual images or backgrounds and are created by poets to express their particular ideas.

The combination of the two-three-two rhythmic pattern and the four-six-four syllable form is the closest to the English sonnet meter. There are two, three, and two feet per line, with the first and second lines together equaling one line of an English sonnet. According to Nakagawa, Harold Stewart claims that English haiku will eventually take a form similar to the English sonnet: the “heroic couplet” with two lines of ten syllables in iambic pentameter. He claims that the following short version could better emulate the 5-7-5 Japanese form: a couplet consists of four iambs (WS), eight syllables per line, or a couplet consists of four iambs or trochee (SW), seven syllables per line. Since the “heroic couplet” has a syntactic break after the fifth foot, it makes sense to assume that in a seven-or eight-syllable form, the syntactic break should be inserted after the fourth foot.

According to Ross, the first stage of the development of haiku in America spans from the 1910s to the 1940s. Some representative work includes Sappho’s three-line haiku in (19a) and Pound’s well-known haiku in (19b). Here, the capitalized letters indicate a stressed syllable. “W” indicates a weak position, “S” indicates a strong position.

(19) English haiku of the first generation (1910s – 1940s).

a. IN gold SANDals/ DAWN like a THIEF /FELL upon ME

S W S W S W S S W S

b. IN a STAtion of the METro

S W S W S W S W

The first verse consists of lines with two trochaic feet (SW) while the second has four trochaic feet. The two verses follow the rhythmic/metrical requirement of English verse. In (19a), the last syllable of line two is a stressed syllable but occupies a weak position since it is not a stress maximum (Halle and Keyser “English Stress”), which is a stressed syllable between two unstressed syllables. On the other hand, the syllable count is 4-4-3 in the first verse and 8 in the second verse, which does not match the counting frame in Japanese, or not even the short-long-short format. The rhythmic pattern is 4 in 19(b) and 2-2-2 in (19a).

During the second stage (roughly 1950s), representative poets are Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, and Jack Kerouac, whose work centered on the Beat movement (Ross). Alienation from the tradition, and personal release or purification through the power of drugs, jazz, sex or even the principles of Zen Buddhism is advocated during this period. Below shows two works by Kerouac, who is regarded as the most important one among the Beat haiku writers by Ross. The positions underlined are where acceptable metrical/rhythmical deviations occur.

(20) English haiku of the second generation (1950s).

a. THERE’S no BUDDha/ beCAUSE/ THERE’S no ME

S W S W S W S W S

b. NIGHTfall — TOO DARK / to READ the PAGE, / TOO COLD

W S W S W S W S W S

TEN

Since the “night” and “too” are not a stress maximum, they can occupy a weak position. Therefore, the first, second and the fifth foot in (20b) is acceptable. The same condition applies to the second syllable of the third foot in (20a). Kerouac’s haiku deviate from tradition in terms of syllable count, as (20a) follows a 4-2-3 syllable pattern, and (20b) follows a 4-4-2 syllable pattern. The rhythmic patterns are 2-1-2 in (20a) and 2-2-1 in (20b).

During the third stage (late 1950s – late 1960s), haiku theories seem to develop through practices such as Kenneth Yasuda and Harold G. Henderson’s introduction to haiku in English, the establishment of haiku journals in English and the Haiku Society of America, etc (Ross). Some of the representative works are shown in (21). (21a) is written by Cor van den Heuvel, while (21b) & (21c) are written by Anita Virgil.

(21) English haiku of the third generation (late 1950s – 1960s).

- a. BY the LAWN’S EDGE, / the DOG BARKS at the DARKness /
S W S S W S S W S W
then LOOKS back at ME
W S W W S
- b. a STICK goes Over the FALLS at SUNset
W S W S W S W S W
- c. FOLlowing ME / DEEPer INto my QUILT/ the WREN’S SONG
S W S S W S W S W S S

During this period, diverse syllable forms began to emerge. The syllable counting is 4-7-5 in (21a), and 3-6-3 in (21c). The rhythmic patterns are 2-4-3 in (21a), 4 in (21b), and 2-3-2 in (21c).

Poets in the fourth stage (1970s – 1990s) differ from the other in creating “haiku moments” that rely on “obvious metaphoric figures”. This generation is less restricted by the traditional haiku form: they introduce Surrealist methods and figurative language;

they are less concerned about the regular prosody; they emphasize the human nature rather than nature (Ross).

(22) English haiku of the fourth generation (1970s-1990s).

a. COlouring itSELF aCROSS the POND the AUtumn WIND . . .

S W S W S W S W S W S

(John Wills)

b. MOONlight — / a SAND DUNE / SHIFTS

(Virginia Brady Young)

c. DUSK / from ROCK to ROCK / a WAterTHRUSH

(Vincent Tripi)

Only (22a) follows the regular iambic pattern, while (22b) and (22c) do not, as there is only one syllable in the third line of (22b) and the first line of (22c). The syllable counting is also diverse. (22a) has the 8-4 syllable form with a space between the first four feet and the last two feet without any punctuation. (22b) is 2-3-1 and (22c) is 1-4-4. These forms demonstrate that poets are creating a freer poetic style, less bound by regular prosody, which enables them to express their unique ideas. This change is very similar to the transformation from premodern haiku to modern haiku in Japanese.

The fifth generation (starting from 2000s) marks “a regression to senryū.” Those haiku lack sincerity and tend to be flat, offering only truncated images instead of providing a sense of completion and depth (Ross).

(23) English haiku of the fifth generation (2000s).

a. BUT/ THROUGH the MIST / APricot BLOSSom

(Stephen Addiss)

TEN

b. SPRING MOON — / the BABY's HEART BEATS / aGAINST MINE

S S W S W S S W S S

(Kathy Lippard Cobb)

c. DEEP in the SINK / the GREAT VEINS of CHARD; / SUMMER's END

S W S W S S W S S W S

(Burnell Lippy)

d. EARLY DARKNESS / SUN-dried to MATOES / SNIPPED into the STEW

S W S W S W S W S W S

(Peggy Willis Lyles)

(23a) and (23d) does not follow either an iambic or trochaic pattern. Especially for (23d), the second foot of the first line is not metrical: it cannot be analyzed as an iambic one, since “dark” is the stress maximum that should occupy a strong position instead of a weak position. The syllable counting becomes more diverse like the fourth generation: It is 1-3-4 in (23a), 2-5-3 in (23b), 4-5-3 in (23c), and 4-5-4 in (24d).

Based on the data, overall, the adaptation of haiku in English features a short-long-short syllable form. It is most common for a line to have two trochees or iambs, with a syntactic break usually occurring after the fourth foot. This structure is similar to the “heroic couplet” in English sonnets, which is familiar to English speakers. However, later, poets began experimenting with new forms, which show a departure from both the traditional three-line structure and the rhythmic patterns of English verse.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the syllable is the prosodic unit in Chinese and English language, and the rhythmic unit in Chinese recent-style verse and English sonnet. This linguistic feature allows their meters to be based on contrasts between different types of syllables. In contrast, the major prosodic unit in Japanese language and the

rhythmic unit of Japanese haiku is the mora, making Japanese meter a qualitative meter based on the number of moras. However, in the future, Japanese meter might develop a system similar to that of Chinese and English by utilizing the contrast between heavy and light syllables, when the rhythmic unit becomes the syllable. The potential development arises because evidence suggests that younger generations (born after 1989) increasingly accept the syllable as a prosodic unit in poetry. However, based on current data, only a tendency, rather than a pattern is observed in the distribution of heavy syllables.

The adaptation — or “translatio — of Japanese haiku in Chinese and English also showcase how a hybrid poetic form was born by combining linguistic features from different languages. The Chinese haiku, *hanpai*, follows a more conservative path by blending the 5-7-5 Japanese poetic form with the Chinese tradition such as tonal regulations and end rhyme. The combination of seven and five syllable form is akin to Chinese recent-style verse so this form was preserved in *hanpai*. Furthermore, by referencing classical poetry, *hanpai* achieves a balance between vulgarity and elegance, showcasing the playful spirit inherited from Japanese haiku. On the other hand, English haiku initially adhered to a short-long-short syllable form, which commonly features two trochees or iambs per line, with a syntactic break occurring after the fourth foot. This resembles the classical “heroic couplet” of the English sonnet. However, later generations have developed new forms that break away from the short-long-short syllable structure and the regular rhythmic pattern, coincidentally mirroring the evolution of their Japanese peers, who transformed premodern haiku into modern haiku.

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Poet: Michelina DE GRUTTOLA / Artist: Ion CODRESCU
Translation: Peter MEISTER (see page 210)

JUXTA

Presentation



Joy Codrescu

Poet: Jim KACIAN / Artist: Ion CODRESCU
Translation: Antonella FILIPPA (see page 196)

HAIKU TRANSLATION:

Cultures across the Border

Toru KIUCHI

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Since the end of World War II many Americans and Canadians tried their hands at writing haiku. Among them, the two distinguished novelists, Richard Wright and Jack Kerouac, wrote numerous haiku. Wright wrote over four thousand haiku in the final eighteen months of his life in exile in France. His *Haiku: This Other World*, ed. Yoshinobu Hakutani and Robert L. Tener (1998), is a posthumous collection of 817 haiku Wright himself had selected. I translated Wright's collection of haiku into Japanese with the collaboration of Michiko Watanabe in 2007. Jack Kerouac's *Book of Haikus*, ed. Regina Weinreich (2003), is also a posthumous collection of 667 haiku. Kerouac's haiku has not been put into Japanese yet. In recent decades, two other American writers have brought out their haiku collections: Sonia Sanchez's *Like the Singing Coming off the Drums* (1998) and *Morning Haiku* (2003); and James Emanuel's *Jazz from the Haiku King* (1999). Wright and Kerouac both studied the theory and technique of haiku composition discussed and demonstrated in the four-volume critical history and collection, *Haiku* by R. H. Blyth, a foremost British Japanologist and Sinologist.

Lenard D. Moore, an African American haiku poet, also has written haiku for decades. As I was reading Jerry W. Ward's review of *The Open Eye*, the first haiku collection by Lenard D. Moore, published in the fall 1986 issue of *Black American Literature Forum*, Moore's talent and specificity in his haiku poems immediately caught my attention. As a Japanese haiku composer myself, I felt particularly interested and therefore managed to obtain a copy of the above-mentioned work. Upon finishing the book, I found myself writing to Moore. To my surprise, the poet readily answered my letter on August 5, 1986 and addressed my questions, stating that his haiku had "appeared in about 130 different publications in several countries." This was the very first letter among many that I received from Moore. Moore's first letter included a favorable review of his haiku collection, *The Open Eye*, published in the July 25, 1986 issue of *North Carolina Libraries*, concluding that his haiku will

appeal to children “at even the earliest levels of reading and literary inclination.” The reviewer rightly cites one of his haiku:

On this chipped plate
drowning in maple syrup:
an old fly. (Moore, *Eye* 61)

I also found that even a child could enjoy it as the ancient Japanese haiku poet Bashō (1644 – 1694) said that haiku composition is best accomplished by a three-year-old child. Bashō means that a three-year-old child composes a better innocent haiku than adults who compose haiku without putting all the thoughts out of their minds. Much later in 2001, I wrote a brief essay on Moore’s timely haiku on a hurricane, citing, and translating into Japanese, the following haiku regarding a drowned animal: “pink pile / of flood-drowned pigs — / the sunlit stench” (Kiuchi 16). My translation of this haiku is:

秋出水溺れし桃色豚の山 レナード・ムーア
aki demizu / oboreshi momoiro / buta no yama (Lenard Moore)
(Moore, *Ten'i* 23).

Over the years indeed, we exchanged numerous letters and emails until we finally met for the first time in late November 2009 at the international symposium on haiku in Tokyo, a meeting organized by the Haiku International Association. He was participating in the symposium as the president of the Haiku Society of America to discuss the future of haiku with other representatives from the United Kingdom, Germany, and Croatia.

Born in 1958, Moore is a native of Jacksonville, North Carolina. He spent his youth surrounded by the idyllic scenery of untouched nature in Onslow County abounding with creeks, ponds, and

farm fields, which later on were to become his background of predilection in his haiku and other longer poems. As he declares in a review that “History, family and place are very important to the poet, especially if he or she is an African American” (Moore 311), the reader understands that roots and nature are the sacred ground the poet feels he belongs to. He was surrounded by the natural world in his homeland as he wrote in his poem, “The Homeplace”: “A faint smell of honeysuckle / sustains itself on the air / while quail rove the slopeweeds” (Moore 1). In addition to this, his short poem, “Onslow County, North Carolina,” is interestingly dedicated to the ancient Japanese haiku poet Bashō, describing the environment of his birthplace: “In windless moonlight / black spider weaving its web, / a poised firefly blinks / among the fallen plum tree, / and, in the garden, / cricket song rises and falls” (Moore 47). Nature was, thus, to become continually relevant to his haiku given the fact that Moore had done a lot of farm work as a child with his great-grandmother while growing up in the rural south.

Not only these American haiku poets but also European haiku poets emerged since the poetry form was introduced to the world by R. H. Blyth’s book, *Haiku*. Blyth translated numerous Japanese haiku into English from Bashō, Buson, and Issa in the ancient times to Shiki, Kyoshi, and Shūōshi in comparatively recent days. The haiku form, not the language, was translated into foreign languages: from the original one-line to three lines; from original five-seven-five syllables to three-five-three (sometimes two-three-two) syllables; and from the rule to have at least a season word to seasonless. Now as I mentioned above, there spread all over the world, creating haiku societies, including not only the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and Croatia but also France, Ireland, Canada, India, and Romania to name a few.

On the other hand, going back to Richard Wright’s haiku, Julia Wright, Wright’s daughter, gave a talk and fondly talked about Wright’s haiku at the 2002 MLA convention in New York. When I

expressed our wish to translate them into Japanese, she told us that her father would have been very happy to hear about our project.

Given such an experience and understanding, it is not difficult to see that the technique of haiku translation entered upon a new phase when we became aware of the existence of Japanese haiku that spread all over the world. Going back to Richard Wright's story, in the meantime, in August 1959, Wright had met a young South African, Sinclair Beiles (Fabre 14). Beiles had brought up the subject of haiku. Fascinated at once, Wright set about composing haiku. On Wright's request, Beiles lent him the four volumes of *Haiku* by R.H. Blyth on the art of haiku (Fabre 505) and later on in September, in London, Wright even asked Ellen to buy a copy of Blyth's book (Fabre 14).

In "The Technique of Haiku,"—section five, first volume of *Haiku*—Blyth stipulates that: "There is almost always a season word in haiku. This word may give the atmospheric background, it may be a kind of seed, a trigger which releases a whole world of emotion, of sounds and scents and colours" (Blyth *Haiku* vol. 1, 335). On reading this part of the book, Wright fully and immediately realized the importance of a season word, that is, an image from nature, and he followed Blyth's rule faithfully. Only thirty-five haiku out of 817 in Wright's *Haiku: This Other World* are without a season word, which clearly indicates that 95.7 per cent of Wright's haiku carry a season word. It was easier for Wright to draw from memories of his native Mississippi, full of trees and flowers, than to use images of dark Paris always under clouds, embedded with concrete buildings. Sick in bed, Wright must have been trying to find a season word without going out, recalling his childhood days in Mississippi, which was "a whole world of emotion, of sounds and scents and colours." For instance, in Mississippi, he found the scent of magnolias:

TEN

In the damp darkness,
Croaking frogs are belching out
The scent of magnolias. (227)¹

I translated number 227 into Japanese in traditional five-seven-five syllables:

濡れた闇もくれんの香を出す蛙
nureta yami / mokuren no ka wo / dasu kawazu

Toward the end of his life, in February 1956, long before he took an interest in haiku, Wright drew much of his inspiration from his young days in Mississippi. At that time, he first hit upon the idea of a new novel “Mississippi,” later to be known as *The Long Dream*, and based upon the true experiences of an African American. Just after he started to be intent on haiku, Wright composed one on his fifty-first birthday, on September 4, 1959:

It is September
The month in which I was born
And I have no thoughts. (508)

This haiku explains how Wright inevitably explored his childhood replete with rich nature to restart his literary career from zero. This haiku would be able to read in Japanese:

九月なり我が生まれ月思案なく
kugatsu nari / waga umarezuki / shian naku

Wright then evokes a childhood memory of 1917, when he was about TEN years old. In his autobiography *Black Boy*, he writes that he saw a chain gang coming toward him, but he was so small

1. The haiku number does not represent a page number but the one serially designated in *Haiku: This Other World*, edited by Yoshinobu Hakutani and Robert Tener.

that he thought they were elephants: “As the strange animals came abreast of me I saw that the legs of the black animals were held together by irons and that their arms were linked with heavy chains that clanked softly and musically as they moved” (56).

The next unpublished haiku obviously indicates Wright’s use of this autobiographical fact. A Japanese translation follows the poem.

The tinkle of chains
From convicts marching in step
In an autumn rain.

