

Haiku Is a Way of Life

by Susumu Takiguchi

Haiku is more than poetry. It is a way of life. At the beginning of the 20th century, an Oxford professor of poetry, A. C. Bradley said, "In true poetry it is impossible to express the meaning in any but its own words, or to change the words without changing the meaning." (1) This has the same resonance with T. S. Eliot who, when receiving a question from my own wife when she was a school girl as to what the eyes meant in his 'The Hollow Men poem', replied curtly to the effect that the words he had written meant exactly what they said.

I have a theory that if we take Bradley's remark to its logical conclusion, the popular adage that only poets understand other poets poems is not only true but may be an understatement. This is because, somewhere in their mental process it is unavoidable for them to try to interpret the original poems of other poets. Such interpretation involves changing the words, which is an equivalent of translation, and thus changing the meaning of the original. Moreover, poets may not necessarily understand their own poems even! Then, who indeed can understand poems? Only the One up there, or muses?

This theory ceases to be facetious the moment we are confronted with problems of translating poems. Because translation of poems is further down the line of the same mental activity which we call interpretation. There is no avoiding the same issue of interpreting poems correctly, whether they are written by other poets or by oneself. If it is difficult to understand poems in one's own language, what hope is there for one to understand poems of other countries through translation? Thus translating haiku poems seems at first an absolute impossibility.

Visible and Invisible Constraints

In this paper, we will follow Bradley's dictum and look into the issues of translating haiku in a negative way in order to see whether there will be anything positive left, and if so, whether such positive values may lead to any viable literary merits. We will restrict ourselves to dealing with traditional Japanese haiku poems only and also to translating them into English. We shall not deal with translating haiku from English into Japanese, or between any other languages.

It is useful to divide different constraints imposed on translating traditional Japanese haiku (hereafter, only haiku) into English into two categories: visible , or formal constraints and invisible, or non-formal constraints. The former are more of technical nature, the hard-ware of haiku, if you will, and are less difficult to overcome, while the latter are concerned with contents, or the soft-ware of haiku, which are far more difficult to deal with, sometimes simply impossible. Both need to be addressed properly for good translations to become achievable.

We must heed against a common mistake that if one follows form, then one can attain the substance.

Different Versions of the Same Haiku

Before going into details of that analysis, let us just see the actual translation of one particular haiku, which is arguably the most famous of all haiku poems the world has ever produced but which is, in my opinion, one of the most misunderstood and misleading haiku as well. It is, of course, Basho's frog haiku.

An old pond
A frog jumps in -
Sound of water.

(Geoffrey Bownas and Anthony Thwaite)

This is probably one of the most orthodox and literal translations of the haiku, a benchmark against which other translations can be assessed. However, there are said to be over one hundred and seventy versions of this haiku in English alone. How different are they? Are they correct or good translations anyway? We shall look at only a handful of them from a book(2) especially edited to show such vast differences in the translation of the same haiku.

The old pond!
A frog jumps in -
Sound of the water.

(Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkokai)

An ancient pond!
With a sound from the water
Of the frog as it plunges in.

(W. G. Aston)

The old pond, aye! And the sound of a frog leaping into the water. (Basil Hall Chamberlain)

The old pond.
A frog jumps in -
Plop!

(R. H. Blyth)

The ancient pond
A frog leaps in
The sound of the water.

(Donald Keene)

The old green pond is silent; here the hop
Of a frog plumbs the evening stillness: plop! (Harold Stewart)

The old pond
A frog jumped in,
Kerplunk! (Allen Ginsberg)

Breaking the silence
Of an ancient pond,
A frog jumped into water -
A deep resonance. (Nobuyuki Yuasa)

The quiet pond
A Frog leaps in,
The sound of the water. (Edward G. Seidensticker)

The old pond -
A frog leaps in,
And a splash. (Makoto Ueda)

The still old pond
and as a frog leaps in it
the sound of a splash (Earl Miner)

Ancient pond unstirred
Into which a frog has plunged,
A splash was heard. (Kenneth Yasuda)

Old pond
a frog leaps in
water's sound. (William J. Higginson)

Listen! A frog
Jumping into the stillness
Of an ancient pond! (Dorothy Briton)

ancient pond -
a frog jumping into its splash (R. Clarence Matsuo-Allard)

pond
frog
plop! (James Kirkup)

Oh thou unrippled pool of quietness
Upon whose shimmering surface, like the tears
Of olden days, a small batrachian leaps,
The while aquatic sounds assail our ears. (Lindley Williams Hubbell)

There once was a curious frog
Who sat by a pond on a log
And, to see what resulted,
In the pond catapulted
With a water-noise heard round the bog. (in the style of limerick)

A frog who would a-water-sounding go
Into some obscure algae-covered pool
had best be sure no poetasting fool
Is waiting in the weeds and, to his woe,

Commemorates his pluck so all will know
His name and lineage, not for the fine school
He learned to sing at, nor, to make men drool
The flavor of his leg from thigh to toe.

