

A Study of Japanese Aesthetics in Six Parts

by Robert Wilson

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Study of Japanese Aesthetics: Part I

The Importance of Ma

by Robert Wilson

"The man who has no imagination has no wings." - Muhammad Ali

Every day I read haiku and tanka online in journals and see people new to these two Japanese genres posting three to five poems per day, as if the composition of haiku and tanka were the easiest thing to do in the world. Oftentimes their output lacks meter, and are far from memorable.

What is the popular perception of Japanese short form poetry in the English-language poetic community? Why are various journals today showcasing some of these same haiku and tanka for publication? Is it because no one's adequately defined the rudiments and heart sense of the two genres? Are English tanka and haiku distinct from Japanese tanka and haiku, having become their own individualized poetic expressions, thus new genres lacking a consistent set of rules to follow?

Perhaps Western interpretations of these genres (most vary), heralded, defended, and defined by many poetry associations and like-minded journals, are indicative of an identity crisis which, again, raises the question of why?

I read the articles regarding the why and what a Western haiku should be and not be, yet come away unconvinced. Yes, the syllable tonal length in the English language differs from that used in the Japanese language (their syllables aren't syllables as Westerners know and understand syllables. They are shorter in intonation, and oftentimes contain more than one beat, whereas in an English syllable, each syllable is one beat, thus, when a Westerner taught in public or private school to write a haiku using a 5/7/5 meter, composes a haiku, the result is oftentimes an awkward sounding haiku).

Very few Western haiku poets disagree on this point and have adjusted their haiku to fit into a schemata utilizing a shorter amount of syllables.

What's agreed upon and disagreed upon are the pieces of the puzzle missing. With so many opinions and theories, it's easy to tell that something's not right.

Poets new to haiku and tanka need direction, knowledge, and homework before

they settle into a routine, wax self-confident, and disseminate their poetry in venues other than on on-line and off-line workshops and in Facebook conversations, extending their misconceptions regarding the two genres to people who, for the most part, will never attend a tanka or haiku club meeting, participate in a poetry workshop, read a journal, let alone study the form from an academic perspective other than the uninformed crap they read in school textbooks; then share their misconceptions with others, etc.

The Japanese aesthetic terms: *ma*, *sabi*, *yugen*, *makoto*, *kigo*, etc.: what do these terms mean? They pop up in books, journals and on the Internet, yet finding a clear definition for any of these terms is next to impossible. I have trouble finding anything about these terms on or off-line written in layman's language, and the definitions vary between writers.

Is a lack of understanding of these terms and the failure by many poets to see the value of using Japanese aesthetics in their poetry, coupled with the stance taken by some "Western" haiku, tanka, haibun, and haiga on- and off-line journal editors, who feel that breaking the rules of the aforementioned Japanese poetic genres, are essential if "Western" poets want an authentic voice that is non-Japan-centric; the reason for what appears to be the Western bastardization of Japanese short form poetry?

Take, for example, the following haiku used in a haibun published by a popular Western European poetry journal:

the oil is getting low - his thoughts are of autumn sleep

Richard Pettit

Pettit's quasi three verse haiku lacks the magic infused into a successful haiku via the utilization of *ma* and other Japanese aesthetic tools that transform a short poem into a multi-dimensional entity that leaps from the obvious to the metaphysical, inviting the reader to interpret what the poet wrote.

To illustrate my point, compare the latter with following haiku by Buson:

That little fox,
What made him cough ---
In a field with bush clover?

Kogitsune no nani ni musekemu kohagihara

Yosa Buson

Translated by Edith M. Shiffert and Yuki Sawa

Buson's poem hints at something that the reader must interpret. The (animist/shamanistic) mention of the fox makes me wonder if this is an allegorical reference or a real animal in the space between lines two and three, which the Japanese call *ma*. Buson's poem is mystical, swathed with *yugen* (depth and mystery). Like an echo after the clang of a brass bell, Buson's haiku lingers in my mind after reading it; an echo that reverberates each time I read it.

In the next several issues of *Simply Haiku*, I will examine some of the tools available for *tanka* and *haiku* poets; tools that'll help us to understand the genres better and, in turn, compose better *haiku* and *tanka* that are indigenous to the genres as they were designed to be taught and handed down to Westerners by the two genres' originators.