囚人の鎖の音や秋の雨

shujin no / kusarino oto ya / aki no ame

About seven years later, the Japanese translation of *Haiku: This Other World*, a collection of haiku by Richard Wright, was done by Michiko Watanabe and me in 2007. To translate, not only did we translate the 817 haiku Wright had selected for the posthumous edition out of the four thousand haiku he wrote in his final years, we also translated Julia Wright’s introduction and the editors’ notes and afterword. Wright’s haiku was composed with three lines of five-seven-five syllables and a season word, strictly observing the rule of haiku composition. As Wright composed his haiku in three lines, conforming to the Japanese verse of seventeen syllables arranged five, seven, and five, we translated Wright’s haiku to one-line Japanese haiku in the same syllabic form. From time to time, however, we found it impossible to translate an English word to a Japanese equivalent because of the differences in culture and custom the word connotes. On occasion the images of nature created in Wright’s haiku may not have the same or similar evocations in Japanese. And the ideas Wright conveys cannot always be expressed in seventeen syllables in Japanese. We therefore provided for each of the haiku a three-line literal translation in prose as well. Five-seven-five syllables in English has much more information than

TEN

those in Japanese. When translating English haiku into Japanese, one need to omit some information to fit it into Japanese five-seven-five syllables. It is complicated and controversial to decide what kind of and how much information should be dropped off.

For example, in the following haiku by Richard Wright,

In the setting sun,
Yellow roses are waving
All their sharp wan thorns. (315)

Wright's haiku is comprised of 5-7-5 syllables and carries a season word "yellow roses," following faithfully the regulations stipulated in R. H. Blyth's four volumes of *Haiku*, through which Wright learned how to compose a haiku. The translators observed the rule of 5-7-5 in translation.

日没に黄薔薇鋭く棘を振る
Nichibotsu ni / kibara surudoku / toge wo furu

The Japanese translation includes 5-7-5 syllables. "Nichibotsu ni" means "in the setting sun." Similarly, "kibara," "yellow roses," "surudoku," sharply, "toge," thorns, and "furu," to wave. Among these Japanese words, however, "wan" cannot be included in the Japanese translation because it does not fit into five-seven-five syllables and there is no change in the general situation without it. We decided to drop off "wan" from the translation because the color of the thorn does not seem to matter a great deal to the essence of the haiku. As is clear from this example, it is usual that not all the information will be able to be included in one translation.

Similarly, the following number 15 by Wright:

O Anvil, be beaten,
Bear all the bitter blows till
The spring sun goes down! (15)

鉄床よ打たれろ春の陽沈むまで

Kanatokoyo / utarero harunohi / shizumumade

To paraphrase, “Kanatoko” means “anvil,” “Utarero,” “be beaten,” “Harunohi,” “spring sun,” and “shizumu made,” “till the sun goes down.” Similar to number 315, “bitter” is, however, missing from the Japanese translation because the translators understand that the adjective is included in “be beaten.” What is most essential in number 15 haiku is to beat an anvil until the sunset. If one beats an anvil, one always does with a bitter blow. Accordingly, “bitter” does not have to be referred to in the translation.

Number 21 reminds the reader not only of the opening scene in Wright’s *Native Son* but also of a clear image of a small apartment which Wright rented in 1959 just before his death:

On winter mornings

The candle shows faint markings

Of the teeth of rats. (21)

冬の朝鼠の歯形蠟燭に

Fuyu no asa / nezumi no hagata / rosoku ni

“Fuyu no asa” (winter morning), “nezumi no hagata” (markings of the teeth of rats), and “rosoku ni” (on the candle). In translation, Japanese 5-7-5 syllables have to omit at least two elements from the original. There is no Japanese translation of “shows faint” in it. “On the candle” is good enough to have a meaning that rats’ markings are left on the candle. “Faint” does not appear in the translation because rats’ markings are likely to be small and faint. The translation reads that on winter mornings markings of the teeth of rats are on the candle.

Number 22 is comical:

With a twitching nose
 A dog reads a telegram
 On a wet tree trunk. (22)

電報を鼻で読む犬濡れた幹

Denpo wo / hana ade yomu inu / nureta miki

“Denpo wo” (telegram), “hana de” (with a nose), “yomu” (reads), and “nureta miki” (a wet tree trunk). It is clear that the Japanese translation misses “twitching,” whose Japanese translation “hiku hiku suru” has too many syllables and does not fit into the 5-7-5 syllables, otherwise causing other important elements such as “telegram” to be omitted from the second line. No other element should be omitted but in this translation “twitching” is so important because R. H. Blyth explains in “The Technique of Haiku” in *Haiku* that its humor “is some indispensable element without which haiku can hardly exist, some poise of the mind, some balance of conflicting elements from which arises that pleasure whose peculiar quality causes us to give it the name of humor” (Blyth *Haiku* vol. 1, 313). The lack of “twitching” in the translation is no doubt a highly regrettable decision:

The humor lies in the visual image of the dog twitching his nose, especially in “twitching,” which carries a double meaning: one is visual, suggesting how the dog comes in contact with—that is, reads—his message; the other, also visual, suggests a sense of the sharpness of the message, the odor, that causes a slight physical movement. (Hakutani 280)

Wright probably learns about humor from Issa’s subsequent haiku which Blyth quotes:

The puppy asleep,
 Biting
 The willow-tree. (Blyth *Haiku* Vol. 2: 565)

犬の子の啞へて寐むる柳かな 一茶

Inu no ko no / kuwaete nemuru / yanagi kana (Issa)

Wright is likely to choose animals for his haiku more often than not: a horse (twelve times), a cat (twenty-three), a dog (eighteen), a sparrow (twenty-three), a wild goose (ten), a goose (ten), a crow (thirty-three), a cow (twenty), a butterfly (twelve), a spider (fourteen), a frog (six), and a rat (ten). The percentage of animal chosen in his collection amounts to twenty-three percent. Almost one out of four of Wright's haiku deals with animals. Wright knows how closely related humor and animals are. In this sense, the Japanese translation of Wright's number 22 without "twitching" does not carry the essence of animal humor even though the translation cannot afford to have it. The translator of number 22 hopes that "with a nose" will have a slight connotation of twitching and "a wet tree trunk" automatically will mean "on a wet tree trunk" despite the lack of the preposition "on" in the translation. As a result, it becomes clear that a little gap in two different literatures and cultures between Japanese and American once translated either way.

Vice versa when translated from English to Chinese. I recently published three haiku in the 2012 no. 5 issue of *Haiku Page*, a haiku journal edited by John Zheng. This is my own haiku in English:

awakening to
the subtle sound
of early summer rain (Kiuchi 7)

John Zheng, a native Chinese and Professor of English at Mississippi Valley State University, translated my haiku into Chinese like the following:

TEN

漸悟
初夏雨
妙音

(Tr. John Zheng)

“漸悟” reads “jian wu.” “Jian” means “gradually,” “wu” (realize), “初夏雨” reads “chu xia yu.” “Chu xia” (early summer), “yu” (rain). “妙音” reads “miao yin” (subtle sound). So Chinese translation of the second and third lines perfectly conveys the meaning of my original haiku “the subtle sound / of early summer rain.” However, the Chinese translation of the first line in my haiku does not necessarily carry the meaning of my intention that I wake up from sleep because of the sound of subtle summer rain. Probably “jian wu” does not mean “gradually realize” but “awaken to.”

The following second haiku has a season word “mosquito” for summer:

parrying
mosquitoes
with supple hands (Kiuchi 7)

John Zheng’s Chinese translation is:

手輕盈
驅
蚊

(Tr. John Zheng)

“手輕盈” reads “shou” (hand) “qing” (lightly) “ying” (supple). “驅” reads “qu” (parry). “蚊” reads “wen” (mosquito). The Chinese translation does not say whether the poet is using both of hands and how many mosquitoes the poet is parrying with hands because the Chinese and Japanese languages are able to go without the plural form of nouns. In Chinese and Japanese, we do not have to designate the subject who parries mosquitoes with hands. The subject whom I dedicated to the haiku to is my co-translator Michiko Watanabe of Wright’s *Haiku: This Other World*, who

recently died of cancer. If I add the dedication prior to the haiku, the Chinese translation would be different.

The following haiku of mine has a cutting word (*kireji* in Japanese), that is, a dash between the first line and the second and third lines. Cutting words are verbal exclamations. They punctuate and emphasize the end of a section. It should be noted that, traditionally, the cutting word will signal the end of one of the three segments (the first line). There is no exact equivalent of *kireji* (*ya, kana, keru* in Japanese) in English or Chinese, and its function can be difficult to define. When placed at the end of the first line, it provides a dignified ending, concluding the verse with a heightened sense of pause and indicating that the verse consists of two thoughts half independent of each other.

tying my shoes —
 smell from
 an early-ripening rice plant (Kiuchi 7)

The subsequent Chinese translation is Zheng's:

系鞋帶
 味來自
 一棵早熟稻

“系鞋帶” reads “ji” (to tie), “xie” (shoe), and “dai” (string). Also “味來自” reads “wei” (taste), “lai” (come), and “zi” (itself). “一棵早熟稻” reads “yi ke” (one fruit), “zao” (early), “shu” (ripened), and “dao” (rice). In English one can say that you fasten or tie your shoes without adding “with shoe strings” because when you tie your shoes it clearly means that you are tying your shoe strings. However, in Chinese as well as in Japanese, you are not able to say “to tie shoes” but “to tie your shoe strings.” One syllable “dai” (string) is naturally added to the first line. The dash after the first line has not been translated in the Chinese translation because the

TEN

language does not have a dash or *kireji*. As mentioned above, *kireji*, a cutting word, provides a dignified ending, indicating that the verse consists of two thoughts half independent of each other. With *kireji*, there should be two segments between the first line and the second and third line in my original English haiku. In the Chinese translation, however, there is only one segment with a connotation that while one is tying his/her shoes a smell comes from early rice plant. The difference lying between the two languages is great and is hardly filled up.

In his essay “Scent of Horseshoes,” Zheng compares a Chinese classic poetry and Richard Wright’s haiku. Zheng contends that the following Chinese classic poetry:

踏花归来马蹄香

Back from flower-viewing scent of horseshoes)

is reminiscent of the next haiku by Richard Wright in its expression of the short Chinese poetry:

In a misty rain

A butterfly is riding

The tail of a cow. (17)

Zheng argues that “This haiku presents a beautiful picture of the springtime. Through the description of a butterfly chasing the tail of a cow, the poet sees the harmony that exists in nature and thus expresses his poetic sensibility to the natural beauty” (18). According to Zheng, the idea of a visual image in nature both in Chinese and English haiku can be shared with each other; nevertheless, the resemblance “shows a receptive and re-creative process that presents new or different ways of viewing nature” (18). It is true that the translation from English to Chinese as well as from English to Japanese may not linguistically correspond with each other. On the contrary, the translational explanation conveys

no correct idea in haiku. Even so, the translational movement from English to Japanese or to Chinese at least shows a re-creative process that presents new or different ways of viewing nature.

All the streams were from Japan to foreign countries until recently. What is recently taking place, however, is the reverse movement from haiku translation from Japan to foreign countries to that from foreign countries to Japan: Japanese haiku poets originally writing in English. Strangely enough, it is necessary to translate haiku written in English by Japanese haiku poets into Japanese. In fall 2009, for instance, I became a judge for the English haiku section in the English-Japanese bilingual weekly newspaper *The Weekly ST* published by the Japan Times, Inc. The readers of the weekly newspaper are almost all Japanese and it is the Japanese haiku poets who send their English haiku to the section. This is the English section for Japanese haiku poets.

As a rule, the contributors are supposed to include in their haiku the given topic such as “grapes” and “an apple,” which I previously designated for haiku senders in advance. More than 100 haiku have been sent to the weekly. Gold, silver, and bronze medal haiku are selected for best haiku every week and at the same time five fine haiku are also chosen along with three of them. They are sent via emails, fax messages, and postcards.

Indeed, I feel that their level went up each time. Especially, the number of syllables, at which Japanese are not very good, decreased greatly in comparison with haiku sent during the first two or three weeks. Our Japanese haiku poets who write in English are likely to put too much information in each line, using long and difficult words.

My haiku senders are well aware of the simplicity in haiku, written not only in Japanese but also in English, omitting particles, prepositions, and be-verbs.

TEN

Furthermore, the best haiku were chosen among gold, silver, and bronze medal haiku and the poet was given a round-trip air ticket between Japan and the United States. The judge was late Sumio Mori, a great Japanese haiku poet. The following is the best haiku published in the May 14, 2010 issue of *The Weekly ST*.

willows on a riverside
a girl on a bike
leaving a singing voice

Yukie Tone

This clearly shows how high the level of Japanese haiku poets who write in English should be. The level of Japanese poets who write haiku in English are based upon the long history of Japanese haiku since the fifteenth century. My Japanese translation of the instance would be: チャリの娘の歌声残し川柳.

Lastly, it would be interesting to introduce the original and translated haiku written by Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Union. He has been known to be a haiku poet and his recent haiku is: “Wrapped in my work; / all the while the wheat is growing / ever taller” (*New Yorker* March 31, 2014). Van Rompuy was the former Belgian Prime Minister and took office as the EU President in 2009. In 2010, Van Rompuy published *Haiku*, a book of haiku poems. Recently, he released a second collection, *Haiku 2*. His first collection, *Haiku* (2010) features the President’s original Flemish haiku, translated into French, English, and German. I added my Japanese translation after this. For instance, the following haiku appears at page 26 with four languages, along with my Japanese translation:

Deus, caritas,
 amor, acceptus, datus,
 hi vitam complent. (Original Flemish)

Dieu, bonté, amour,
 remplissant toute une vie,
 reçus et donnés. (French)

God, goodness and love,
 both received and given
 give meaning to life. (English)

Gott, Güte, Liebe,
 empfangen und gegeben
 erfüllen ein Leben. (German)

神は、善と愛を
 ともに受け与えられて
 生に意味を与える (Japanese, my translation)

Another haiku at page 30:

Mane spatians
 violam pede calco:
 annus iam vernat. (Original Flemish)

Promenade à l'aube.
 Je foule une violette:
 déjà le printemps. (French)

On a morning walk,
 I read on a violet:
 spring is in the air. (English)

TEN

Morgenwanderung.
Ich trete auf ein Veilchen:
es ist schon Frühling. (German)

朝の散歩で
スマレの上に読む
春が来ている (Japanese, my translation)

The last example appears at page 32:

Aestus in fossa:
bufones copulantes
ver suum vivunt. (Original Flemish)

Fossé en ardeur.
Envahissant le printemps
les crapauds s'accouplent. (French)

In a nearby ditch
toads mating passionately
inaugurate spring. (English)

Im Graben paaren
sich die Kröten wie rasend
in en Frühling hinein. (German)

近くの溝に
がまがえるが情熱的に交尾している
春の到来を祝いながら (Japanese, my translation)

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JUXTA

Interview

IT SEEMS THE WORLD IS STILL HERE:

An Interview with E. Ethelbert Miller
and translator Rafi Ellenson

CRYSTAL SIMONE SMITH

Crystal Simone Smith: As present in your previous collections of poetry, free verse is more often contemporary poets' preferred form. Amiri Baraka noted in his autobiography that his early fascination with Zen and his encounter with R.H. Blyth's four volumes of haiku (1949–52) inspired his attempts to write short forms and haiku. What sparked your engagement with the haiku form?

E. Ethelbert Miller: I seriously started writing poetry during my freshman and sophomore years at Howard University. Many of my early poems were short and perhaps captured all I wanted to say at the moment. I'm certain my style around 1969 and 1970 was influenced by my reading of the poetry written by Langston Hughes and also Norman Jordan. One of my favorite books was Jordan's *Destination Ashes*. There were no strong religious influences on my work other than Christianity and Islam. An appreciation and interest in Buddhism would come much later. This was probably an outgrowth of my friendship with the novelist Charles Johnson and the poet and translator Don Mee Choi who

both resided in Seattle. One will not find any haiku in *The Collected Poems of E. Ethelbert Miller* edited by Kirsten Porter. There is one haiku included in my book *If God Invented Baseball*. I might add however that I have written a number of short poems that might not follow the traditional 5-7-5 structure but capture the tone and spirit of haiku.

CSS: A furtherance of your engagement is the collaboration and translation of the collection with Rafi Ellenson. How did that originate and what were your aspirations and goals, in terms of audience reach?

EEM: I don't think *the little book of e* would exist if not for Joanna Chen. I met Chen in Israel back in 2004 when I was a Fulbright Scholar. Despite our geographical separation we would often Skype and share poems and discuss literary matters. Chen had translated a few of my poems into Hebrew and shared with her friends in Israel. It was Chen who introduced me to Rafi (who I believed was once her student). Although Rafi and I have never met in person we have a mutual interest in social justice issues. During my years of activism, I've worked closely with members of the Jewish community searching for ways to establish cultural bridges for people to cross. I think Rafi and I saw *the little book of e* as a way of enhancing Black/Jewish dialogue and helping in a small way to build a Beloved Community.

Rafi Ellenson: Ethelbert is exactly correct. Our work was sparked by my teacher Joanna Chen, a poet and literary translator, who put Ethelbert and myself in touch. I love the way Ethelbert refers to the cultivation of a "Beloved Community" in the Kingian sense. It is my aspiration that this collection can function as a tribute and fulfillment of the best that translation can offer as a form of bridge-building and as a tool for forming connections.

TEN

CSS: In the tradition of paying homage through literature, you reference many prolific jazz musicians and songs in your haiku. Notable haiku poet, Lenard D. Moore, is credited as the inventor of jazzku, often incorporating the musical genre in his haiku. Can you discuss your incorporation of jazz into haiku?