He will not for his mother be remembered,
Nor for his father's deeds, his honor bright,
Nor for his brother's leg dismembered,

And eaten by a king with rare delight.
He will be famous simply for the sorta
Noise he makes just when he hits the water. (in the style of sonnet)

Difficulties of Translating: the Case of the Frog Haiku

I have already pointed out that this famous haiku by Basho was one of the most misunderstood and misleading haiku poems. Let me try and justify such a daring and quite possibly suicidal assertion. The following points are the main aspects of common misunderstanding about this haiku. However, these points are seldom heard. Probably for that reason they are relatively unknown.

We seldom see in Japan a single frog around a pond in the springtime. What we normally witness is a group of frogs, sometimes even countless numbers of them. A frog or frogs are a season word for spring. When and on what ground did we decide that the haiku was talking about a single frog and not a number of, or many frogs? Only three translations use the plural frogs out of 130 or so in the book. The question of how many frogs are involved in the haiku is a crucial point which affects the interpretation of the haiku's mood and its main thrust.

Frogs tend to jump into the water all the time, one after another, or simultaneously, or at random, in spring time. Why should it be a single splash?

Frogs are noisy in spring when this haiku is believed to have been composed. They are a symbol of merriment, colour, life and bustling movements of the springtime, which is a celebration of life on earth. This is particularly the case in their mating time. It is the frogs' chorus, often boisterous, that has been the main theme of haiku, bearing this season word. Which explains why it was such an original and innovative departure when Basho tuned his poetic sensibility into the sound of water rather than into the croaking of the frogs. How was it, then, that such a loquacious and busy scene was doctored and philosophised into a symbol of stillness, loneliness and tranquillity?

Also, frogs have been liked by the Japanese haijin for their comic and haiku-like (light-hearted and with a sense of humour) quality. It is known that the first version of the jumping of frogs in Basho's haiku was "tondari" as opposed to "tobikomu" in the final version. "Tondari" is a much more dramatic, graphic, outlandish and comic expression and very much more in line with the Danrin School. What this indicates is the possibility that Basho was initially toying with the idea of a humorous, light-hearted and even comical scene of the frog(s) jumping and splashing with joy. It is only later that he might have turned to more modest, rustic and serious tone. Here one detects Basho's own poetic licence. As can be seen in Basho's other writings and poems, especially in the "Narrow Road to the Deep North", he often changed facts into fictitious situations for literary effect. It would not be surprising if he had done the same in the frog haiku.

In the meeting of spring 1686 (1681 or 1682, according to some) at the second Basho-an when this haiku is believed to have been created, one of Basho's disciples, Kikaku, suggested that the first five syllables of the poem should be yamabuki-ya (Japanese yellow rose, *kerria japonica*). Yamabuki had long been used in connection with frogs in the Japanese classic poetic tradition*. The brilliant yellow of yamabuki is another symbol of spring. The episode suggests that there must have been a joyful feeling among the large gathering with Basho. Therefore, the melancholic stillness normally attributed to this haiku is either an outright mistake, or at least an overplay, a typical example of fukayomi, or "reading too much into haiku". Such interpretation, it has been pointed out, could be an invention for propaganda purposes by some of Basho's followers in order to promote the Basho school. The rejection of "yamabuki-ya" in favour of "furuike-ya" (the old pond) is yet another example of Basho's originality and innovative faculty, quite apart from the fact that the former would have constituted kigasanari (season word duplication), which probably would not have mattered at that time. Basho preferred the "modest" old pond to the "gorgeous" yamabuki. Whatever the cause, this interpretation of stillness has been accentuated by over-zealous Western haiku poets to whom such interpretation suited and has permeated the whole world as an undisputed or indisputable single interpretation.

"Eternity", which is also often mentioned as an attribute of this haiku, is a

different story all together. One can feel "eternity" looking at an old pond with or without the song or splash of frogs. A single frog making a single splash and creating a single sound in between the silence of the infinite past and the silence of the eternal future sounds slightly too good to be true.

