

Little by little we are going away
To that land of lush tranquility.
Perhaps I, too, must be on my way,
Once I've picked up what belongs to me.

You cool cloisters of birchen trees,
From where I've worshipped Earth and plain,
Watching this sea of waning humanity,
I cannot shed this numbing pain.

I've loved too much in this world
What blankets the soul in flesh—
Peace to aspens that, with boughs unfurled,
Watch over rose-hued waters that by them rush.

Many silent thoughts I've known,
Many songs to myself I've sent.
And on this darkened earth, though alone,
I'm glad of what life I had to spend.

I'm glad of the women I've kissed and held,
Glad of the blossoms I've crushed in hand,
And of the wild grass I made a bed,
And happy that beasts, shadows of ourselves,
Have never known my anger on their heads.

I know that, there, I'll find no groves in bloom,
And no swan-necked rye making music in the wind.
And so, with such a multitude pacing to its doom,
I can only kneel in the cold and cringe.

I know that in that land are no such fields
Ripening into ochre and gold in the dark.
So I love yet more those who still can feel
The warmth of my hand, the pulse of my heart.

--Daniel Webster (concluded)

A LAST-MINUTE ADDITION OF SOME IMPORT. . .

Since the first of October EARTHLINK in Canada has been putting out an updated listing for writers, editors and publishers. It contains the addresses of over thirty Toronto-area writing groups, including a correspondence group, the contacts for a dozen Toronto reading venues, and the addresses for several recent Canadian writing conferences. Ideal for the dissemination of information and flyers. Send \$5 (Canadian) to EARTHLINK, 100 King High Ave., North York ON, Canada M3H 3B1. They also take U.S. dollars, British pounds, money and postal orders.

Five of a Kind

"Someone, probably thinking of Basho's famous haiku about the-sound-of-a-frog-jumping-into-an-old-pond, once likened the English language haiku movement to a small puddle far from the mainstream of poetry. If so, the puddle is doing well on its own. While the mainstream moves, for the most part, sluggishly through gray fogs of obscurity and intellectualizations, the puddle is ablaze with color and light . . ."

From the introduction to Cor Van Den Heuvel's *The Haiku Anthology*.

Haiku in English first became popular in the 1950s when, following the war, the West began to be exposed to the cultural riches of Japan. Since then, haiku has increasingly become an indigenous Western literary form, having dropped many of the conventions which not a few Japanese haiku poets continue to insist are essential to "real haiku." In adapting haiku to English, Western poets have sought to preserve the Japanese sense of haiku as a moment of intuitive insight captured in simple, concrete language. But they have also attempted to attune the form of haiku to the natural rhythms of English, to draw inspiration from the landscapes of other continents (particularly North America), and to approach the intuitive through the West's own natural sense of spontaneity. Here are five recently published books exploring the past achievements and future potential of the haiku movement in English.

The Haiku Anthology (Second Edition) Edited by Cor Van Den Heuvel
Simon & Schuster ¥2,150 (trade paperback)
367 pages 16 cm x 23.5 cm
ISBN 0-671-62837-2

The first edition of this important anthology of haiku in English was published in 1973 and this expanded, updated version documents three major recent developments: (1) the emergence of the "one-liner"—haiku written in one line rather than three (actually most Japanese haiku are printed in one continuous line even though they maintain the 5-7-5 syllable count)—of which this haiku by Marlene Mountain is one of the most interesting examples:

at dusk hot water from the hose

(2) the increasingly frequent practice of writing longer works such as renga, *haibun*, and haiku sequences, and (3) an interest in human relations, including sex and love, as subject matter (subjects which are almost never treated in Japanese haiku and which Van Den Heuvel thinks should be more properly labeled as "serious *senryu*"). The anthology includes generous examples from each of these categories and more conventional haiku as well. Altogether, there are more than 700 works, covering virtually every major style of haiku in English and the most important authors in the movement.