EEM: When I think of jazz haiku I think of James Emanuel who resided in France for many years. He died in 2013 at the age of 92. Somewhere in my personal collection I believe I have a copy of his book *Jazz from the Haiku King*. I did correspond with him for a spell and was able to publish a few of his jazz haiku when I was working with the *African American Review* publication. In terms of my own work there are a number of haiku I've written that make reference to jazz musicians. In *the little book of e* one will find references to Alice Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, Charles Mingus, Thelonius Monk, Don Cherry, Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, John Coltrane and Charlie Parker. I love the music. Jazz was my father's music. I became interested in it around the same time I started writing poetry in college. I became interested in John Coltrane and even corresponded with the jazz critic Frank Kofsky (he died in 1997). We exchanged letters because he was interested in the manuscript I had developed while taking a jazz history course (at Howard) taught by Donald Byrd. As a class project I spent time researching and collecting poems written about John Coltrane. In terms of jazz haiku I think it's also important for poems to convey a jazz sound and tone without necessarily naming jazz musicians.

CSS: In similar thought, the introduction (by Ellenson) makes mention of the challenges of translating cultural references, like the names and songs of jazz musicians. Can you discuss the variances of Hebrew and what you categorized as American Hebrew?

RE: American Hebrew is a Hebrew that captures and refers to specifically American concerns and culture. The question arises, how does one use Hebrew to encapsulate the ideas that Ethelbert

so beautifully renders in haiku? The phrase Black Lives Matter has a power and significance in English that must be contextually manifest into Hebrew. While I would hesitate, or even refuse, to categorize American Hebrew as a full-on dialect of Hebrew, I play with the particular concept in this book so as to give an allowance for experimenting with the outer bounds of the Hebrew language.

CSS: Your approach to haiku, while composed in the tradition of 5-7-5 syllables of three lines, transcends moments in nature. References to social issues like Black Lives Matter and climate change are interspersed in the collection. How do you find writing in the constraints of the haiku form suitable for these topics?

EEM: I try not to separate the personal from the political. I believe it is important for poets to not only write about nature but to protect it. Climate change is a social issue as is combating racism, sexism and antisemitism. I don't feel form holds back content. A form that is too strict can become a straitjacket and one's poem will say "I can't breathe."

CSS: You mention in the introduction Miller's a "dedication to bridging divides through literature." Can you expound on the Judaism engagement with the haiku form? Do you think the translation of this collection will inspire poets writing in Hebrew to engage on a larger scale with the form?

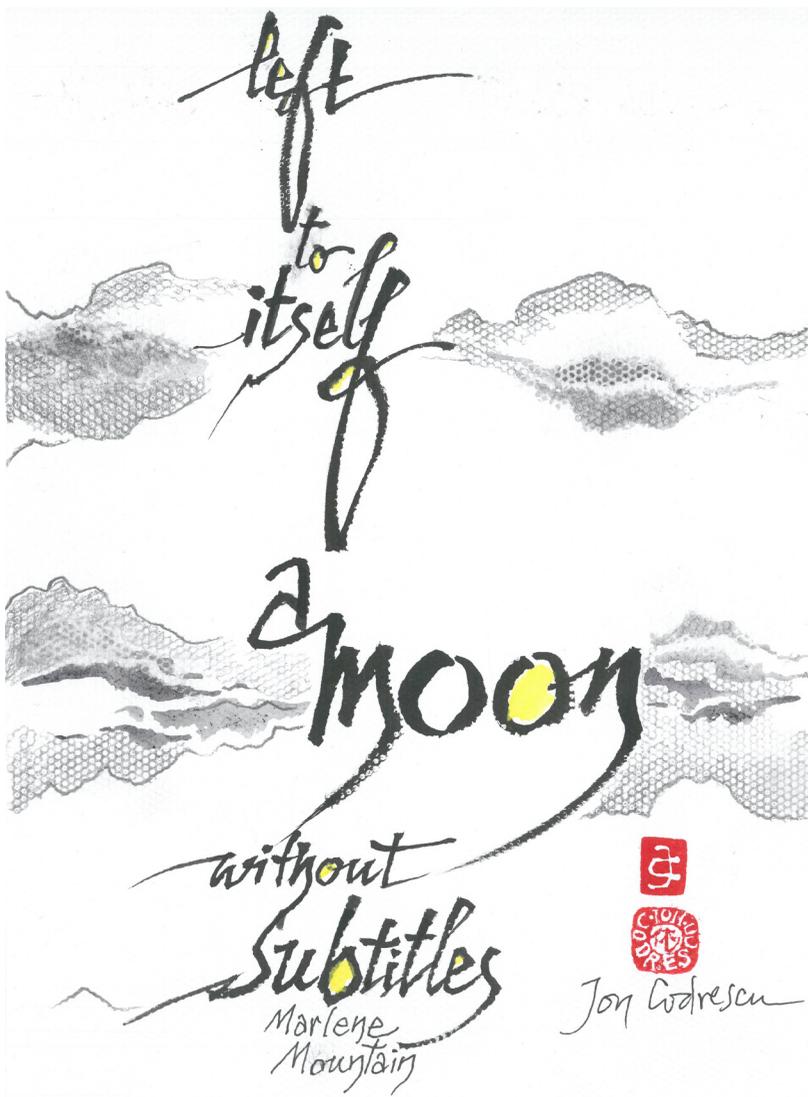
RE: There are a number of poets in Israel who engage with haiku and while I'm uncertain how many more will emerge from this collection, I am hopeful that, especially in this historical moment, underrepresented and marginalized voices within the United States and beyond will be translated into Hebrew. It is time for more and more texts from these kinds of backgrounds to be translated from English into Hebrew as well as vice-versa. Translation, and the choice of what is translated and what is not, is a matter of social justice.

TEN

CSS: This collection was written during the pandemic, a time of immense solitude and loneliness. Have you engaged in the haiku form post-pandemic, if so, has your haiku changed in any way? Lastly, do either of you have future projects you would like to tell us about?

EEM: I've written a few haiku since *the little book of e*. I'm certain I'll continue. Currently I'm working on a book of collaborative poems with Miho Kinnas, a Japanese poet and translator. Miho teaches haiku workshops and was kind enough to write a blurb for *the little book of e*. Our goal is to write 1000 poems together and publish it under the title of *The Buddha Is Not a Fortuneteller*. In February 2025 the University Press of Mississippi will publish *Black Saturation: Selected Works of Stephen E. Henderson*. Henderson was my mentor at Howard University. The book was edited by Hazel Ervin, Emily Ruth Rutter, Phillip Richards and myself.

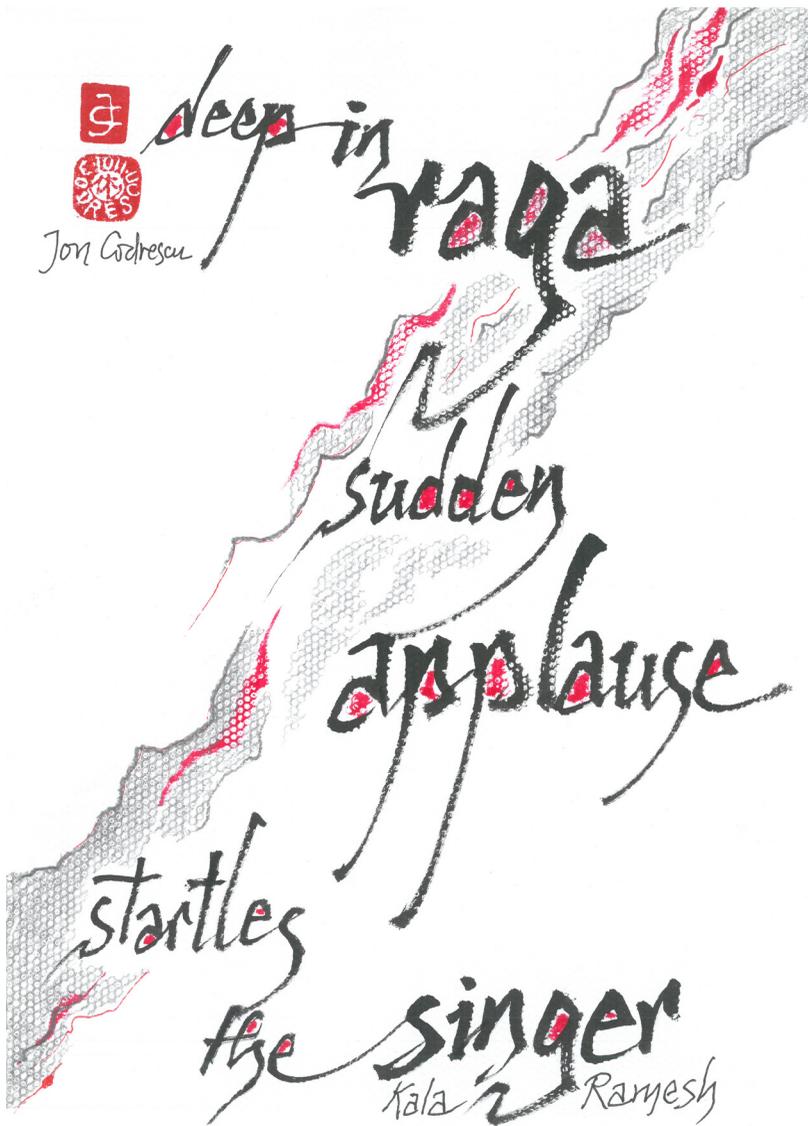
RE: Currently, my most major project is working on completing my rabbinical studies. I expect, God willing, to be ordained as a rabbi in May of 2025. As part of my capstone project, I am working on a collection of poetry inspired by the (circa) 3rd century collection of rabbinic aphorisms *Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Ancestors)*. I hope to publish these poems when I have completed my study of the book at the end of the academic year.



Poet: marlene MOUNTAIN / Artist: Ion CODRESCU
(see page 224)

JUXTA

Themes



Poet: Kala RAMESH / Artist: Ion CODRESCU
(see page 215)

Translation: A Theme

ABSTRACT: For this special issue on translation, a call for papers solicited personal essays loosely ranging from 500-1,000 words. Translators from across the haiku spectrum responded with a variety of discussions and reports of their approaches to translating haiku.

Accidental Translator

I work as an interpreter — strictly verbal translation — and don't consider myself a translator. At work, I repeat highly technical IT terms without fully grasping the content, like a parrot. Yet in my personal life, I yearn to be more creative, to use my own voice. So why, then, do I translate contemporary Japanese haiku every day?

It began with a casual conversation at a pizza joint after a Haiku Poets of Northern California meeting with Garry Gay and Paul Miller. I expressed my frustration: “Why do English-language haiku magazines only publish essays about Bashō, Buson, or Shiki? Why not contemporary poets?” Their response: “We don't read Japanese. If you can provide translations, even rough ones, we'd appreciate it.” And now, Blue Willow Haiku World's daily haiku translation becomes part of my everyday routine — perhaps for a lifetime.

Although I've helped a few poets in Japan by translating their work, I don't take on book-length translation projects. It requires the patience and stamina of a marathon runner — and the keen proofreading eye that I simply don't have.

Most haiku published in Japanese magazines follow the 5-7-5 format and include *kigo* (season word). I don't count syllables in translation since English doesn't lend itself easily to the 5-7-5 structure.

I frequently wrestle with whether to strictly follow the Japanese word order in my translations. Most of the time, I prioritize making the haiku sound natural in English. Unlike English, Japanese grammar follows a subject-object-verb structure. Sometimes, I change the order of words in Japanese original, trying not to kill the surprising element. Also, I have to use my imagination. It is often unclear whether the subject is singular or plural (for instance, “a

frog” vs. “frogs”). There is the absence of explicit object pronouns like “your,” “her,” or “his.” I rely on the gender of the poet.

Though we only have alphabets in English, Japanese is equipped with *kanji* (Chinese characters), *hiragana* (originally made from *kanji*) and *katakana* (for foreign words). *Kanji* itself has the meaning. For example, “ant lion” or “doodlebug” is 蟻地獄 (*ari jigoku*) — literally translated as “ant’s hell.” It is a summer *kigo*. The Japanese characters for “hell” give a reader of the scorching heat of the summer. The English name for this insect doesn’t imply the feeling of Japanese word would provide. “Jellyfish” is my favorite summer *kigo*. When I compose in Japanese it can be presented as 水母 (water-mother), or 海月 (ocean-moon). English doesn’t have this luxury, either.

When I compose my own haiku in English, I feel more “freedom.” William J. Higginson, one of my mentors, said I look at English words with the different eyes of native speakers. It may sound a bit odd, but when I read newspapers or listen to presentation at work, certain words seem to call out to me “use me!” Maybe I have a kind of strange filter as an English-as-second-language poet. It feels as if composing in English versus Japanese engages different parts of my brain. I don’t select hard-to-translate haiku for my daily blog. Perhaps it’s not exactly ‘automatic,’ but it’s almost as if an internal, robotic tool — like an AI agent — takes over. I don’t spend more than a few minutes per haiku. Like a job, it is a thing I need to do and not to have a fun.

I don’t translate my own haiku from Japanese into English or vice versa. Early on, when I submitted work for a haiku anthology, I was asked often, “Why didn’t you include your Japanese originals like other Japanese poets do?” Frankly, I found the question irritating. Monolingual people may not understand that when I write in English, I’m thinking in English. I don’t see my Japanese haiku as something to be translated for submission in English.

TEN

Is a translator like me a bridge between two cultures? Or am I more like a river offering a pathway from point A to point B? There may be a better vessel (a more talented translator) a passenger (a reader) can rely on. Like a dandelion, I will continue to spread seeds, hoping some of them land in someone's land and bear flowers.

— Fay AOYAGI



KALEIDOSCOPE: The translation of haiku poems

I think that a translation, especially in the poetic field, should lead not only to understanding the creative experience and possibly reliving it, but also to broadening the life of the text, to giving it a new dress (not a new body) in another language, restoring, with a good approximation, both the literal and metaphorical sense of the text and its literary characteristics, such as the length of the verse and the structure of the composition.

Language that is not just words, it is intimacy (“everything is in the intimacy of the language” as Céline wrote), it is the whole of the culture of the place, the history, the social situation and so on.

It is not about creating a new work, indeed, in this case I believe that the translator must be the author's shadow, a shadow that does not superimpose his own voice on that of the author but instead highlights the message and sensitivity of the author.

Translation is a job made of compromises, doubts, mediations, choices: what was preferred yesterday may not sound good today. Here, sounding: for me, much of translation lies in this.

It is listening, looking for the music, the rhythm that becomes words, the breath, the “emotional rendering of style” (Céline).

For me, the rhythm of a text is its fundamental element. From rhythm, in translation, also comes the beauty of the words, of the metric, rhythmic, semantic choices of the poet, while the expressive function has to do with his thoughts, emotions, moods, attitudes. . . . In translation, one does not only transpose the contents from one language to another, without too many losses or additions, one should try to transfer these values into the receiving idiom.

In a prose text it is apparently simpler, in a poem it is already more complicated, in a haiku it requires knowledge of the type of poetry and, preferably, the experience of writing and translating it.

TEN

An adequate translation is not enough, in my opinion, to highlight the original text if one does not try to render the musicality of the haiku, the “flavor of the spirit”, the rhythmic architecture on which the author bases his verses, by operating on the potential possibilities of the two languages within which to make translation choices.

No text like the poetic one presents the same fascinating and inexhaustible linguistic dynamism: unlike the prose text, the poetic text expresses concepts in an indirect way and can often say one thing and mean another. Furthermore, in poetry the form and the content are closely connected. In haiku, moreover, the unsaid is added, the void that testifies to the gap between experience and expression, of which the author is the first translator.

As for this “first translator”, that is, the author, for the subsequent translator the crux is always how to choose the word that serves to reduce in the best possible way the gap between the word chosen by the author and what represents the experience for the translator himself, with all his wealth of knowledge of the language, experience of translation, artistic, auditory, musical and rhythmic sensitivity, the choice of this or that synonym, his preference for this or that word.

We have to resign ourselves to the fact that, however much we implement strategies of conscious reading and fine analysis, ours is only one of the possible interpretations of the source text.

In this regard, given that for 17 years as Cascina Macondo Association we have announced an international haiku poetry competition, in which participants were asked to send 3 haiku in the original language and with the translation into Italian, I have often had to proceed to “re-translate” from the original language to verify and possibly modify the translation into Italian.

When you undertake a translation of a translation the difficulty doubles. For example, for many years a Russian middle school has sent out haiku from its students, both in Russian and in English:

Лучи солнца сползают с ветвей.
 За горизонтом молчанье.
 Вечер осенний.

Sunrays crawl down the branches.
 There is silence behind the horizon.
 An autumn evening.

Michelangelo Buonarroti defined himself as an artist “of taking away”: for him the block of marble had to be sculpted so that it could free the statue that was imprisoned inside. In the same way I believe that, like the *haijin*, the translator is committed to “taking away” rather than adding.

In order to adapt the text to the Italian language and to the 5-7-5 structure it was necessary to omit something, privileging the image of the first verse and leaving in the unsaid what could be imagined as consequent to an autumn evening:

sera d'autunno
 scendono lungo i rami
 i raggi del sole

(autumn evening —/the sun's rays slide/along the branches)

In any case, what I like to do when I translate from a foreign language into Italian and vice versa, is first to read the entire text aloud several times, without stopping to consider each single word, looking for sound, expressive sonority, rhythm, cadence, sensation, repetition, essence: this phase is important because poetry is a sound text as well as a written one. Everything in poetry becomes meaning and poetry takes on concreteness, depth, presence.