? Some brave commentators in Japan have even gone so far as to say that this world-famous haiku is not that brilliant and that in fact it is rather mediocre. I personally do not subscribe to that school of thought but the haiku may possibly have been somewhat over-rated. The choice of the old pond for the first five and the choice of the sound of water rather than the singing of the frogs turned this haiku from an ordinary work into one with eternal relevance and universal appeal. As I have already pointed out, the greatest significance of this haiku lies in its originality and innovative nature. It is referred to as "Shofu kaigan no ku" (the eye-opener, or enlightenment of the Basho School) For Basho, this haiku was like "Damoiselles d'Avignon" for Picasso. If people have been overestimating its merit, it is largely due to the one-sided interpretation of the "stillness" school.

If the comments I have made here were to be established as reasonable, the whole understanding of haiku in the West might well have to go through a serious rethinking, or worse still, a fundamental correction.

Part One: Visible, or Formal Constraints

We now turn to what I call visible constraints (or formal constraints) in translating haiku in Japanese into English. Since the three most important rules of traditional Japanese haiku are season words (kigo or yuki), 5-7-5 syllables (teikei) and cutting words (kireji), let us briefly examine them first. The traditional Japanese haiku is often referred to as "yuki-teikei" to distinguish it from the more modern free verse haiku.

season words (kigo)

Haiku is a nature poetry as the Japanese have long developed a keen perception of changing seasons. Could that perception be translated into English? The constraints in this regard are as follows:

1. Difference of kind: there is no tsuyu (sticky rainy season) in Britain while there is no humid winter in Japan. Difference in seasonal events.

2. Difference of degree: What English people feel hot temperature in summer would be cool to the Japanese skin. What English people feel a mild winter would

be a bitter one for the average Japanese.

3. Difference of perception: To most Japanese the moon still means a lot in their perception of beauty and poetic sentiment. The moon is no more than an object of scientific enquiry to many English people. The Japanese are more emotional, sentimental while these qualities are disliked by the British

who are more pragmatic, unromantic and reliant on the power of reason. One man's meat is another man's poison.

4. Difference of priority: On the whole human affairs are more important to English people than nature, which is subjugated to human exploitation. Nature is an ornament to decorate man-made objects and not something to be respected in her own right. The Japanese have helped to destroy nature in modern times but they are still akin to nature and regard themselves at one with nature.

These differences tend to make the translation of Japanese haiku into English unsatisfactory, inaccurate and even irrelevant.

5-7-5 So-called Syllables (teikei)

There is a consensus about the rhythm and form of Japanese haiku. As a representative argument, we will undertake basic analysis based on the summary by Keiko Imaoka.

It has already been established that it does not make sense to apply a feature inherent in Japanese to a totally different language such as English. Here the so-called Japanese 5-7-5 "syllables" are not the same thing as syllables in English. Therefore, it is wrong to write haiku in English in 5-7-5 English syllables. Not only the quality of English syllables is different from their Japanese cousins but also the same number of English syllables carry much more information than in Japanese. Therefore, haiku in 5-7-5 English syllables carry too much information than their Japanese counterpart, making the English version wordy and defying the rule of brevity in haiku.

"Onsei" is Japanese syllables. However, in haiku "haku", or a beat=jion should be used. Haku is the smallest unit of aural sound of daily Japanese and forms the basis for Japanese verse. Japanese haku (beat) is very articulate, short and distinct like staccatos, e.g. sa-ku-ra. Haku can be subdivided into phonemes (on-so) which is just an academic concern.

Japanese vowels are called 'bo-in'. There are five bo-in=5 vowels, a, i, u, e, and o. There used be 8 vowels until Heian. (5 vowels, the same with Spanish, Latin; 3 in Arabic, 11 in French, 9 in Korean) On the other hand, Japanese consonant is called shi-in and there are 14 of them, very few compared with other languages.

There are very few Japanese words having only one haku (beat), e.g. tsu, su, ta, ki, etc. Two haku (beats) is really the length which is comfortable for the Japanese. In spoken Japanese each mora is more or less the same length-the same is hardly true for English syllables. English also has more prominent accents than Japanese, which really gets in the way sometimes when you try to make the syllables match - simply put, English words are such that you don't necessarily get rhythmical smoothness just by having five syllables. This makes a 5-7-5 division that makes no provisions for accented and unaccented syllables less natural for the English language. (Shimpei Yamashita)

cutting words (kireji)

Cutting words are certain particles of old Japanese and it is almost impossible to find the English equivalent for the same effect, except for effective use of such things as colons, semi-colons and caesuras.