Still alive,
They are frozen in one lump:
Sea slugs

Matsuo Basho
Translated by Makoto Ueda

What does it mean to westernize *haiku* and other forms of Japanese short form poetry?

The following *haiku* was written in Eastern Europe, an area considered to be a part of the West. Is this, then, an example of Western *haiku*? Is geography a deciding factor? The use of English?

The poet's cultural memory, coupled with one's experience, education, and outlook towards the metaphysical define a *haiku*. All of us on this planet are individuals.

I read the *haiku* below and see it as an authentic *haiku*. It doesn't tell all, it makes use of *ma* (time and space), *yugen* (depth and mystery), utilizes the meter indigenous to *haiku*. No *haiku* is indigenous to its geographical locale, nor to the racial, ethnic, or spiritual make-up of its author.

dark afternoon . . .
kicking a stone down the path
 with my winter shoe

Sasa Vazic
Serbia

The *haiku* above was written in Eastern Europe (the West), the one below, in Asia (the East). Both in their native language utilize the S/L/S metric schemata indigenous to *haiku* and both utilize Japanese aesthetic tools. The aforementioned

tools are more than just a geographical region's aesthetics. They are specific tools essential to the creation of a specific genre. The utilization of "Western" aesthetics as taught by Caucasoid European and North American universities, for the most part, lack the metaphysical mindset needed to elevate a haiku into the "ma" of what is and isn't. A haiku must transcend the said, mount the unsaid, in a timeless moment, one's senses intertwined in an undefined orgasm of then, now, and will; like Alice, jumping into the white rabbit's black hole, feeling the wind, caressed by darkness, chasing what could or could not be in a dream inside a dream, independent of preconceptions.

airing out kimonos
as well as her heart
is never enough

Chiyo-ni

Translated by Patricia Donegan and Yoshie

- - - - -
Out of
 The stillness
Of my breast
 Emerges
The rising moon;
And when I turn to look at it ---
The moon
 In clumps of cloud.

shizuka naru / waga mune wakete / izuru tsuki / furisakemireba / murakumo no
tsuki

Shotetsu

Translated by Steven D. Carter

The next tanka, written by an American, is also beautiful, making good use of the Japanese aesthetic tools: sabi, yugen, and ma. The pause creating the ma is at the end of line three:

when I am gone
doctors will donate this heart
to someone else
only to find you
deep within the scar tissue

Kathy Lippard Cobb

It was awarded an honorable mention in a California based tanka contest recently. The winning tanka deviates from the meter indigenous to tanka which many "Western" editors are claiming as allowable due to what they allege to be a difference in tonality and iambic pentameter indigenous to the West's conceptualization of poetry. They are quick to label those who disagree as Japan-centric or Japanophiles; a labeling that's ignorant and based on generalities, which cannot apply to Westerners in general unless one applies this assumption, based upon their ethnicity, and "buy in" to the philosophical theories propagated by Anglo-files and Anglo-centrics. I write this with a smile because to write good haiku and tanka, membership in a 'phile,' be it Japanese or Anglo, is irrelevant. Tanka (Japanese song) is called that for a reason . . .

"The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance."

Aristotle

If tanka was just another name for the general term, song, my critique would be mute. Tanka isn't just a song, but a specific type of song, just as opera is a specific type of song. Look at the difference in the tanka's meter below when I place the word "been" at the end of line four, at the beginning of line five of the tanka that won first place in the same contest Lippard-Cobb's tanka won an honorable mention, although I feel Lippard-Cobb's is the stronger of the two poems:

eagle
in an updraft...
wondering
who I might have been,
otherwise

Serin Fargo
U.S.A.

eagle
in an updraft...
wondering
who I might have
been, otherwise

Serin Fargo
U.S.A.

My minor change doesn't alter the tanka's meaning; only the meter, which is just that: meter, neither Western nor Eastern . . . a different way to play a song.

The East and the West have different mindsets in many ways, yet to classify a mindset by geography alone is ludicrous.