In the case of haiku written by Westerners, there are different ways in the various languages to approach this type of poetry, for example in English a structure of 3-5-3 syllables is preferred or in

TEN

any case a short-long-short pattern without a rigid structure. In Italian, if it is not really possible to stay within the syllabic count, I try to use metrical figures such as the synaloepha or phonetic phenomena such as the crasis to have the same poetic result.

As far as I am concerned, translation is facilitated in some cases by the fact of being able to get in touch with the *haijin* and ask for clarifications.

A few years ago I had the pleasure of translating into Italian some haiku by Jim Kacian and needed clarification on the intention of some of them:

once under sail the ocean small(s)

I was not sure if the author meant that once you set sail the ocean seems to be small, or limited, or meaningless, unimportant. I wrote to Jim Kacian and by his answer I understood that the primary suggestion of the poem was that the ocean becomes more intimate, growing smaller, even if it could not disregard the other interpretations, so I took the textual suggestions to reflect them in meanings:

una volta salpati l'oceano diventa intimo

In another case I chose to translate “there” as “qui” instead of “là” as the correct translation of the adverb would be. The choice was dictated by the fact that the immediacy and persistence of the image of the tree were not external, but internal, that the profile of the tree reverberated itself in memory as well as in sight. I had the impression that translating “è ancora là” would have been like abandoning that image to a sort of “immemoriality”, like much of what we see every day in our lives, “full of sound and fury” as Shakespeare writes, “and then it is heard no more”:

after lightning
the tree's silhouette
still there

dopo il lampo
il profilo dell'albero
è ancora qui

I also had the pleasure of translating haiku by Pietro Tartamella into English, at the request of Diederik De Beir, for a haiku project on the panel of the *Holy Hermit* by Jan van Eyck.

uomini e sete
tornano in solitudine
i boschi e i campi

Diederik De Beir was not sure whether it was the men and the thirst that were returning to solitude, or whether it was the woods and fields. He asked if the meaning was:

men and thirst
return in solitude
to the woods and fields

After talking about it again with Pietro Tartamella, my translation was as follows:

men and thirst
woods and fields
return to solitude

I particularly like this type of haiku, because if you read the first and second lines you see an image and perceive an emotional imprint, while if you read the second and third lines the image and perception change.

TEN

On the other hand, when it comes to a Japanese haiku it is undeniable that you have to deal with the extreme conciseness represented by the *kanji* and the plurality of meanings they can have. Even the syllables used as *kireji* (*ya, zo, kana, keri . . .*), whose purpose is to connect two concepts that visually suggest images that are apparently distant from each other and not easily connectable, but that then manage to unite in the poetics completing the scene with meanings, have no equivalent in inflected languages, such as Italian, English, French . . . and are rendered with various punctuation marks.

In this case, it is once again evident that poetry is first heard and then read: *kireji* are parts of the spoken language, modulations of the voice, expressive intonations of the language. Punctuation marks are a convention that facilitates reading and usually accompany breathing.

There are also (but not only in the Japanese language) names of plants, animals, objects that do not correspond or whose precise translation “sounds” bad or obsolete; there are puns, onomatopoeias that are not easy to translate.

Furthermore, it is not easy to render Japanese aesthetic and philosophical concepts such as *wabi-sabi*, *mono no aware* or *yūgen* if not by adapting the translation as much as possible to this sensitivity and trying to make the reader understand the general meaning of the haiku.

The reader, in the end, becomes the protagonist: as in a kaleidoscope, in which the colored tiles are few and always the same, the translation is reductive, since it proposes the choices and the interpretation of the translator, but once brought to the reader it can evoke infinite other interpretations like the prism that reflects the colored pieces of the kaleidoscope.

— Antonella FILIPPA

Some Recent Translations

I have been writing haiku in Japanese for more than seven years. In 2018 I joined the Ten'i Haiku Society (天為俳句会) of Tokyo, Japan and have been participating in kukai and submitting Japanese-language haiku to the *Ten'i* magazine every month. After becoming a *dōjin* in *Ten'i*, I began to write a monthly column, titled “Translation as a form of appreciation,” (鑑賞としての翻訳) for the society’s journal. In that column I select one haiku from the society’s founder, Dr. Arima Akito, together with six to seven haiku from the past issue of *Ten'i* to translate and discuss. In this brief article I would like to share some translations from this ongoing project.¹

金雀花や病みつつ渡る地中海 flowering broom — while ailing I cross the Mediterranean Sea ²	有馬 朗人 Arima Akito
--	--------------------------

This haiku’s season word, *enishida* (金雀枝), posed an interesting problem. In most Japanese-English dictionaries, the English words given for *enishida* are “broom” or “Scotch broom”. As a translator I felt that “Scotch broom” was at variance with the overall Mediterranean atmosphere of the haiku. The single word “Scotch” can pull the reader away from the original setting just long enough to interrupt the flow of the translation. Yet a first line of just “broom” feels too short. Since *enishida* as a season word refers to the plant when it is flowering, my solution was to use “flowering broom” to give me a line of the appropriate length.

1. My most sincere thanks to Kaji Tomonori (梶倶認) and the Editorial Department of *Ten'i* for granting me permission to use these haiku.
 2. *Ten'i* (May 2023, 78).

TEN

秋立つや麒麟の顔が我が耳に 有馬 朗人
 autumn arises —
 a giraffe's face
 at my ear³ Arima Akito

A continual regret of mine is that English, with its alphabet, cannot replicate the nuanced complexity and beauty of the Japanese writing system. The Japanese word for giraffe, *kirin*, is written here with *kanji*. This is a stylistic choice of the poet. Dr. Arima could easily have written the word *kirin* with *katakana* or *hiragana* (キリン or きりん); using the *kanji* form of the word gives the haiku a certain literary elegance. Unfortunately, there is no good way of conveying this feeling in an English translation. Sadly, 麒麟 must remain “giraffe”.

冴え冴えと沙翁の寺に小夜の窓 有馬 朗人
 winter chill
 a window on the beautiful night
 in the Temple to Shakespeare⁴ Arima Akito

This haiku, too, contains a *kanji* word whose literary effect cannot be adequately conveyed in English translation: 沙翁, which is read as Shaō. It is Shakespeare's name in *kanji*, and must remain as “Shakespeare” in the translation.⁵ The word for evening in this haiku, *sayo* (小夜), presented an additional challenge. According to most Japanese-English dictionaries, this word can simply be “evening” or “night” in English. Yet neither seemed to fit here. The prefix 小, which normally means “small” or “little”, characterizes

3. *Ten'i* (July 2023, 58).

4. *Ten'i* (December 2023, 46).

5. It is possible to write Shakespeare's name as シェークスピア or シェイクスピア (both pronounced *Shēkuspia*). Even if Shaō 沙翁 had been chosen merely for concision (3 sound units vs. 6 sound units), it nevertheless gives the haiku a certain elegance and refinement.

the night/evening as something familiar, something charming. It is crucial for this haiku's evaluation in Japanese and must be reflected somehow in the English translation.⁶ According to the 新明解 (*Shin Meikai*), a standard Japanese-Japanese dictionary, this prefix can have a beautifying sense.⁷ Hence, the translation's "beautiful night".

遠き朋近き友みて神の旅

有馬 朗人

both fellows from afar
and nearby friends are here
gods' journey⁸

Arima Akito

What caught my eye (and ear) about this haiku was its juxtaposition of *tomo* 朋 and *tomo* 友. Both words can be translated simply as "friend", but I was averse to simplifying a contrast that existed in the original poem. That is, if the poet deliberately chose two different words for "friend" in the original, that choice must be reflected in a literary translation. Of these two words, *tomo* 友 is the more commonly-occurring;⁹ I felt most comfortable keeping it as "friend" in my translation, especially as it refers in this haiku to people close at hand.

But what about *tomo* 朋? According to the *Kanjikai* (漢字海), a standard Japanese *kanji* dictionary, this *kanji* has a number of different meanings beyond "friend". It can mean a fellow student (同門の友); it can also refer to a work colleague or someone

6. As opposed to *yoru* 夜, "night", which would also fit here.

7. *Shin Meikai*, cf. *sa* (小).

8. *Ten'i* (September 2024, 52). Note: *kami no tabi* (神の旅) "gods' journey" is a season word synonym for *kannazuki* 神無月, "Month Without Gods", the old name for the Tenth Month of the old calendar, in which all the gods of Japan leave their shrines and travel to Izumo.

9. Cf. Yukio Tono, Makoto Yamazaki and Kikuo Maekawa, *A Frequency Dictionary of Japanese* (London: Routledge, 2013), where *tomo* 友 is listed as the 3789th most-frequent word (out of a list of 5000 words). By comparison, the everyday word for friend, *tomodachi* 友達, is the 219th most-frequent. The spelling *tomo* 朋 is infrequent enough to not be listed.

TEN

with whom one shares a common goal (一定の仕事や目的を共にする仲間). These nuances led me to pick “fellow” for this word’s translation. At that point, the rest of the translation came together easily. For *tōki tomo* 遠き朋 I felt “fellows from afar” flowed better than “distant fellows”; it also suggested a loose, smoothly-moving iambic rhythm for the first two lines. Keeping the third line as the simple “gods’ journey” then would present a shift in meter to a line with two initial stresses; this gives a satisfying rhythmic conclusion to the English translation, I think.

— Phillip KENNEDY

Climb Mount Fuji, Little Translator

In May 2000 I launched the *Haiku of Kobayashi Issa* website, a searchable archive of (at the time) five hundred haiku. It was a rich media project sponsored by the Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT) at my university, Xavier of Louisiana. Bart Everson of CAT helped with the web design; my son Bryan Godfrey-Lanoué created the search engine. This was just the beginning, because prolific Issa wrote over twenty thousand one-breath poems, at the time called *haikai*, that had the immediate function of serving as possible first verses (*hokku*) for *renga*, at the time called *haikai no renga*. The *renga* connection, by the way, is important to my story; I'll return to it later.

Over the years I've worked my way slowly through the nine-volume collection of Issa's complete works, purchased in Tokyo in 1987. As of today, over 13,000 haiku appear on the website, but there's still a lot of work to do. I retired this year, which has allowed me to focus more intently on translating Issa. If I stay healthy, I should reach my goal of 20,000 haiku within the next ten years.

Posting my translations on the Internet along with my email address has allowed me the benefit of insightful feedback both from native speakers of Japanese and astute students of haiku. Thanks to Bart Everson's guidance, the "Daily Issa" feed (@issa_haiku) became one of the very first digital humanities offerings on Twitter (now X), launched in August 2008 with over five thousand subscribers today. Sharing translations on the Web and social media brought me in contact with Shinji Ogawa, a lover of haiku who has corrected many hundreds of mistakes while deepening my understanding of Issa within his cultural and historical context. A haiku friend once asked me if Shinji is possibly an invention of mine, since no other sign of him exists online. I assured her that he's very real—or at least *was* very real. When I last heard from him over a decade ago

TEN

he was already quite old: a man of mystery living in reclusive exile in a Mexican border town.

Since Issa is a world-renowned master of haiku, you might think that his best work has already been gleaned from his many journals and published not only in Japanese but in English collections, but if you think this, you're wrong. Issa continues to thrill and amaze me, even as I pass the 13,000 mark. Three haiku that I translated in the past month, I believe, would be strong contenders for inclusion in a future authoritative anthology of the poet's best work. Haiku number 12,999 of the archive reads:

へろへろの神が雛につんむきぬ
hero-hero no kami ga hina ni tsunmukinu

eeny, meeny
miny . . .
choosing a doll

In this charming verse Issa alludes to *hero-hero no kami*, a children's ritual that involves grabbing a string to decide who gets to play with whom. The Doll Festival is held on the third day of Third Month. One can picture a parent, a child, or perhaps even Issa in a doll shop at the time of the festival, struggling to make a choice.

Artificial intelligence, by the way, isn't quite intelligent enough — at least not yet — to handle a haiku such as this one. Here is the translation of Issa's poem that the usually excellent DeepL program offered this morning:

God of the weak and helpless faces the hatchling.

And the finely tuned machine at Google Translate, while wonderful for rendering prose, spat out this mess:

The heroic god is attracted to the chicks.

Moving on, here is haiku number 13,021 of my archive:

曲水やどたり寝ころぶ其角組
kyokusui ya dotari ne korobu kikaku kumi

winding stream party —
 drunken sprawled and snoring
 Kikaku and crew

Kikaku was Bashō's most famous student. In Issa's poem Kikaku and his haiku disciples are utterly drunk, passed out in all sorts of comic postures in the garden. Perhaps "Kikaku and crew" is a coded way of saying, "Issa and crew." This haiku refers to a "winding stream party" — a Chinese poetry-and-drinking game played in springtime. Cups filled with sake would come floating down a garden stream; players had to compose a poem before a cup floated out of reach — then drink it. Here is Deep's translation:

That angle group that lies in a lake or river with a waterfall.

Google Translate couldn't make sense of the entire haiku, spitting out only Japanese gibberish — not even trying to say it in English (if we can say machines ever "try" to do anything). When I fed it just the first two *kanji*, which signify "Winding Stream Party," it produced, "curved water" — nicely literal but far from Issa's meaning.

And here's my third example of recent discoveries that deserve consideration as possibly belonging to his best work, number 13,060 of the archive:

TEN

折々は腰たたきつつむ茶哉
ori-ori wa koshi tataki-tsutsu tsumu cha kana

now and then
hitting her lower back . . .
picking tea

The comment that I appended to this haiku is, “Self-shiatsu for an aching back.” What I don’t say in my comment (but maybe I should add this) is how the scene reveals Issa’s tender compassion for hard-working peasants. The woman, probably old because in similar scenes he calls the tea-picker “granny,” performs back-straining labor. She pounds on her lower back now and then for a bit of relief but keeps on working. DeepL translates it like this:

Every moment is a moment of tea tapped on the hip.

And Google Translate also falls sadly short of the mark:

Chaya pats his waist from time to time.

In my sophomore year of college I was assigned, for a theology class, J. D. Salinger’s *Franny and Zooey*, a novel that, at one point, quotes this haiku by Issa (translator unknown):

O snail
Climb Mount Fuji,
But slowly, slowly!

A decade later, when I had learned enough Japanese to read the original text of the poem, I discovered that it actually ends with Fuji:

かたつぶりそろそろ登れ富士の山
katatsuburi soro-soro nobore fuji no yama

little snail
 inch by inch, climb
 Mount Fuji!

The ordering of images is important. Issa starts with a little snail, advises it to keep climbing, and only at the very end does he pull camera focus from close-up to wide-angle to reveal the vast sweep of locale and task: this snail is climbing . . . Mount Fuji! Even if, as some Japanese critics explain, the snail is climbing a facsimile Fuji in a temple garden, the shift from tiny to large, humble to majestic, ephemeral to eternal, is the haiku's essential revelation.

Honoring Issa's original structure, especially the images that he chooses to serve as poetic punch lines, is a practice that I have tried to follow always, and I recommend all translators of haiku to attempt to do the same. Just as important as the sequencing of images, a deep dive into the cultural framework and tradition of Japanese poetry is also necessary. The lack of such understanding explains Deapl's and Google's sorry versions of the three haiku that I fed them today.

This dive into culture led me, naturally, to a study of Issa's Buddhism. For "Priest Issa of Haikai Temple," poetry and Buddhism dovetail. Each haiku is an encounter with the universe, a revelation that is instructive not only in the "what" but, even more deeply, in the "how": how Issa squats to have a staring-match with a frog. How he talks directly to horses, sparrows, cuckoos, and crickets. How he quietly discerns the humor and ironies and lessons of life in common, unadorned, everyday experience.

TEN

門口や自然生なる松の春

kado-guchi ya jinen bae-naru matsu no haru

at my gate

wildly it grows . . .

spring pine

Neighbors have well-trimmed pines at the entrances of their houses, but Issa's grows wild and untrimmed, suggesting not only his own frank, unaffected demeanor, but also embodying an ideal of Pure Land Buddhism put forth by the patriarch Shinran: Issa, like the pine, shows non-striving naturalness, "just as I am-ness."

I mentioned earlier that *haikai* emerged from Japanese *renga*, these days better known as *renku*. In recent years, guided by *renku* master Shokan Tadashi Kondo, I have been studying the deep spiritual origins of linked verse. In the Muromachi Period (14th–16th centuries) *renga* moved from the secular court to monasteries, becoming a Buddhist ritual that invites its participants to reflect mindfully on transience, to move forward without retrogression, to surrender ego control in a communal effort, and to achieve, possibly, the enlightenment symbolized by blossoms in the penultimate verse. The *hokku* or first verse of a *renga* (mother of haiku) is loaded with spiritual significance. The fact that it alludes to the present season isn't an arbitrary rule; it's a call for *renga* participants to "Be here now." The path to enlightenment can only start by opening one's self to the here and now. Literary invention or linguistic cleverness, immersed in ego, create false beginnings that can lead, spiritually, only to nowhere. *Hokku* acknowledges publicly: "Here we are, friends, beginning this journey together in this space and time; let us attend to it!" As a poem written by two or more people (single author *renga* being mere practice for

the real thing), *renga* is an invitation to share. Interestingly, this is precisely how Bill Higginson described haiku in his monumental *Haiku Handbook*: as a form by which experience is generously shared.¹⁰ We're all in this together. Let's travel, then, together toward enlightenment!