kumatahari (enjambment)=Not all Japanese haiku can be divided into three parts (5-7-5). Sometimes, a word, or phrase, stretches into two parts. This is called kumatahari and sometimes poses difficulty when translating such haiku into English.

brevity=Brevity is the soul of wit The point is not to say as much in the [single poem] as possible, by condensing and compacting, but perhaps to say as little as possible that will sketch the scene! I like to think of haiku as sculpture, where we are trying to chip away the excess material (of experience) to reveal the clear image within. If we leave any of the 'extra' stone, the result is less sharp and clear. (Kim Hodges)

Vagueness of Japanese= The vague nature of Japanese leaves the translator with all sorts of possibilities of interpretation. When putting it into English, he/she will have to choose one option.

old Japanese (still used extensively in haiku)=Arguably more difficult to learn than modern Japanese.

reversed syntax=In many instances the syntax in Japanese is the opposite to that in English. This makes it difficult for the translator to use the original Japanese syntax in the English version.

other word order= English pre-positions are post-positions in Japanese. There are other grammatical constraints (determining the subject, dropped subjects, singular/plural, taigen-dome, tochi-ho, etc.) which poses problems for translation.

rhyme= Rhyming is not the main feature of haiku. It is partly because of the

phonetic properties of Japanese. Also, rhyming in haiku makes it artificial and affected, the characteristics contrary to the spirit of haiku. To rhyme the English versions of Japanese haiku would often give them definite poetic form and make them "sound like" English poems. For precisely that reason, rhyming is rather disliked in today's haiku in English.

Images=haiku relies heavily on pictorial images. However, Japanese images are different from those of English.

Refrain=The Japanese refrain does not translate well into English.

Part Two: Invisible, or Non-formal Constraints

Let us now look at the invisible, or non-formal constraints to translating haiku in Japanese into English. This part is more difficult to evaluate not least because it tries to deal with the characteristics of Japanese haiku, which are not readily visible or knowable.

hai'i (haiku spirit, or haiku feeling)= This is arguably the most important element of Japanese haiku, without which a haiku poem would be boring and soul-less. Originally, 'hai' was derived from a Chinese word, haikai, meaning 'comic'. This phrase was used in "haikai no renga" (comic renga=linked verse), to distinguish the new form of poetry from the classical and elegant form of linked verse, called simply "renga". It was then taken up by Basho who elevated the meaning to a more refined value. Basho's broadened definition was anti-traditional and was characterised by freedom of rendering, search for new subjects, language and perceptions and a refined sense of humour. Thus hai'i became an independent aesthetic and literary value, distinct from that of waka. However, this is the most difficult feeling to explain to non-Japanese and to translate into their languages.

haiku no kokoro (the soul of haiku)=Similar to hai'I, this refers to the soul, or feeling, of haiku which permeate an individual's way of thinking, psychological attitude to things and generally his or her way of life. The words used in a haiku can have such soul, or feeling (not just season words) The subjects or objects to be used in a haiku, e.g. animals, plants, flowers or objects which evokes haiku soul.

haigon (words having haiku feeling)=words traditionally used for haiku in Japan are different from traditional poetry and assume characteristics peculiar to haiku. Haigon reflect the distinct way in which the haiku poet observes the world: an outlook with a slight twist, sense of humour, direct and concrete. Haigon express the hai'i explained above.

yojo (lingering echo of feeling, 'aftertaste'=the ringing sound after the bell is tolled is often compared to the lingering echo after reading a haiku. A good haiku often has this yojo and like a good aftertaste of fine wines give the prolonged pleasure to the reader.

fuga no makoto (poetic truth)=perhaps the most important of all Basho's teachings. Haiku without fuga no makoto is shallow, bland and artificial, however cleverly it is written. This is particularly true with modern haiku where "imagination" and "invention" are given a place in haiku composition, which can slip easily into false emotion and faked sensibility, lacking fuga no makoto. However, what constitutes fuga no makoto is difficult to define, let alone transmit into different languages.

furyu (special taste of artistic and poetic nature)=another term impossible to translate. It is translated as elegance, taste and refinement. However, there is no accounting for tastes. A person with furyu is a person of a romantic turn of mind, one of refined taste and loves art, literature, particularly poems. He or she is somewhat removed from the mundane affairs and lives a life of leisure, indulging in cultural pursuits and accomplishment.

wabi, sabi, karumi=One can write a long thesis on each one of these. These are some of the most important poetic values which Basho developed in the haikai. The meanings of wabi (patina, rustic beauty and loneliness), sabi (melancholic sense of beauty) and karumi (lightness) are well-documented elsewhere and do not detain us here.

honkadori (allusion to a classical poems)=a haiku which 'borrows' an anecdote from the old times, which have been told in classic poems.

cultural constraints (indigenous, local events, music, art)=especially those events, cultural values which are 'unique' to Japan and which, therefore, have no equivalents in other cultures.

human senses (smell, colour, sound, tactile sense etc.)=haiku is a form of poetry which reflects human senses strongly and make a good use of them for effect.