One Hundred Frogs: From Renga to Haiku in English by Hiroaki Sato
Weatherhill ¥2,400 (trade paperback)
241 pages 14 cm x 21 cm
ISBN 0-8348-0176-0

The first part of this book traces the history of Japanese haiku, specifically showing how it developed out of the renga form, and lists not only the more familiar rules and techniques of haiku but also some which have fallen by the historical wayside. The second part deals with the peculiar problems of translating haiku from Japanese into English and in the process shows how haiku can be effectively assimilated into the English language. The last part anthologizes both excerpts and complete works of renga and haiku composed in English. The anthology is (too) brief and some of the same material is included in *The Haiku Anthology* above, but Cor Van Den Heuval's solo renga, "Rickshaw (Buddha Comes to the West)" and Sato's own "In Your Panties" are important contributions. The book derives its title from the one hundred translations of Basho's archetypal *furu ike ya* that are presented in Part Two to illustrate how differently a single haiku can be translated. The translations included range from the literal to the literary, the traditional to the avante-garde, the limerick to the sonnet, the ridiculous to the sublime. And in this priceless translation by Clara Walsh, the sublime actually manages to become the ridiculous:

An old-time pond, from off whose shadowed depth
Is heard the splash where some lithe frog leaps in.

The Haiku Handbook: How to Write, Share, and Teach Haiku, by William J. Higginson with Penny Harter
McGraw-Hill ¥3,550 (trade paperback)
331 pages 13.5 cm x 20.5 cm
ISBN 0-07-028786-4

Higginson's *Haiku Handbook* greatly expands and replaces Harold B. Henderson's slender *Haiku in English* (1967) as the most complete and authoritative guide to writing and teaching haiku in English. The scope of the book is magnificent. *The Haiku Handbook* introduces the reader to both classical and contemporary Japanese haiku and then proceeds to give a comprehensive history of haiku in the West, from its earliest beginnings (the first Westerners to write haiku were probably French, circa 1905) through the experiments of Pound, Wallace Stevens, Amy Lowell and others to the post-war haiku in English movement. Haiku movements in other languages such as Dutch, Greek, Yugoslavian and Arabic are given along with English translations. Information is included on haiku magazines in English and also on alternative ways of sharing haiku, such as having one's haiku printed on postcards and stationery. In addition to a detailed section on the art and craft of writing haiku, one entire section is devoted to teaching haiku, covering everything from teaching haiku to kids to lesson plans.

Erotic Haiku, edited by Rod Willmot
Black Moss Press ¥1,990 (paperback)
60 pages 20.5 cm x 20.5 cm
ISBN 0-88753-093-1

As with a lot of porn, the anticipation of what lies between the covers of a book with a title like *Erotic Haiku* far exceeds what actually appears on the white sheets inside. But considering that these haiku are some of the first attempts in the entire history of haiku to capture moments of intimacy in a traditionally sexless, almost puritanical art form, the book can be highly recommended. Tastefully or not, a full-color centerfold has been included, and the graphics are indeed graphic. The poems themselves range from the poetically suggestive to the sensually explicit, with both male and female perspectives presented:

she leaves
warm pillow scent
remaining

Lying in the wet grass,
him still beating
inside me.

--Michael McClintock

--Alexis Rotella

Arguments as to whether poems such as these should be properly labeled haiku or senryu, porn or art, rest entirely upon definitions. What's important is that new thematic ground has been broken, creating plenty of open space for further exploration. Haiku's traditional appreciation for nature can now include not only the birds and the bees, but also the organically human.