If the translator of traditional Japanese haiku doesn't understand the deep DNA of the form — that it is the first step in a Buddhist ritual of setting aside ego with a feeling of sisterly and brotherly sharing, of acknowledging how slippery and ephemeral is the present moment, and of relying on plain, authentic experience rather than literary cleverness; that translator won't be very effective. He or she might do a bit better than our friends DeepL and Google, but ignoring the foundational feeling and purpose of *hokku* cannot lead to the best possible translation. It takes a lot of time and effort for a snail to climb Mount Fuji, but based on my past forty years of working on the Issa project (and anticipating the ten years to come), I can attest that the slow-moving, immersive way of translating haiku is joyously rewarding.

— David LANOUE



1. Not coincidentally, Bill was also a renku student of Shokan Tadashi Kondo.

Thoughts on Translation

My original urge to translate was just a deeper version of my desire to read. Get closer. Get to know. This line closes a poem by Hermann Hesse: “Denn all mein Irren war ein Weg zu dir.” (For all that stumbling was my path to you.)

Hesse is speaking to Melancholy. For me it was addressed to the Divine. “Come closer,” the poem hummed. “Don’t leave. See what I sound like in English.” Much earlier *Siddhartha* had called me into German. “Don’t leave. See what I sound like in the original. I’ll be Govinda.” Govinda and Siddhartha. Two names for Buddha. “You can be my sidekick.”

Much later the editor of *Modern Haiku*, Robert Spiess, invited me to review a volume by Günther Klinge. *Ikarusträume*. What Icarus himself dreams, or what Klinge and we dream about Icarus.

Hang-glider taking off
from a snow-covered mountain.
Dreaming of Icarus

Drachenfliegerstart
vom schneebedeckten Gipfel.
Ikarusträume

By this time I had done enough translating — stray poems, on my own, unpublished; the published *Minnebüchlein* (*Little Book of Love*) by Christian Minnesinger Heinrich Seuse (sometimes Suso); and a set of entries in an Arthurian dictionary — to have a few habits: (a) start by reading for pleasure (don’t choose the poem, let it choose you); (b) write it out in the original (letting English phrases suggest themselves); (c) let the reader see the German.

This last might not be up to you. The editor might choose to publish only the English.

— Oh! my soul! —
 the dollmaker to the doll.
 And, in fact . . .

— Nada Zidar-Bogadi (Modern Haiku 27.1, p. 74)
 Review of *Never Nearer to the Moon*

My German point of departure was itself a translation. So Spiess omitted it. Wouldn't get us much closer than my English to Zidar-Bogadi's Croatian original.

Along comes Jim Kacian. Would I please participate in *A Dozen Tongues*. "We're trying to bring poems from various cultures into many other languages so you'll translate a bunch of poems, probably mostly from the English version, into German." Into German. Oh boy.

I ask a native speaker to proofread my German version of Michaela de Gruttola's original. Edith Phillips, of blessed memory, offers to improve my punctuation.

together watching television
 even grandmother
 enjoys the cartoons
 (from the Italian)

alle gucken
 zusammen fern trickfilme
 mag auch oma
 (from the English translation)

My wife and I are wandering through a cemetery in my dad's hometown. Sarah calls from a distant hill. She has found a tombstone naming the town my grandfather's grandfather came from, and the year 1849. Germany had experienced political turmoil in 1848.

TEN

Backnang, north of Stuttgart. I go there the following summer.
Long thoughts, drifting off near the river where they had worked
leather.

In the village
we're from
this downpour

Im Fleck
meiner Urahnen
Platzregen

(With gratitude to Bob Spiess, William C. McDonald, Paul Miller,
Charles Trumbull and Jim Kacian for editorial assistance of various
kinds.)

— Peter MEISTER

Translation in the case of *Night Jasmine*

Transparency accuracy: the best is when there is no trace left of the translator in the translated text, the same tone, the same color. Goran Gatalica's *Night Jasmine* appeared in the *Haiku Shiki* June 2024 issue, a Japanese haiku journal circulated nationwide, with four critics, including Yuzo Ono, discussing his haiku based on the translation. This was a breakthrough because it was the first foreign collection ever featured in this journal.

In order to achieve this quality, there were 871 email exchanges with Goran, asking small questions like a difference in the tone for 'lonely' or the name of the specific bird. Goran asked four Japanese poets to provide friendship translations; later, he sent me the whole text to revise. Consequently, I took over the overall smoothing of the Japanese section. The original haiku is in Croatian, and I translated them from their English translation, but it helped a lot to contact the author directly to clarify the poem and the author's mindset. Translation is rewarding!

— Emiko MIYASHITA

The Translation of English Language

Haiku into Hindi: An Exploration of Form and Cultural Nuances

Introduction

When poetic forms migrate from one soil to another, they undergo a transformative journey. Haiku, originating in Japan, found its way to India, where it adapted to the region's distinct literary, social, and philosophical landscape. Rabindranath Tagore, in 1919 during his visit to Japan, discovered this concise poetic form and brought it back as a gift to India's thriving literary scene. He also wrote a book titled, *Japan Yatre*, where his appreciation of this Japanese short form found a mention. Tagore translated Japanese haiku into Bengali, his native language, effectively rebirthing haiku in India. This marked the beginning of haiku's evolution in Indian literature.

Later on, several poets like Agyeya and Satyabhushan Verma started adopting and writing this poetic form. Interestingly long before haiku came to India, Punjabi literature terrain was already blooming with three-lined verses such as *Mahiya* and *Tappe*. It was only after 1919, the five-seven-five syllabic structure was embraced by the native poets or Haikukars. They skillfully leveraged the syllabic constraint to craft evocative images that invited contemplation. The integration of haiku into Hindi literature yielded profound benefits, fostering cultural, social, and philosophical adaptations.

Haiku in translation: Japanese – English – Hindi

The sonic similarities between Japanese and Hindi languages facilitate seamless translation, with Devanagari script providing both clarity and precision. The Japanese-Hindi linguistic affinity thus eased Haiku's adaptation to Indian experiences and sensibilities. However, the translation practice of ELH into Hindi gave birth to two schools of thought.

1. Traditionalists adhered to the five-seven-five syllable count, creating profound reflections.
2. Innovators deviated from this structure, pioneering novel poetic forms.

Deviation from the five-seven-five structure could be attributed to various reasons:

- To convey intense themes that transcended syllabic constraints
- Challenge conventional norms and push creative boundaries
- Overcome perceived limitations in expressing complex ideas
- Experimenting with innovative structures and forms
- Breaking free from traditional constraints
- Exploring new ways to express modern themes and experiences

Challenges in Translation

The translation of English haiku into Hindi poses unique challenges and opportunities, as it requires not only linguistic skills but also cultural sensitivity and an understanding of the emotional resonance of the original work. When I began translating my own work in 2018, it sparked a diverse reaction from the Haikukars. Purists distinguished it as 'transcreation' rather than translation, citing my prioritization of meaning over form, which sometimes necessitated deviations from the traditional syllable count.

Inspired by fellow poets writing English Language Haiku (ELH) without strict syllable counts, I ventured into translating their works into Hindi and created Triya, a platform for innovative haiku and other Japanese short form translations. However, traditionalists insisted that translations adhere to the conventional five-seven-five syllable structure, even if the original didn't. This dilemma was resolved during a conversation with Jane Hirshfield, organized by Triveni Haikai India on translation practices and challenges, where

she emphasized: "Any attempt at translation is more valuable than leaving a great haiku inaccessible to readers." Empowered by her words, I embraced the challenge of translating ELH into Hindi more passionately and this year we complete four years of Triya with more than 200 poets' work translated into Hindi.

Approaches to Translation

1. Literal Translation: This approach focuses on translating words directly. While it can preserve the original structure, it may fail to capture the nuances and emotional depth of the haiku. A literal translation often reads awkwardly and may not resonate with Hindi readers.

Consider this English haiku:

deep in raga
sudden applause
startles the singer
— Kala Ramesh
Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years (2013)

Its literal translation would be:

गहरे राग में	<i>gehre raag mein</i>
अचानक तालियों का बजना	<i>achanak taliyon ka bajna</i>
गायक को चौंका देता	<i>gaayak ko chaunka deta</i>

This word-for-word translation may not suffice for Hindi readers, who value emotional depth. To convey the singer's absorption in raga, a more evocative term is necessary. To describe the singer's immersive state followed by his amazement, I arrive at two versions:

राग में तल्लीन
गायक को चौकाता
तालियों का गर्जन

*raag mein talleen
gayak ko chaunkata
taaliyon ka garjan*

राग में तल्लीन
तालियों का गर्जन
गायक को चौकाये

*raag mein talleen
taaliyon ka garjan
gayak ko chaunkaye*

The first version was finally published in *Triya* as it works both ways when you read aloud

राग में तल्लीन/गायक को चौकाता तालियों का गर्जन
raag mein talleen /gayak ko chaunkata taaliyon ka garjan

and

राग में तल्लीन गायक को चौकाता/तालियों का गर्जन
raag mein talleen gayak ko chaunkata/ taaliyon ka Garjan

2. Translating Emotional Resonance: The emotional depth of haiku is another critical aspect that can be challenging to convey in translation. Words and phrases that evoke specific feelings in English may not do so in Hindi. A successful translation must capture the same emotional weight, often requiring the translator to rephrase, or condense the phrase.

Consider this English haiku:

fissured fields
watering the crop
with his tears

— Brijesh Raj
World Haiku Review, 2016, *Shintai Haiku*

The literal translation of the senryu would be:

TEN

दरारों भरे खेत
फसल को पानी देता
अपने आंसुओं से

*dararon bhare khet
fasal ko paani deta
apne aansuon se*

However, a more impactful version would be:

खेत में दरारें
वह सींचे फसल
आंसुओं से

*khet mein dararein
wah seenche fasal
aansuon se*

Here the use of a single word 'Seenche' (watering) transforms the translation, distilling the poem while preserving its emotional essence. It demonstrates the power of precise word choice in translation.

3. Adaptation: This method involves reimagining the haiku to suit the cultural and linguistic context of Hindi. By replacing certain images with those that are culturally relevant, the translator can create a work that feels fresh and engaging while still reflecting the original's spirit.

Consider this English senryu:

the war dead
sitting where they died
painless

— Mike Gallagher
Bones 21

This senryu was published in *Triya* after trying out multiple versions.

युद्ध में शहीद
उसी स्थल पर स्थिर दफ्न
दर्द रहति

*yuddh mein shaheed
usi sthal par sthir/dafn
dard rahit*

युद्ध में शहीद
उसी स्थल पर दफ्न
दर्द रहति

*yuddh mein shaheed
usi sthal par dafn
dard rahit*

Mike's senryu commemorates the war dead. To preserve cultural sensitivity, I reframe the Hindi translation:

Original (English): Sitting where they died.

Literal Hindi Translation:

जहां मरे उसी जगह पर बैठे

Jahan mare usi jagah par baithe

Culturally Reframed Translation:

उसी स्थल पर स्थिर/ दफ्न

Usi sthal par sthir/dafn (Stable/buried in the same place)

By replacing the literal translation with "*Usi sthal par sthir/dafn*," we honor the Indian cultural reference to war heroes, recreating a poignant image that resonates with local nuances.

4. Collaborative Translation: Engaging native speakers or poets in the translation process can yield richer results. Collaborative efforts can help bridge cultural gaps and ensure that the translation resonates on multiple levels, maintaining both form and meaning. Since the inception of Triya, I have been collaborating with poets on translations of their poems.

Consider this English senryu:

TEN

old age home
a leaf falls
into the silence

— Neena Singh

failed haiku, Volume 7, Issue 80

For this senryu, I had worked with the poet though multiple versions to arrive at this version (suggested by the poet):

वृद्धाश्रम
एक पत्ता गरिता है
मौन में

*vridhashram
ek patta girita hai
maun mein*

which to me sounded telly. To make it more visual we finally agreed at this version:

वृद्धाश्रम
मौन में गरिता
एक पत्ता

*vridhashram
maun mein girita
ek patta*

5. Transcreation: Effective transcreation of haiku achieves emotional resonance and semantic equivalence in the target language, mirroring the source language's impact. This process aligns with localization principles, where the translated content is tailored for the target audience's cultural, linguistic, and contextual nuances. Transcreation allows translators balance creative freedom with fidelity to the source, ensuring that the haiku's core message resonates. The below mentioned haiku have been transcreated to fit into the syllabic structure of five-seven-five.

Consider these six haiku by Indian poets including my own:

last night's storm —
 mother sweeps away
 the broken nest

— Geethanjali Rajan

First Place, Raedleaf Poetry India Award, 2013

बीता तूफान - 5

beeta toofan

माँ सुबह बुहारे - 7

maan subah buhare

टूटा घोंसला - 5

toota ghonsla

house on sale
 the weeds bloom
 while they can

— Ravi Kiran

Triya Monsoon Edition '24

बकिऊ घर - 5

bikau ghar

उगते खरपात - 7

ugate kharpaat

पाकर मौका - 5

paakar mauka

stars adrift
 in the chill of night
 last diary entry

— Angelee Deodhar

बहते तारे - 5

behte tare

रात के कंपनी में - 7

raat ke kampan mein

अंतिम लेख - 5

antim lekh

TEN

abandoned shrine
Gods as lost
as us

— Shobhana Kumar
A Sky Full of Bucket Lists

तजा मंदिर - 5	<i>taja mandir</i>
देव भी असहाय - 7	<i>dev bhi asahaya</i>
मानव जैसे - 5	<i>maanav jaise</i>

temple in ruins
a brook nearby
brims with lotus

— Teji Sethi
The Heron's Nest XXIV:1, March 2022

जीर्ण मंदिर -5	<i>jeernd mandir</i>
कमल से बौराई - 7	<i>kamal se baurayi</i>
पास की नदी - 5	<i>paas ki nadi</i>

drifting sands
sometimes the poem
writes itself

— Debbie Strange
Winning Haiku, 2023 Drifting Sands Wearable Art
and Haiku Contest

बहती रेत - 5	<i>behti ret</i>
कई बार कविति - 7	<i>kayi baar kavita</i>
स्वयं को लखि - 5	<i>swayam ko likhe</i>

In Hindi half-word/sound is excluded while counting the syllables.

Conclusion

The translation of English haiku into Hindi is a multifaceted endeavor that goes beyond mere linguistic conversion. It demands an appreciation for the art of poetry, an understanding of cultural contexts, and a sensitivity to emotional nuances. Through thoughtful adaptation, translators can create haiku that not only retain the spirit of the original but also speak meaningfully to Hindi-speaking audiences. Ultimately, this process enriches both languages and fosters a deeper appreciation for the art of haiku across cultural boundaries.

— Seji TETHI



The Wings of Translation

A translation is no translation, he said, unless it will give you the music of a poem along with the words of it.

— John Millington Synge, Irish writer (1871 – 1909)

Translation is unfathomable art. Where does it begin, how does it occur? Even the art of writing is a translation in itself— trying to put into words all the feelings and emotions, all the ideas and observations, trying to preserve the unique voice of each author. For that reason, translating other people’s poems is challenging enough, but being a bilingual poet, I sometimes struggle to find the right words even when I translate my own haiku.

Why is it so difficult to convey the meaning of the words of such a short poem? I believe that it has to do a lot with the fact that its brevity is deceptive and actually those lines can hold so many possible interpretations. Add to that the translation of peculiar words and concepts, and you are facing another huge obstacle. Overall, if you consider the etymology and syntax of the words, and the difference in grammar between languages, translation becomes a task which involves a lot of energy and hard work.

Although I speak other languages as well, I will draw from my linguistic experience and focus on my English/Bulgarian translation practice. These two languages have different linguistical backgrounds— Bulgarian is classed as a Slavic language while English is a Germanic one. As a result, they have different word order and sentence structure. Consequently, when translating haiku or tanka between these languages, the translator needs to be aware of that in order to avoid sounding like Master Yoda from Star Wars when putting words in reversed order.

As well as having a flexible sentence structure, Bulgarian has gender cases (masculine, feminine, neuter) and lacks a separate word for the definite or indefinite articles. Instead the nouns are modified by adding the appropriate suffix. Obviously, this can affect the word and syllable count when making translations between these languages.

In order to illustrate these differences, I will use a couple of examples from Alan Summers' article "Travelling the single line of haiku" which I translated into Bulgarian in 2019 for the Bulgarian Haiku Union journal *Хайку свят* (*Haiku Svyat*). The first one by American poet and activist Marlene Mountain (1939 – 2018) was a pretty straight forward translation:

left to itself a moon without subtitles

— Marlene Mountain

Haiku 21 (ed. Gurga & Metz, Modern Haiku Press, 2011)

оставена сама на себе си луна без субтитри

However, the second example — like many other one-line haiku — presented some challenges:

city of glass the immobilised man small stone counting

— Alan Summers

Blithe Spirit 23.3

град от стъкло неподвижен човек брой дребни камъчета

As Alan Summers explains in his article, one way to understand this monoku is to break it down into its most obvious (and initial) sections: city of glass, the immobilised man and small stone counting. All three sections are easy to be interpreted but in the English text 'small' also acts as a pivot and can be associated both with the man (as being insignificant in the metropolis) and with

TEN

the size of the stones (wasting time with unimportant stuff). In Bulgarian, despite trying various versions and changing the word order, the pivot was lost and as a result I opted for the most obvious, literal translation and chose the size of the stones.