Summary characteristics of haiku

Brevity, immediacy, particularity(concreteness), directness(subject, experience, sensory directness); concrete subjects, plainness, spontaneity & poetic naturalness, seasonal perception, poetic sincerity, haiku-feelings, delicacy of feelings, use of image, lyric poem, ordinary everyday occurrences and familiar

objects, common language (plain English), sense of humour but not showing off clever wit, newness and originality, real lived experience (not faked, or imagined), the Suchness of things, a snapshot of events in words, here and now. Maurice Saatchi said, "The fewer the words the better advertisement becomes. No word is the best ad"

Wabi(rustic), sabi(patina, loneliness), karumi(lightness), shiori(thinness)

Metaphor, allusion, sense of detachment

Buddhist elements: the evanescence of all things, the selflessness of all elements, the bliss of Nirvana, features of Zen.

Apparent Contradictions of Haiku: here and now/universality - timelessness - permanence; concrete, specific subjects/ generality; 'surface' phenomena/ deep insight; subjective/objective; suchness (things just as they are)/ universal truth (things as they should be); physical/ metaphysical; metaphor/ simile; immanence/ transcendence

Summary

1 There are considerable difficulties in translating Japanese haiku into English.

2 The difficulties are caused partly by visible, or formal constraints but more importantly by invisible, or non-formal constraints.

3 Therefore, if we accept the validity of such translation, we should also accept the limitations thereof. Some translations are better than others depending on the subject matter, words used in the original, quite apart from the ability of the translator.

4 Notwithstanding, there is a scope that excellent translations of Japanese haiku into English can sometimes be achieved. In some instances, the translations can arguably be better than the original.

5 There are instances of what may be termed as 'creative translation' (or, creation itself), whereby the translator more or less rewrite the original, or create a new poem out of it. Here, perhaps we need to define the word 'translation' applied to translation from Japanese haiku into English.

Because we should remain within the boundary of translation for any translation

to remain as such.

Two Haiku Examples to Test the Conclusions

Let us now look at two more haiku closely to put these conclusions to test.

Mallow Flower Eaten by My Horse

Michi nobe no mukuge wa uma ni kuware keri (Basho)

Donald Keene's translation

Mallow flower
By the side of the road-
Devoured by my horse.

Pp142-143, Nihon Bungaku-shi (Japanese Literature, London, 1953)

Keene compares this translation by himself with that by Chamberlain of the same haiku;

The mallow-flower by the road
Was eaten by a [passing] horse. Basil Chamberlain

and maintains that what makes the Basho's haiku infinitely distinct is that it was the horse Basho was riding that ate the mallow flower. Basho was riding the horse when suddenly it notice the flower and lowered its head to eat it, a second before which Basho had a vivid view of the beauty of it.

the moral lesson conveyed in those few words was too obvious: - had not the mallow pressed forward into public view, the horse would never have devoured it. Learn, then, ambitious man, to be humble and retiring. The vulgar yearning for fame and distinction can lead nowhither but to misery, for it contradicts the essential principle of ethics. (Chamberlain)

Not Dying On the Journey

Last but not least, I shall introduce a commendable attempt by an English poetess() at demonstrating the feasibility of translating Japanese haiku into English effectively by creating ten different English versions of a famous haiku by

Basho.

The haiku in question is:

Shini mo senu tabine no hate yo aki no kure
(Kasshi-ginko)

The basic prose translation runs thus:

At the end of this journey at last,
I haven't met my death, as I feared at the beginning;
At the end of autumn.

[1] Her first rendering attempted to call up memories of great works in the English literature canon.

A weary way; now, at last, the end:
In the beginning, fear of death, that passed away.
Autumn is ending too.

The English reader should recall Grey's 'Elegy' -

The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
also the first words of the Gospel of St. John,
In the beginning was the word.
And an Anglo-Saxon lament with the refrain,
That passed away, so will this.

Here she seems to be attempting to make an exotic poem acceptable as English poetry by evoking accepted masterworks.