The Zen Haiku and other Zen Poems of J. W. Hackett, by J. W. Hackett
Japan Publications ¥3,000 (hardbound)
257 pages 15 cm x 21 cm
ISBN 0-87040-533-0

Hackett has been called "America's Bodhidharma" and "Mr. Haiku," and the epithets seem as ludicrous as some of Hackett's haiku. Canadian poet Steven Forth recommends reading Hackett with a full bottle of brandy at hand. Given the glowing reviews included on the dust jacket, the case for approaching Hackett's work with Zen-clear rather than brandy-bleary eyes should be an easy one to make, but unfortunately it isn't. The main problem is that Hackett too often mistakes philosophic for poetic insight. The "Zen" in these poems is stated too explicitly, straining the language in unsuccessful reaches at the sublime, instead of being implicitly embodied in concrete, earthy details as is the case with really good haiku. The result is that Hackett often ends up expending a great deal of effort talking about Zen and belaboring his points instead of effortlessly expressing the Zen moment.

Going in circles
trying to make ends meet
a frantic puppy.

In addition to the concrete image of the dog chasing its tail, there is the dubious play on words: "going (round) in circles" and "trying to make (financial) ends meet." The koan-like insight that in our attachments to the things of this world we usually end up going round and around getting nowhere is sound, but regrettably Hackett's poetic and philosophic ends simply don't meet.

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The first three books above contain extensive bibliographies and provide sufficient documentation on haiku in English as an independent movement in Western poetry to show that haiku can no longer be plausibly regarded as a "unique" cultural possession of Japan (any more than contemporary rock music can be regarded as a uniquely Western cultural possession). All of the books can be found on the shelves of the larger Tokyo bookstores with the exception of *Erotic Haiku* which can be ordered either through the bookstores or directly from Firefly Books, 3520 Pharmacy Ave., Unit 1-C, Scarborough, Ontario, Canada.

--Richard Evanoff

Announcements

A new name for TELS? One matter arising from the recent TELS reorganization meeting is that the present name, the Tokyo English Literature Society, does not properly reflect the group. A large percentage—almost 50%—of our members don't live in Tokyo, or even near Tokyo, and we are getting more overseas subscribers. One member in Hiroshima had considered starting a branch down there, but was put off by the idea of trying to promote a group named HELS. Also, the words "Literature Society" seem to conjure up the idea of an appreciation group rather than a group that encourages and promotes creative writing, and while there is nothing at all wrong with the former concept, it is the latter that we are concerned with.

For these reasons, we are planning to choose a new name for the society, and we would be most grateful to receive ideas from members. If you have any suggestions, please send them to TELS, c/o New Leaf Publishing, 14-10-407 Sakuragaoka-machi, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150. Points to keep in mind are: 1) Our main aim is to promote creative writing in English, 2) the name should be easy to remember, 3) the initials should be pronounceable and/or memorable, 4) activities include (or will include) monthly workshops for poetry and fiction, a bimonthly literary magazine/newsletter, poetry readings, book auctions, small press publications, weekend workshops and more.

The TELS reorganization meeting was held on the 13th of September, with a dozen people attending. The meeting was very successful, and a complete reorganization of the society is under way. Complete information on the changes will be sent to all members in the near future.

Poetry Translation Workshop. There will be an informal meeting of people involved or interested in the translation of poetry, with an emphasis on Japanese poetry, on November 22 in Ogikubo, beginning at 2 p.m. Anyone interested in attending can contact Steven Forth at 899-2815 or Anna Watson at 301-0235.

I saw a scarecrow
at the station
there to scare
us birds
on meek migration
flap our sweaty arms
and fly back
to the nest
"I am not afraid!"
I flutter
as I stand stood back
observe
them make their
way way
home
I crow at them
"Homb! with youbegone!"

--Matthew Zuckerman

Meetings

TELS monthly meetings are held on the 4th floor of the Shinjuku Bunka Center, 6-14-1, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo (phone: 350-1141). Both members and non-members are invited to attend. Donation: ¥300 (includes coffee). The meetings for the next two months are as follows:

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| Dec. 13, 1987,
Jan. 10 &
Feb. 14, 1988 | 1:00 | Poetry Workshop. Bring along at least 15 copies of your poem. Everybody's work is welcome. |
| | 3:00 | General Announcements and Fiction Workshop. Bring along at least 15 copies of your short fiction. Everybody's work is welcome. |

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