Earlier on I mentioned the challenges while translating one's own work and the example below shows how sometimes the literal equivalents can be replaced by a more suitable version in order not only to paint a more impactful image but also to showcase the richness and beauty of the language:

cloudless sunset	безоблачен залез
across the horizon	по ръба на хоризонта
a necklace of birds	наниз от птици

(Third Prize in the 22nd “Kusamakura” International
Haiku Competition, 18 November 2017)

The word ‘necklace’ translates literally as *огърлица* (*гърло* is neck in Bulgarian). Still I opted for a different word — *наниз* which is used for both beads on a string (necklace) or for dried fruit or flowers (pierced identical objects) linked on a piece of string. When I observed the birds across the horizon on that quiet August sunset, they looked indeed as a necklace, as if an invisible connection was holding them together and they were ‘hanging’ in the sky. Needless to say, I felt that although the haiku was originally written in English, the chosen word for necklace in Bulgarian improved it and took it on a higher level.

In conclusion, I would like to note that although at first glance the two languages are quite different, in fact once you delve into them, you can find some similarities and despite the difficulties good translations can be provided. Thomas Moore Devlin, editorial lead at the language platform Babel, writes that “what really separates languages is not what you can express, but how you can express it”. And I couldn't agree more. In haiku the small choices we as poets

or translators make can indeed determine the whole difference. We need to ensure that we use our creative energy and we help the poem to spread its wings and reach as many readers as possible without losing its originality and poetic value.

— Iliyana STOYANOVA



On Translation of Haiku from Japanese into English and French — My Examples

I am a sexagenarian male Japanese haiku beginner. I have written haiku since last July. I write a haiku in Japanese first and translate it into English and French.

By profession, I am a business translator; therefore, I am accustomed to business document translation from English or French into Japanese and vice versa. However, when I translate haiku in Japanese into English or French, I often encounter many difficulties.

Today, haiku is globalized and many people all around the world write it in its own mother language or English, today's international language. On the other hand, mainly European and American experts and translators have translated haiku in Japanese from the classics to the contemporaries into occidental languages including English, first of all. As for haiku translation, I have learned foreign precursors and appreciate their understanding of the Japanese haiku and abilities and efforts of research.

I would like to cite one example. It is the very famous and classic-of-classics haiku by Bashō.

古い池や蛙飛び込む水の音
furuike ya kawazu tobikomu mizu no oto

old pond!
a frog plunges into
watersound¹

vieille mare
une grenouille plonge
le bruit de l'eau²

1. Translated by Kern, Adam L., *The Penguin Book of Haiku* (Penguin Classics) (English Edition) Penguin Books Ltd.

2. Translated by Isabel Asúnslo, *Le haiku en herbe*, Éditions L'iroli.

One thing that we can perceive is that these two translations are simple and sketchy, not explicative.

The other thing that we can understand is that the English and French translations correspond to one another in words and syntax. As for the latter, of course because the two versions are written in the same European languages. I have absorbed these two points into my haiku translation.

Additionally, while a handful of foreign haiku authors observe the rule of 17 syllables strictly, like Richard Wright, most don't. Of the two translations above, the former is in free verse and the latter complies with the rule. I am a non-native speaker of English and French, and lacks sufficient foreign language vocabulary, and therefore I have given up trying to adhere to the 17-syllable rule in haiku translation.

I would like to introduce some examples of my haiku translation practice. All of them were written last July, from when I began to write haiku, so I am not confident that these examples are successful, and some of them contain season words that do not correspond with summer. Let's enumerate them as follows.

1夏の夜や恋したりける百合の花

natsunoyo-ya/koi-shitarikeru/yurinohana

summer night —
fell in love
with a lily.

la nuit d'été —
tombé amoureux
d'un lis

2お盆なり念仏唱う向日葵や

obon-nari/nenbutsu-tonau/himawari-ya

it is O-Bon
a sunflower's
prayer to Amitabha

c'est O-Bon
un tournesol
sa prière à Buddha

TEN

3梅雨明や涼なるかな朝ぼらけ

tsuyuake-ya/ryo-naru-kana/asaborake

the end of rainy season

how cool

this morning is

fin de la saisons des pluies

comme il fait frais

ce matin

4うたた寝や昼さがりなる施餓鬼かな

utatane-ya/hirusagari-naru/segaki-kana

napped

hearing invocations

early afternoon

sommeillé

entendant l'invocation

en début d'après-midi

5蝉吸うや一睡もできぬ昼寝かな

semi-suuya/issue-mo-dekinu/hirunekana

cicadae sing

too loudly

to nap

des cigales chantent

trop

pour prendre la sieste

How do you find my originals and their English and French translations? Anyone who is familiar with Japanese will discover that my translations are not always literal, as when you compare with the above two translations of Bashō. But, except for this, I have observed the key points in translating the haiku above as much as I could. As the excellent 20th -century French writer and translator, Valery Larbaud, wrote, when we translate, it is essential to pay attention to balance as much as possible.

In addition, my original haiku are presented in not only *romaji*, but also Chinese characters and *kana*, because I would like to elucidate the unique characteristics of Japanese expression in writing and Japanese subtle nuances, which are difficult to translate into foreign languages.

I would like to conclude my essay by suggesting that my haiku are almost conceptual rather than realistic, because I like European romanticism and symbolism, especially in poetry, and my haiku are, perhaps, influenced by it without my being aware of it.

— Kosyu TAKAHASHI (高橋孤舟)

My Translation Process

The Question of Kigo

I mostly translate Japanese haiku into English.

In my experience, translation is, first, a form of close reading. The original text presents a fixed reference point to be returned to. Still, the process is dynamic. I need to shift my focus between the text, my rendition and my understanding of the aesthetics of English language haiku. As I go, I will notice interesting, new things about the text. Some insights may need to be sacrificed for poetic effectiveness or brevity. Ultimately, I aim to justify every aspect of the final draft in terms of either my grasp of the original or my understanding of effective English language haiku.

Translating haiku is a bold, even foolhardy thing for me to do. I learned Japanese as an adult through textbooks. Since I originally learned Japanese words and syntax along with their English equivalents, I can usually switch languages easily. This can trip me up, though. The Japanese entries in my ‘mental dictionary’ often lack richness—the synonyms and multiple meanings easily available to me in English. Occasionally they are plain wrong. Sometimes they are missing altogether. Luckily, I can refer to dictionaries and I have generous Japanese friends who speak good English who will look over my drafts.

My main strength is that I have been reading and writing English language haiku for a long time and have a reasonable understanding of what makes it work.

The initial step is choosing what to translate. Do I like the work? Is it within my translation capacity? What is my purpose in translating it? The example that I use below is from a project aiming to introduce Australian school children to haiku via haiku written by Japanese children.

Since most of the translation I do is for talks or workshops, I have a lot of freedom. I do not have to find a publisher or persuade an editor that I have something that will appeal to a large enough paying readership.

The next stage is to look up any words I do not know in the haiku I have chosen. A first rough draft is generally quite easy to write. Then I focus on what makes the original work ‘poetic’. How closely can I duplicate that?

Let me take as an example of a piece of juvenilia published in *Kingyō* (*Goldfish*), the first haiku collection by Sakanishi Atsuko.

つんつんとかたい葉を出すチューリップ
tsun tsun to katai ha o dasu chuurippu

It is a child’s fresh take on the appearance of a tulip (the *kigo*). For me the centre of this piece is her use of the onomatopoeia, *tsun tsun*, which means things like “pointed, sticking up (hair), standoffish, prickly, unfriendly, poking, pungent.” That *tsun tsun* is also used to describe prickly, standoffish people gives the tulip real character.

This is a one-part haiku consisting of an adjectival phrase preceding a noun. The fun of the word order — natural to Japanese — is that the noun comes at the end, answering the momentary question: “What is pointy-pointy, and puts out a stiff leaf?” This punchline effect can only be reproduced in English by introducing a cut.

Another feature is the pattern of (rounded) *hiragana*, (Chinese) *kanji* and (angular) *katakana* (the three scripts used in Japanese). Here *katakana* signals that *chuurippu* (チューリップ) is a loan word, indicating the flower itself is an exotic. It is quite different in spirit from the soft, delicacy of cherry blossom.

Can we see the two *kanji* (for “leaf” and “put out”) right in the middle of the haiku as somehow mimicking the tulip’s pointy stiff

TEN

leaf? The look on the page may be accidental. Still, since I have a way to render it, I will. I want to bring out the playfulness of this haiku for my audience of Japanese learners and their teachers.

My final translation is

putting
out its
stiff
so-stuck-up leaf chuurippu

I have left the *kigo* in Japanese to stress the untranslatability of *kigo* in haiku. In this case, a gloss is probably not necessary. The students may have to strain a little to guess it, but effect will be all the better for that.

There is also a long — if less widespread than before — practice of using concrete poetry techniques in English language haiku. Concrete poetry is fun. The unconventionality of the layout asks to be questioned. It also invites an experimental use of the voice if the haiku is read out loud.

This somewhat experimental translation is fine for a conference paper. Its most controversial aspect, the retention of the *kigo* in Japanese, can be justified by the ultimate audience of Japanese language learners.

If I were to include it in a submission of translations intended primarily for haiku poets, I suspect most editors would balk at the code switching, even if a gloss were available. To my mind, this is a pity.

There are different approaches to translation — foreignizing (those that allow the otherness of the source language and culture) and domesticating (those that minimise differences). Many translations of haiku understandably draw on Anglophone traditions of nature poetry, imagism and minimalism which also inform English

language haiku. However, I feel that if the *kigo* — often but not always a concrete image — is flattened to simply a word or phrase among other words, something essential is lost.

As a translator, I am always searching for ways to show that *kigo* are special. Much haiku is written to a *kigo* prompt. Each *kigo* is therefore the challenge to which the poet has been asked to rise. The resulting haiku will be read accordingly. *Kigo* are also, through their repeated use in millions of poems, the epitome of any haiku's poetic resonance. From the traditional point of view, they are the “unchanging” presented in tension with the “ever-changing”.

Could code-switching be one solution to their translation?

— Alice WANDERER



Translation is a Magician's Task

Translation is a magician's task. To remove a poem from its language, its culture, the nuances of rhythm and pace and place it in an unfamiliar world and still have it retain the range and complexity of what was created in the universe of its origin requires nothing less than magic.

What is at stake is the soul of the poem. But the soul is wrapped in the clothing of its birth. Cristina Rascón and I decided to bring forward as much of that clothing as we could, believing the rags the poem wears are integral to the understanding of what it contains.

Cristina, haiku poet, writer, and translator of Japanese haiku into Spanish, gave a lecture at the Haiku Northwest Seabeck Haiku Getaway of 2022 in which she presented some exciting translations that she'd made of the very first Hispanic-American haiku poets, Jose Juan Tablada of Mexico, Flavio Herrera of Guatemala, and Jorge Carrera from Ecuador. Following a brief conversation together I agreed to help shape her literal translations, retaining as much of their meaning as possible, at the same time making subtle changes that would suit them to the ear of American haiku poetry readers.

She selected seventeen haiku from each poet and we set about our task. No surprise, it turns out this comes down to details as small as the use of capitals, the spacing of lines or titles and the use of punctuation. Its container, the form of haiku itself, has already been borrowed from the Japanese. Now it transforms itself to a Hispanic American culture. Inevitably it will take that culture into its being. We have decided rather than to force upon it the form and expectations of the receiving culture, American English, we would honor the poet's choices and his culture as best we could.

Here are examples of some of the decisions we faced. In the poems of Herrera he uses titles as part of the poem and capitals at the

beginning of each line. Though it is not often seen in American haiku we decided to leave it that way.

Volcanoes
 Thermometers that measure
 The fever of the tropics

Sometimes all that is needed is a simple change that favors the rhythm and the accustomed feel of the new language as in Andrade's poem "Zoo."

Flamingo:
 chalk doodle in puddle.
 Movable foam flower
 on a bare stem.

becomes with a little help:

Flamingo:
 chalk doodle in the puddle.
 Movable foam flower
 on a bare stem.

Sometimes it's the word order as in Tablada's poem "Flying Fish,"

Splits into splinters the glass of the sea

becomes:

Splits the glass of the sea in splinters

There are times that the direct translation is awkward. This poem by Tablada titled "The Bees" demonstrates that principle. We also agreed upon other changes.

TEN

Non-stop drips
Honey the apiary;
Every drop is a bee . . .
I changed it to:
The apiary drips
Non-stop its honey
Every drop a bee . . .

We kept the capitals, lost the semicolon and dropped “is” in the new language. We retained the order of “Non-stop” and “honey” to keep the “feel” of the tapestry it came in.

The poetry of a culture expresses the personality of that culture. What we have noticed in these poems is a jocularity of spirit we don’t often find elsewhere. And there is a musical lightness of touch that helps to carry the intelligence forward. What we have hoped to accomplish in our translations is to keep alive the literal that lives along the surface of the poem and at the same time attempt a graceful evolution of what lives at the core.

Combining the fluency of my colleague in both the language and the art of haiku with someone who listens with the ear of the new culture, we hope to have come as close as we can to bringing an authentic version into the room.

After all is said and done, there is a spiritual element to this process that cannot easily be defined, yet one which surely attends to notions arising from the emotional stream of consciousness, influences hard to describe as poetry itself. Decisions, therefore, must occasionally rely on impulse more than logic in order to hope for a harmonious new version. No wonder, then, the word magic comes to mind.

— David WATTS

Aspects of the Problem of Translation elucidated by rendering a Japanese haiku composed by Matsuo Bashô into English

Considering the many different problems that may crop up in this context I can only broach some selected items meant, however, to become aware of the scale and kind of the difficulties which have to be constantly coped with in such a process.

Priority of any responsible translation is loyalty towards the original. As a matter of principle all given components of the source language statement have every right to call for a comprehensive and appropriate registering and adequate decoding both of the textual message with all its polysemous potentialities and of all external, rhetorical and stylistic features to establish the indispensable requirements as regards the not in the least less difficult task of taking into account and encoding all collected findings and impressions in the target language.

From the methodical point of view it is possible — mainly with languages whose structures do vary so considerably as it is the case with the Japanese and English ones — that up to four working steps turn out to be necessary:

1. the interlinear or word for word translation,
2. the structuring translation,
3. the adapting translation,
4. the literary translation.

By way of illustration a quick glance at a haiku composed by Matsuo Bashô:

TEN

The Japanese sequence of words

hibari / yori // sora / ni / yasurau // toge / kana

corresponds directly to the following English one

lark / than / sky / in / rest / mountain pass / (kana).

Kana is definitely no independent word inasmuch as it primarily bears a meaning like a semanteme. Instead it belongs to the so-called *kireji* or “cutting words” the decisive criterion of which are aspects of form rather than content. In their original function *kireji* are grammatical particles; in poetry, however, they are used above all for metrical purposes, i.e. just formally to fill up the number of syllables to satisfy the traditional 5-7-5 format. The *kireji kana* always takes up an end position thus letting for instance the atmosphere die away gradually. That's why it has become a habit in western languages to render it by a dash or three dots. Yet put after the twelfth syllable *kana* will mark a slight caesura, similar to the *kireji kamo* laying by this more emphasis on the last part. Regarding the expressive level *kana* stands for “admiration” or “amazement”. And it is just this very flavouring that has to be taken into consideration in our case while taking the next step destined to lead to the essential further unambiguity.

This approach is again a “coarse cut” yet now being geared predominantly towards the inherent laws of the target language reducing or supplementing the version to this end by the necessary elements — morphological and syntactical ones — while arranging the adjusted components in a more natural and idiomatic way:

Higher than the lark in the sky!

Having a rest at the pass of the mountain.

Then follows the adapting translation which is already oriented as defined by the *scopos* theory (Greek for “purpose”, “aim”) to the needs of a commissioned work and the specific requirements of the target language.

Resting at a pass in the mountains higher than the lark in the sky!

In the literary translation, the final stage, the prose sentence arrived at in this way has to be cast in its definite form correlating with the artistic original. Simultaneously one must see to it that all connotations and accents — often not quite apparent at first sight, though subconsciously recognizable in the end — are captured to an acceptable degree. In all probability options will be left nevertheless for a further closer scrutiny until the final decision is made. Such as here:

Even higher
than a lark in the sky.
Rest at the pass.

versus

Resting even higher
than a lark in the sky,
high up at the pass!

These alternative solutions do by chance reflect at the same time the two main differing concepts of haiku in the western world which are sometimes not only just demonstrations of a mere matter of taste but may lead to highly controversial discussions, often to such an extent that what seems to be a pro in one opinion is used as a con on the other side.

Another preliminary remark in advance: There is no longer any serious disagreement about the item that the strict syllable count is

TEN

one of the formal devices that can henceforth be neglected without further scruples. Yet all the more passionate is the dispute left between the supporters of the skeletal and the artistic way of composing haiku just to clarify the poles.

Like this the first version refers to nothing but the facts. It is rhythmically well balanced (4-6-4) and made of two parts, distinctly marked and skilfully saving the surprising explanation for the last line. Enough material in connection with a good arrangement to set free the reader's emotions.