[2] The second version uses simple rhythm and rhyme to mark the haiku firmly as 'poetry' in a form accepted by all English people, - the four line >rhymed verse found in nursery rhymes and hymns.

This is journey's end at last;
I set out fearing Death; he passed
Me by and all my wandering's done.
And autumn's come and gone.

This version personifies Death, using a familiar folk-lore representation of Death as a solitary traveller met on a lonely road.

She may have tried out the easiest English verse form. Overall, this version is too

wordy.

[3] The third attempt uses the same easily acceptable form and emphasises Basho's hint of self-mockery.

The end of this long road; the journey's made
At last. Starting, I was afraid
I might meet Death. My foolish fear!
Wandering and autumn's days end safely here.

[4] Her fourth try is more concise and ambiguous. Does the end of autumn bring cosy security or expectation of winter and old age?

The end at last. This weary journey done,
I set out fearing Death; he passed me by;
The end of autumn's come.

In this version, she has abandoned rhyme and maybe for that reason it turned out to be too much like ordinary speech.

[5] Version five is again a three line verse, but contains a rhyme and is more cheerful in outlook, even mildly triumphant.

This is journey's end at last;
I set out fearing Death, he missed my trail;
Journey and autumn's end are safely past.

[6] The sixth variation is the one she herself preferred. It expressed the mood of calm acceptance which I perceive in the poem. It also uses assonance rather than true rhyme.

This journey's over; all the wandering done;
Starting, I feared to meet my death but now,
Only autumn's gone.

[7] Version seven, very similar, contains a true rhyme (last - past) in place of the 'eye rhyme' done - gone. She feels on reading 6 and 7 aloud that 6 sounds more 'musical' and softer.

This is the journey's end at last.
The death I feared at starting never came,
And not my life, but only autumn's past.

[8] The eighth variant follows the rules for Anglo-Saxon poetry in alliteration and rhythm. Thus an English reader perceives the verse as a clever exercise in archaic style which arouses interest.

The trail travelled truly; goal reach at long last;
Death-dread at road's head needlessly heeded.
Autumn fast fading.

She uses words derived from Anglo-Saxon, which gives a strength and vigour to the lines. She thinks that alliteration is still an effective device when writing poetry in English.

[9] In the ninth version she tries, as many translators of haiku do, to copy the Japanese form of seventeen syllables. She feels that English words contain too many syllables to allow nuances of meaning to be expressed in seventeen English syllables.

End of this long trail
Begun in fear of death.
Alive. Autumn ends.

[10] The last try offers an example of a pun, using the word 'remains' in two senses in an attempt to reproduce the device of the 'hinge word' which is used in so many haiku.

My journey is completed, finally.
Death I feared at starting; life remains
And the remains of Autumn.

NOTE

(1) A. C. Bradley: Oxford Lectures on Poetry, 1909

(2) Hiroaki Sato, One Hundred Frogs, Weatherhill, Inc., 1995

Susumu Takiguchi is a haiku poet and critic, artist and essayist, with various other interests. A Japanese national, residing in the United Kingdom for nearly thirty years, his interest in haiku began with a study of Matsuo Basho while he was Lecturer in Japanese Language and Civilisation at Aston University in Birmingham, England. This interest continued to grow until now when he is engaged in the international haiku movement. The prime example of this is the World Haiku Festival 2000 organised by him in London and Oxford 25 - 30 August 2000. In 1998 he established the World Haiku Club which manages the Festival and its numerous events including world-wide haiku networks on the Internet.

He was born in 1944 in Japan and studied at Waseda University, Tokyo and the University of Oxford. He has had a wide-ranging career, including financial reporter with Nihon Keizai Shimbun (Nikkei); Editor-in-Chief, The Art Market Report; art critic and part-time lecturer at Oxford University; lecturer at Aston University in Birmingham; Executive Director of Strategic Planning and Research, Nomura Europe PLC. He is currently Director of Ami-Net Oxford International and occasional lecturer at Oxford Brookes University. He is Chairman of the World Haiku Club.

Publications include Kyoshi - A Haiku Master (Ami-Net International Press), Ushizu no Zaregoto (an anthology). He has also translated The Fake's Progress by Tom Keating, Geraldine Norman, Frank Norman (Shincho-sha), Naked Came I (the life of August Rodin) by David Weiss (Futami-Shobo), Towards The Tamarind Trees by Anthony Trew (Hayakawa-Shobo), Modesty Blaise by Peter O'Donnell.

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