The second version falls back on a far wider range of stylistic and poetic applications. In this way the adequate accentuation of what has been experienced in reality is reproduced not only by the exclamation mark but also by the twofold emphasis on having reached that extraordinary height after so much laborious climbing trying to re-enact the same childlike joy Bashō, too, must have felt according to his Japanese commentators when realizing that the song of the lark he had become aware of even rang out from below his own position.

Thus we read for example in *Bashō and His Interpreters: Selected Hokku with Commentary* edited by Makoto Ueda (Stanford U P, 1992) the following two interpretations: First the one by Iwata: "When we have reached a high place, we experience a kind of elation, feeling as if we have risen higher in social status. The poem depicts such childlike elation as well as a touch of surprise." And another one by Yamamoto: "A lark's song is cheering and lively, well befitting spring. Hearing it, Bashō returned to an innocent, childlike frame of mind and called out to the lark, saying lightheartedly, 'I'm higher than you.'"

Putting the gerund "resting" at the very beginning, i.e. in an outstanding position, equals pointing out the writer's momentary state: After all his efforts he has at last reached the top of the passway and is in urgent need of a break which gives him the opportunity

to get his special situation, the peculiarity of his particular location straight in his mind. Corresponding to what happened to the lark the process of rising has been stopped. Besides not only had the bird to stay behind farther below, but can also be outdone easily because it simply has to carry on with its efforts just to hold its position by flapping its wings. This is the explanation of the author's triumphant feeling, his jubilant cry. One point more for him, one less for the lark. Just a total of 17 syllables to comprise his overwhelming happiness, yet justifying the shift in balance. Higher than high! It even seems as if the independent dynamic creature was beaten by the static mass of the mountain, the lark being held back and nailed down by the pass which is underlined as well by the assonances marking the corresponding words, "lark" and "pass" whereas "sky" and "high" detach from that level to form another dimension. The "rest at the mountain pass" proves to be — illogical but notwithstanding true — a mocking bird of some greater import.

If we want haiku to be recognized as a real genre of poetry we will probably not succeed without resorting to all those devices which definitely constitute literature. That is why literary translation should be the goal to be pursued at all events as it is the ultimate art of conveying foreign culture.

— Klaus-Dieter WIRTH

JUXTA

Reviews

la nuit
d'été
tombé
Amoureux
d'un
bis



Ion Codrescu

Takahashi
Kosyu

Poet: TAKAHASHI Kosyu / Artist: Ion CODRESCU
Translation: by the author (see page 218)

A Dialogue that Spans Time and Space

A Review of *The Routledge Global Haiku Reader*

Pippa PHILLIPS

James Shea and Grant Caldwell (Editors). *The Routledge Global Haiku Reader*. (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2023.) Soft Cover: ISBN 978-1-032-27265-8. 357 pages.

The Routledge Global Haiku Reader is an indispensable volume for serious students of haiku. Its essays concern the interpretation and translation of Japanese haiku; an historical overview of haiku, with a focus divided among Japan, the anglophone world, and global haiku; and essays about English language haiku and the influence of haiku on modern anglophonic poetry. The articles are arranged to create an engaging dialogue with a multiplicity of perspectives from a multiplicity of cultures, languages, and contexts.

There is a question that pervades the volume: what is haiku, exactly? Is it a uniquely Japanese form, tied to the precedents established by Basho and his poetic lineage? Can its essence survive translation into other languages, cultural contexts, and aesthetic practices? If so, in what does its aesthetic value inhere, and how do we chart its evolution into a globally accessible art form?

The various analyses provided are indispensable not just to readers of haiku, but to haiku writers looking to take their craft and understanding of the short form to the next level. Of particular note are Haruo Shirane's "Beyond the Haiku Moment" and Richard Gilbert's "The Disjunctive Dragonfly." Both scholars regard dogmatism as folly which limits artistic progress, often rooted in various misinterpretations of haiku tradition. Shirane argues against the rejection of "Western" sensibility and figurative language, while Gilbert fixes on disjunction, rather than the dualistic notion of juxtaposition, as the governing principle of haiku. The focus on semantic inversion, impossibility, and flouted expectations allows for a shifting, context dependent appraisal of haiku.

The tension between tradition on the one hand and innovation on the other are evident in both the Japanese and anglophonic traditions. Several articles chart the dramatic schism between a commitment to a traditional understanding of haiku aesthetics, or *kachōfūe*, as embodied by Masaoka Shiki's student Takahama Kyoshi, and the emergence of gendai haiku through the poets that comprised the New Rising Haiku movement. Hiroaki Sato and Yūki Ito map out the dogmatic cult of personality of Kyoshi on the one hand, and the political persecution of the New Rising haikuists on the other, outlining a tension between hierarchy and traditional methods, and democratic experimentation. This tension remains today, not just in Japan but to some extent in the English language haiku community.

There is an understandable focus on the anglophonic lineage of haiku, from Blyth's translations to the Imagists to the contemporary age. Yoshinobu Hakutani outlines bilingual poet Yone Noguchi's influence on American poets, particularly Ezra Pound. Karen Jackson Ford's "Marking Time in Native America" traces the influence of indigenous American culture on haik — for good and

ill. There are more poems in evidence about said culture from the elegizing perspective of non-indigenous poets, than there is authentic poetry from indigenous voices such as Gerald Vizenor and William Oandasan.

Other essays focus on haiku from a global perspective, outlining the impact of haiku on French, Hispanic, and Russian poets. However, the history of Indian haiku is conspicuously minimal, missing even from Charles Trumbull's essay on global haiku traditions. This is surprising, given the prominent role Indian poets play in English language haiku today, as well as the popularity of haiku among poets working in the many languages native to the subcontinent.

The anthology ends on a note of possibility, exploring the ways haiku continues to evolve. Phillip Rowland's "From Haiku to the Short Poem," serves as an answer to Takeo Kuwabara's historically significant essay "A Second-Class Art," an invocation for haiku poets to create poetry whose value is self-evident. Rowland argues that haiku provides a foundation for developing a broader understanding of micropoetry.

In the end, although we may be no closer to answering the central question of what haiku is, perhaps it doesn't matter — a poem's worth doesn't necessarily rest on its connection with a tradition, but in its artfulness, and its context. *The Routledge Global Haiku Reader* is a necessary volume for anyone serious about the art form.

Haiku as Crucible

A Review of *Lenard D. Moore and African American Haiku*

Emily SPENCER

Ce Rosenow. *Lenard D. Moore and African American Haiku: Merging Traditions*. Landham, MD: Lexington Books, August 2022. Hardcover. 104 pages. ISBN: 978-1-7936-5317-8.

Traditions merged; artistry discovered. In scholar Ce Rosenow's exciting and stalwart *Lenard D. Moore and African American Haiku: Merging Traditions*, Rosenow posits that Moore's use of "African-American aesthetics" and usage of various types of haiku, his invented jazzku, and haiku-related forms merge to artfully convey a solidary and solitary African American aesthetic covering music (jazzku), storytelling (haiku sequence), grief recovery / ancestral devotion (elegiac haiku), and more (Rosenow 6). Moore's poetry is both vehicle and crucible for artful experience, recovery, and community for Moore himself and society. The scope of these form-plus-aesthetic pairings is individual and collective, solidifying his haiku in the canon of poetry et al. and African

American poetry (17). Who is Moore? Lenard D. Moore was the first African American president of the Haiku Society of America and is the author of several haiku collections, including *The Open Eye* and *Desert Storm: A Brief History*, as well as other books of poetry, including jazz poetry, *The Geography of Jazz*, and he edited the first anthology of African American haiku, *One Window's Light*. Rosenow notes how Moore's opus relates to his approach to haiku that spans the individual to the collective: "Considering Moore's haiku in relationship to his longer poetry, haiku sequences, and haibun clearly demonstrates Moore's sustained poetic interest in communal and family narratives, art and music, and grief" (6).

As the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it, the aesthetic is "the philosophy of the beautiful or of art . . . the distinctive underlying principles of a work of art or a genre . . . the arts of a culture, etc." Of course, a culture may have its principles prescribed to it by stereotypes, colonists, and/or the mass market—or it may germinate its own principles of beauty and culture through lived experience. Moore's haiku, according to Rosenow, are the latter, as she notes that Moore writes from lived experience: "Moore, however, writes haiku primarily as he experiences them or in reflection on his experiences," as opposed to "desk haiku" written from the imagination and fiction (55). It is evident from Rosenow's analysis that the haiku forms haiku sequence, jazzku (invented by Moore), elegiac haiku, and others serve as unique tools, crucibles, to vibrantly render individual and communal aesthetics of a man, his community, nation, and world. Rosenow builds off of Toru Kiuchi's "African American Aesthetic in Lenard D. Moore's Haiku," whereby Kiuchi states, "Lenard D. Moore takes his home life and experience from abroad through his haiku to create African American aesthetics that is [*sic*] simplistic in its style" (Kiuchi 160). Adding her perspective, Rosenow attributes this aesthetic development as aided and nuanced by specific types of haiku and haiku related forms (6).

For instance, regarding haiku sequence and the African American aesthetic of storytelling, an aesthetic that Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in “The ‘Blackness of Blackness’” has previously identified, “Much of the Afro-American literary tradition can, in a real sense, be read as successive attempts to create a new narrative space . . . the so-called black experience” (Gates 295), Ce Rosenow claims that “Moore’s haiku sequences communicate significant aspects of the African American experience referred to by Gates” (7). Furthermore, Rosenow presents the following haiku number 136 from *Desert Storm: A Brief History* as an example of a haiku in Moore’s sequence that pertains to individual experience and to cultural storytelling aesthetics:

Sunday morning
a black GI prays
inside his tent

Then, Rosenow presents number 7 from Moore’s collection as an example of collective story and the storytelling aesthetic:

a squad of soldiers
boarding the wet cattlecar
none smiling

In this way, Rosenow notes, “The resulting sequences thereby utilize haiku form with its focus on transitory moments experienced by a single person in order to create larger communal narratives . . .” (19). Therefore, the haiku sequence is a tool, a crucible, to better, or at least with more aptness, express the beauty of the solitary and the solitary, the solitary as linked to the solitary, via not only content but form.

Shifting gears from haiku sequence, which many poets have employed, such as Sonia Sanchez in *Morning Haiku*, Rosenow introduces us to jazzku — a form created by Moore — via Moore’s

TEN

poem “American Jazzku.” Rosenow states, “The intersection between Moore’s jazz and haiku poetics finds its most innovative expression in ‘American Jazzku’” (30):

“American Jazzku”
(96th Street Library, New York City)

We sit in a hush so
deafening it tingles my ears
for what will burst
into talk,
into poems.

Thus, Rosenow opines that the jazzy, riffing, aesthetics of jazzku are not just in the musical content of jazz, which was invented by the African American community, and sonics but in the innovation of the jazzku form itself, “the five-line jazzku poem stretches haiku beyond its traditional three lines and truncates Moore’s free verse jazz poems, which are longer than five lines, thereby locating itself between these two lengths” (31).

Finally, another area that Rosenow reflects upon from the tome of Moore’s writing is elegiac haiku. Rosenow analyzes Moore’s haiku about his late daughter and ancestors, which carries out the African American aesthetic of ancestral devotion, or, at the least: salute, evident in such cultural texts as *Beloved* by Toni Morrison — an ancestral devotion spanning back to peoples and their cultures in Africa, such as the Akan in present-day Ghana, and surviving the intergenerational trauma and terror of American Transatlantic slavery in which enslaved African American families were separated by slave owners, as documented in such autobiographical works as *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* by Frederick Douglass.

In an interview with the Haiku Foundation, Moore states, “When I lost my daughter, Maiisha LaShawn Moore, it was poetry that

saved me. . . . I've written my way out of grief that I experienced when I lost my daughter. And so, without poetry, I don't know where I would be, including haiku." Rosenow mentions the following haiku by Moore as an example of this process, a haiku which Moore mentioned in that interview:

hot afternoon
the squeak of my hands
on my daughter's coffin

Rosenow notes, "Moore employs images that engage multiple senses in this single moment, again recalling Edwards' claims that in grief people have a heightened awareness of what they are physically experiencing . . . The piercing sound, which would be jarring to both Moore and those around him, also jars the reader as the second line moves to the third," (57). In this way, Rosenow notes that elegiac haiku, in their artistry, are vehicles for grief recovery.

Ce Rosenow in *Lenard D. Moore and African American Haiku: Merging Traditions*, presents a symphonic five-chapter book that communicates that Lenard D. Moore's approach to haiku is that of deep, perceptive, masterful formal engagement, culturally authentic (lived) aesthetic artistry, and knowledge about haiku. Truly, beautiful — artful. Also engaging is Ce Rosenow's keen close reading as a scholar and haiku poet herself in this well-rounded and researched book. Rosenow notes, "Moore's original haiku made important impacts on contemporary poetry. It helped promote the further development of English-language haiku and moved haiku from a form occasionally used by African American writers to one that is an established part of African American poetry" (77).

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The “Vibrant Bubble”

A Review of *Haibun: A Writer’s Guide*

David GRAYSON

Roberta Beary, Lew Watts and Rich Youmans. *Haibun: A Writer’s Guide*. United Kingdom: Ad Hoc Fiction, 2023. Paperback ISBN 978-1-915247-40-7. 120 pages.

From the beginning, *Haibun: A Writer’s Guide* hints that it will be a distinctive work. It’s coauthored by three recognized haibun writers: Roberta Beary, Lew Watts and Rich Youmans. It’s the first such full-length publication in English. But possibly the most telling sign that this “how-to” will be different is the opening section. Titled “From the Authors,” it takes the form of a haibun.

The authors cover a lot of ground in a slim volume. The book kicks off with defining and exploring the haibun, which includes a section on haiku due to its centrality. The authors delve into the history of the form, how to read and write haibun, and walk through a classification of different types. They present favorite work, and wrap up with an appendix of exercises and a resources section. In

terms of length, the back matter comprises approximately 20% of the total material.

The first noteworthy aspect of *A Writer's Guide* is that it's valuable for all levels, and even experienced practitioners will benefit. This helps avoid the trap of some instructional work that writers grow out of. One ingredient that makes it effective for all levels are the frameworks that the authors present.

In the chapter "Reading Haibun," the authors share the "4-Spark Reading Framework." It's based on what they describe as the "Holy Trinity" that comprises a haibun (title, prose, and haiku). Importantly, it's also anchored in treating each of these elements as equals. For a haibun with the most common structure (title, prose block, and final haiku), the authors trace the linear path that most readers presumably follow (title, then prose, then haiku). The framework identifies four types of "sparks" that connect these parts. It charts how the first spark occurs within the haiku. The haiku draws (or "sparks") the reader back to the prose, then from the haiku back to the title, then between the title and prose. (Of course, haibun with different formats would require a modified treatment.) This model can be illuminating at any level of engagement, whether simply as awareness of how you might react to a haibun, or directly applying it, as the authors recommend.

Another valuable model presents options for "linking and shifting" between prose and haiku. They use a short prose poem, "Mott, North Dakota" by Jim Johnson, and write four haiku to convert the poem into four different haibun versions, each representing different degrees and modes of linking and shifting. In one example, the haiku precedes the prose and functions as a "scene-setter." The other three haiku appear at the end, and serve other purposes. For example, one clarifies or concludes the prose, and another intends to "leap and open new narratives" (38). This model can be effective as a prompt or as a scaffold to appraise work in progress.

The second strength of *A Writer's Guide* is how the authors incorporate their experience as active practitioners. An illustration is the guidance they provide for creating titles. Following their 4-Spark framework, they characterize the title as an “equally essential part” of the three components. They note that while a title can simply set a scene, it’s beneficial for it to do more; otherwise, it “places enormous weight on the prose and haiku to carry the haibun” (41). They observe that if you’re unable to get a title that bridges prose and haiku, this might be an indication that “your haiku has leapt too far, and that you may have lost the reader” (42). Insights such as these are likely born from direct experience writing, and the reader is the beneficiary.

Another topic addressed is starting with prose or poem. Each author offers their own personal reflection. (They all land on the same practice, normally starting with prose.) The section is typical of other topics where there’s less prescription and more discussion and elaboration of questions and choices. This approach balances directive guidance and reflects the opening haibun-format section in that three prominent craftspeople share multiple views that when combined yield a rounded perspective for the reader to absorb.

While there are benefits when the critic is also an artist, there are risks, too. One potential pitfall is that the authors use a liberal sampling of their own work as examples. For instance, in the chapter “Favorite Haibun,” each contributor selects not only a favorite by another author, but one by themselves. Lew Watts’ “Sweet Mercy” is used as the composition to walk through for the 4-Spark framework. Chapter 4, “Writing Haibun,” features two by Beary and one by Youmans (out of a total of six). Some sampling was inevitable, since their work is a key part of the contemporary corpus. However, it can be challenging to reflect and provide commentary on your own work.

Fortunately, the risk wasn't realized. I suspect having coauthors helped to mitigate this, as they could provide feedback to each other. But beyond that, pedagogically it's successful since the authors have background on their haibun that of course a reader is not privy to. The context that Beary shares for "Retrospection" — an example of a "braided" haibun with the lines of a single haiku alternating between blocks of prose — is an illustration.

While the prose component of the Holy Trinity is covered well, it might nevertheless still have been valuable to reference other short prose genres, like prose poems or flash fiction. As mentioned above, in the model on linking and shifting, they did select a prose poem as the base, so there is some inclusion.

The authors recognize that haibun is becoming more popular but acknowledge that a bridge connecting haibun writers with the larger poetry community isn't yet in place. Like haiku's relationship to mainstream poetry, haibun also remains a "vibrant bubble," but a bubble nonetheless. Can this book capitalize on the growing acceptance and start to link the two worlds? If haibun does indeed spread beyond the confines of English-language haiku, I predict that *Haibun: A Writer's Guide* will have contributed to that development.



Poet: KOBAYASHI Issa / Artist: Ion CODRESCU
Translation: David LANOUE (see page 217)

JUXTA

Haiga

HAIGA

I enjoyed the translation theme employed in *Juxta* 10. It gives us the opportunity to approach haiku and related texts from multiple angles and perspectives. Many of us read in multiple languages, so we recognize how transposing a haiku from one language to another may change its sonority and music. Words may be short or long, light or heavy in sonority, colorful or neutral, rich or poor in meaning, open or closed in significance, melodious or noisy, loved or hated by exposure in the context of the history in which we live.

Creating *haiga* in different languages (English, French, Italian and German) poses an additional set of problems for me. Preparing this task, I needed to do more than the usual composition exercises regarding the structure of the calligraphy, since each language has its own lexical characteristics. I wished to preserve the fluidity of each poem so that it might recall the flowing spirit of the Japanese calligraphy of *kanji* and *hiragana*. Calligraphy is such an integral part of these compositions that the painting becomes calligraphy, and the calligraphy becomes painting, so to harmonize the entire energetic field of the message and remove boundaries or differences between these two visual languages. In general, the role of *haiga* is not to directly illustrate the content of the poem, because the words express very clearly the meanings and ideas the poet wants to evoke. I hope to make each painting a companion to the words, suggesting an atmosphere and carrying forward their meaning.

A particular challenge was the poem written by the late Italian poet Pietro Tartamella. His haiku was inspired by one of the scenes from the famous Ghent Altar piece painted by Jan van Eyck. Although my two paintings are similar in composition, each has its own particularities in terms of calligraphic arrangement, word size, color accents and details. I hope you enjoy them!

— Ion CODRESCU

flowering
broom -
while ailing
I cross
the Mediterranean
Sea

Arima Akito

Joy Codrescu

Poet: ARIMA Akito / Artist: Ion CODRESCU
Translation: Phillip KENNEDY (see page 198)

JUXTA

People

men

and

thirst

returning

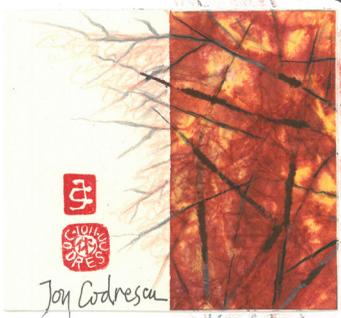
to

solitude

the woods

and the fields

Pietro Tartamella



Poet: Pietro TARTAMELLA / Artist: Ion CODRESCU
Translation: Antonella FILIPPA (see page 196.)

JUXTA *Contributors*



Fay AOYAGI is past president of the Haiku Society of America (2016–2019) and an associate editor of *The Heron's Nest* since 2013. She served as Honorary Curator of American Haiku Archive in 2024. She is a dojin of the Japanese haiku groups Ten'I and Aki, and has published three award-winning haiku collections. Her blog Blue Willow Haiku World, provides daily translations of contemporary Japanese haiku.



Shelley BAKER-GARD served as Haiku Society of America Coordinator for Oregon from 2014–2023. She has been writing English haiku and senryū for many years and has been widely published. Her 2023 title *They Never Asked; Senryu Poetry From The WWII Portland Assembly Center* (co-authored with Michael Freiling and Satsuki Takikawa) won a Touchstone Distinguished Books Award HM.



Rafi ELLENSON is a student at the Hebrew College Rabbinical School. In Jerusalem he worked for the Hotline for Refugees and Migrants and for 0202: Points of View from Jerusalem. He was awarded the Dorot Fellowship to study literary translation. In Boston he has worked as the Associate Director of the Dignity Project and as the Director of Hebrew Programming at URJ Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute.



Antonella FILIPPA has managed a publishing house, organized environmental integration courses, worked as a scientific director and R & D manager, taught in a medical school, created a ten-episode series on the environment for RAI Italian national television, spent time on the editorial staffs of *La Tenda* and the Cascina Macondo cultural association, and currently, she organizes courses on haiku writing.



Richard GILBERT, Professor of English Literature, Kumamoto University, studied poetics at Naropa University and gained his PhD in Poetics and Depth Psychology from the Union Institute. He founded the Kon Nichi Translation Group in 2002. Recent books include *Haiku as Life: A Kaneko Tohta Omnibus* (2018). He is a co-founder of the *Heliosparrow Poetry Journal* (2020 – present).



David GRAYSON has been writing haiku and senryu for twenty years. He authored *Discovering Fire: Haiku & Essays* (Red Moon Press, 2016), and edited *Full of Moonlight* (HSA 2016 Members' Anthology). He was featured in *A New Resonance 6* (Red Moon Press, 2009), *My Neighbor* (Two Autumns Press, 2009) and *Spring Haiku in the Park 2018* (Yuki Teikei Society). He lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with his family.



Jennifer HAMBRICK is the author of three award-winning poetry collections, including *Joyride* (2021), and of *a silence or two* (2024). Her writing appears in *The Columbia Review*, *Rattle*, *American Life in Poetry*, and elsewhere. She holds a Ph.D. in Musicology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is a classical musician, public broadcaster, and cultural journalist in Columbus, Ohio.



Phillip KENNEDY is a freelance writer and editor in the field of educational publishing. He writes haiku in both English and Japanese and is a *dōjin* in both the Ten'i Haiku Society of Tokyo, Japan and in the Yuki Teikei Haiku Society (San Jose, California). He is currently compiling a series of English-language season word handbooks for the Yuki Teikei Society. He lives in Monterey, California.



Toru KIUCHI is the editor of two collections of essays, including *American Haiku: New Readings* (2018) and *Haiku, Other Arts, and Literary Disciplines* (2021) (with Yoshinobu Hakutani). He is also the author of *The Critical Response in Japan to African American Writers* (2003) (with Yoshinobu Hakutani and Robert Butler) and *Richard Wright: A Documented Chronology, 1908-1960* (2014) (with Yoshinobu Hakutani).



David LANOUE a translator and critic of Japanese haiku and author of several "haiku novels," beginning with *Haiku Guy* (2000). *A Taste of Issa* (2019) presents 1,210 of Issa's best haiku with original texts and comments. Now a retired professor emeritus living in Lexington, Kentucky, he continues to post translations and commentary on his website, *The Haiku of Kobayashi Issa* — a searchable archive of over 13,000 poems.



Peter MEISTER taught German at the University of Alabama in Huntsville for twenty years before retiring to work on a trio of musicals envisioning Earth as a successful planet. He earned his undergraduate degree in German at the University of Pennsylvania and graduate degrees at the University of Virginia.



E. Ethelbert MILLER is a writer and literary activist, author of two memoirs and several books of poetry including *The Collected Poems of E. Ethelbert Miller*. He served as editor of *Poet Lore*, the oldest poetry journal in the US, for 17 years. A two-time Fulbright Senior Specialist Program Fellow to Israel, he holds an honorary degree of Doctor of Literature from Emory and Henry College and has taught at several universities.



Emiko MIYASHITA (宮下恵美子), a haiku poet who writes in Japanese and English, was trained by Akito Arima and is now a *dōjin* for the Shin (晨, Dawn) group. She is director of the JAL Foundation, author of two haiku collections, edited *The New Pond: An English-language Haiku Anthology*, and has cotranslated collections of haiku by Masajo Suzuki, Akito Arima, Yoshiko Yoshino, and Taneda Santōka.



Pippa PHILLIPS is an educator currently residing in North Carolina. Her poetry has been published and anthologized widely, including in *A New Resonance*, *The Heron's Nest*, *Prune Juice*, and the *Asahi Shimbun*. She creates micropoetry-focused multimedia such as mini-chapbooks, stickers, and jewelry, and is currently working on an illustrated chapbook. You can find her work across multiple platforms @pippaesque.



Teji SETHI is a nutritionist and researcher with a poetic DNA. Her bilingual creative works and reviews have been published in *The Yearbook of Indian Poetry in English*, *Indian Literature Journal* (Sahitya Akademi), *Modern Haiku*, *The Heron's Nest*, and elsewhere. She published *moss laden walls* (2021) and co-edited the India dhanyavaad anthology *amber i pause* (2023), and is founder editor of *Triya* haiku journal.



Emily SPENCER is the author of *East Walnut Hills*. Her work is published in the *Kenyon Review*, *Poetry*, *Modern Haiku*, and elsewhere. She is an assistant professor at Miami University.



Iliyana STOYANOVA — poet, editor and translator — holds a PhD in Theology. She is the current president of the British Haiku Society. she has also served as Secretary of the United Haiku and Tanka Society (2017 – 2020), editor for the *Living Haiku Anthology* and Haikupedia Editor. Her haiku and other poems have been published in numerous journals and anthologies, and won several international awards.



Kosyu TAKAHASHI, following 20 years as an editor for a business publishing house, is now a free-lance business translator, writer, and editor. He studies particularly Japanese and European literatures, including Latin, classic Greek, Russian, Korean, and Chinese. He writes haiku in Japanese, English, and French. (Kosyu is a *haigo*, and an autonym for Takeshi (毅).)



Alice WANDERER is a retired teacher of Japanese who became interested in haiku in the 1990s. Her book, *Lips Licked Clean*, a translation of a selection of haiku by Sugita Hisajo based on her PhD thesis, won a Touchstone Award in 2021. Her first collection of haibun, *Flow*, was published in 2023 and an e-chapbook of haibun, will be published by Snapshot Press in 2025. She is a founding member of the Fringe Myrtles.



David WATTS has published two haiku collections, *Dream Tree* and *Seed Kites*, along with 7 books of poetry, 3 short story collections, 2 mystery novels, 9 westerns, 4 books of aphorisms and a Christmas memoir. He is a classically trained musician, a retired national radio and television host, and a professor both of poetry (The Fromm Institute) and of medicine (UCSF). This is his first effort at translation.



Klaus-Dieter WIRTH has been publishing haiku since 1995. As a philologist and linguist (German, English, French, Spanish, Dutch) he has a special interest in international haiku. His haiku poetry, essays and other articles are widely represented, predominantly in magazines and anthologies covering five languages. Four of his individual quadrilingual haiku books are currently in print:



Bo ZHAN's dissertation investigates the applicability of universal metrics in Japanese haiku and Chinese recent-style verse. She has explored the teaching and perception of pragmatics, and is interested in the teaching of Japanese refusals to Chinese and English speakers. Bo has taught various levels of Chinese and Japanese at, among others, Purdue University, Wake Forest, and Carnegie Mellon University.

JUXTA *Staff*



Janine BEICHMAN, biographer and translator of Japanese poets, has published *Masaoka Shiki: His Life and Works*. *Beneath the Sleepless Tossing of the Planets*, her translations of the selected poems of Ōoka Makoto, was awarded the 2019-2020 Japan-United States Friendship Commission Prize for the Translation of Japanese Literature. Her most recent book is *This Overflowing Light*, translations of the poet Ishigaki Rin.



Ion CODRESCU taught graphic arts, history of art, and comparative art at Ovidius University, Constanța, Romania. He is founder of the Constanța Haiku Society, *Albatross* and *Hermitage* haiku journals, and the Constanța International Haiku Festival. He is author of eighteen books of poetry, haiga, and essays. His paintings have been exhibited and collected in many countries.



Cheryl CROWLEY studies the literature of premodern Japan, specializing in the popular verse form *haikai* (ancestor of modern haiku) of the 17th and 19th centuries. Her book, *Haikai Poet Yosa Buson and the Bashō Revival* (2007) explores the intersections of poetry and visual art, elite and popular culture. Recently her research has focused on the work of women *haikai* poets in early modern Japan (1603–1868).



David GRAYSON has been writing haiku and senryu for twenty years. He authored *Discovering Fire: Haiku & Essays* (Red Moon Press, 2016), and edited *Full of Moonlight* (HSA 2016 Members' Anthology). He was featured in *A New Resonance 6* (Red Moon Press, 2009), *My Neighbor* (Two Autumns Press, 2009) and *Spring Haiku in the Park 2018* (Yuki Teikei Society). He lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with his family.



Josh HOCKENSMITH is a writer, book artist, and librarian who has worked with haiku since the 1990s. He helped found the Richmond Haiku Workshop. He is interested in book arts, the history and future of the book, and literary translation. He is the library assistant at Sloane Art Library at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, where he is also working toward an MA in Art History.



Jim KACIAN is founder/president of The Haiku Foundation (2009), founder/owner of Red Moon Press (1993), editor-in-chief of *Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years* (W. W. Norton, 2013), and managing editor of *Juxtapositions* since its inception in 2015. His latest book of haiku is *after / image* (2018), and this year completed *Clerikus*, his anecdotal history of haiku in the West, which is now in search of a publisher.



Adam L. KERN is author and editor of several books on Japanese literature, including *The Penguin Book of Haiku* (Penguin Classics, 2018). He studied Japanese literature at the University of Minnesota, the University of Kyoto, and Harvard University, where he earned a Ph.D. in East Asian Languages & Civilizations. Kern is Professor of Japanese Literature and Visual Culture at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Toru KIUCHI is the editor of two collections of essays, including *American Haiku: New Readings* (2018) and *Haiku, Other Arts, and Literary Disciplines* (2021) (with Yoshinobu Hakutani). He is also the author of *The Critical Response in Japan to African American Writers* (2003) (with Yoshinobu Hakutani and Robert Butler) and *Richard Wright: A Documented Chronology, 1908-1960* (2014) (with Yoshinobu Hakutani).



Peter McDONALD was a lifelong academic librarian and researcher who retired from academia as Dean of Library Services, California State University, Fresno in 2019. He's had a lifelong interest in Asian poetry, and is himself a minor published poet.



Sheila SMITH McKoy is an award-winning poet, fiction writer, and filmmaker. She co-authored *One Window's Light: A Haiku Collection*, winner of a 2017 HSA Merit Book Award for best haiku anthology. She is both a Pulitzer Prize and Pushcart Prize nominated poet. She has authored and edited numerous scholarly works in the areas of Africana Studies, race and difference, literature and culture, and mentorship.



Ce ROSENOW is the author of *Lenard D. Moore and African American Haiku: Merging Traditions*, co-author with Maurice Hamington of *Care Ethics and Poetry*, and co-editor with Bob Arnold of *The Next One Thousand Years: The Selected Poems of Cid Corman*. Her essays have appeared in many respected journals. She is the former president of the Haiku Society of America.



Dave Russo is the digital project manager for The Haiku Foundation and is a founding member of that organization. He is the author of *Summer Music Festival at Natural Chimneys Park*, a small handmade book. And he's the consulting editor for *The Coach Gaither Story*, a sports biography.



Crystal Simone SMITH is the author of four poetry chapbooks including *Wildflowers: Haiku, Senryu, and Haibun* (2016). She is also a co-author of *One Windows Light: A Collection of Haiku*, Unicorn Press, (2018). Her work has appeared in numerous journals including: *Callaloo*, *Nimrod*, *Modern Haiku*, *Frogpond*, *The Heron's Nest*, and *Acorn*. She is the Founder and Managing Editor of Backbone Press.



John ZHENG is the author of several poetry collections including *The Dog Years of Reeducation*, *A Way of Looking*, and *Delta Sun*, editor of seven books including *Sonia Sanchez's Poetic Spirit through Haiku* and *Conversations with Lenard D. Moore*, and coeditor of *Dana Gioia: Poet & Critic* and two other books. He has received three poetry fellowships from the Mississippi Arts Commission.

JUXTATEN is our second themed issue, and our topic is translation, in general, as well as specific to haiku. It features new scholarship by **Jennifer HAMBRICK** (“Found in Translation,” an interview/essay concerning the work of Richard Gilbert and the Kon Nichi Translation Group of Japan); **Shelley BAKER-GARD** (“The Poet’s AHA,” a look at the American Haiku Archives, part of the California State Library in Sacramento); **Bo ZHAN** (“Japanese Haiku Meter,” a consideration of the rhythmic unit and prosodic structure of Japanese haiku); **Toru KIUCHI** (“Haiku Translation: Cultures across the Border,” a presentation given at the International Conference, English Language and Literature Association of Korea, Busan, Korea, December 12, 2012); and interview with poet/editor E. Ethelbert Miller and translator Rafi Ellenson by **Crystal Simone SMITH**, plus considerations of the translator’s art by a dozen current practitioners (**Fay AOYAGI**, **Antonella FILIPPA**, **Phillip KENNEDY**, **David LANOUE**, **Peter MEISTER**, **Emiko MIYASHITA**, **Teji SETHI**, **Iliyana STOYANOVA**, **Kosyu TAKAHASHI**, **Alice WANDERER**, **David WATTS**, **Klaus-Dieter WIRTH**); plus reviews of three recently published titles of note, and 11 new pieces from haiga master **Ion CODRESCU**.



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