The majority in Japan are influenced by Chinese linguistics and poetry; animism, the shamanistic beliefs of the indigenous Ainu; and by Taoism, Shinto, Zen and other sects of Buddhism, which at times, can become a concatenate of Japan's cultural mindscape.

Then again, other people who live in and call the West their home, share similar beliefs.

China's influence on Japanese poetry cannot be underestimated, negated, or ignored. It was China who colonized Japan and intermarried with the Ainu and other indigenous peoples living in this island grouping before it was unified and became Japan. China, one of the world's first three civilizations, introduced written language, poetry, etc. to Japan.

The aesthetic terms: *sabi*, *yugen*, *makoto*, *ma*, etc. have Chinese roots that have been hard to grasp for many English-speaking people (primarily due to what they were taught in school), because the Asian mindset utilizes metaphysical silence, impermanence, the undefined, the untouchable, ambiguity, minimalism, and other forms of non-concrete thinking in the creation of their poetry; the antithesis, in many ways, to that found in what's today labeled, "Western thinking."

"At the south window, my back to a lamp, I sit. Wind scatters sleet into darkness. In lone depths of silent village night: the call of a late goose in falling snow"

Po Chu -I
ChineseTang Dynasty poet
Translated by David Hinton

Many "Westerners" prefer terms with concrete definitions. They are trained in school to dissect and define everything, leaving little room for pure metaphysical manifestation, spontaneity, the essence of the thought patterns they began life with as children.

"You can't learn to write in college. It's a very bad place for writers because the teachers always think they know more than you do—and they don't. They have prejudices."

Ray Bradbury

"The first precept was never to accept a thing as true until I knew it as such

without a single doubt."

Rene Descartes

Japanese aesthetics aren't a religion or a culture's ism. They are important tools essential to the sculpting of authentic haiku and tanka; and, contrary to misinformed teaching, have counterparts in Western thought: counterparts that merit consideration when authoring English-language Japanese short form poetry.

One set of tools is not enough. It's better to work with a full toolbox. What's central to this paper, however, is the finished result: authentic tanka and haiku.

MA

Every time I study Japanese aesthetics, which form the heart of all Japanese art, from anime, cinema, music, drama, poetics, etc., I encounter an awareness of time and space called ma.

Ma is not an easy term to comprehend from a Western sensitivity, due to the West's penchant to examine and think in terms of tangibility and non-metaphysical comprehension.

"Mystical explanations are thought to be deep; the truth is that they are not even shallow."

Friederich Wilhelm Nietzsche
German Philosopher

Before entering the school system as small children, metaphysical thoughts and imagination are innate sensibilities all are born with. In school, tangibility is the catch-all phrase necessitating theorization and dissection via Western tradition influenced by Greco-Roman tradition that's built upon further by European philosophers, theologians, and social scientists like Hegel, Kierkegaard, Kant, Nietzsche, Papal theorists, Descartes, Spengler, McLuhan, Albert Camus, Martin Luther, Freud, Jung; coupled with the comprehension of science as defined by Machiavelli, Pavlov, Newton, Darwin, Einstein, etc.

"I do not feel obligated to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect, has intended us to forgo their use."

Galileo

How does Western thought define: senses, reason, and intellect, especially when introduced to a haiku like the one below, by someone who many consider to be one of the founders of the Serbian haiku movement?

Why do some influential poets in America advocate and justify a style of haiku and tanka that's very different from the original conceptualization and foundation of the two genres?

A moment ago
the stain on the road
chased field mice

Мрља на цести
Малочас је ловила
Пољске мишеве

Slavko Sedlar
Translated by Sasa Vazic

Stated Kai Hasegawa from Japan's Tokai University, the author of over 20 books of haiku criticism, in one of two interviews I conducted with him in Simply Haiku:

"Western languages are thought ultimately to belong to God, but in Japan, from ancient times, language has been considered exceedingly private. This is in fact a big problem, but it's also a discussion that won't get us anywhere.

A more realistic problem for discussion is that of ma. This Japanese word can have a spatial meaning, as in 'empty space' or 'blank space,' a temporal meaning (silence), a psychological meaning, and so on. Ma is at work in various areas of life and culture in Japan. Without doubt, Japanese culture is a culture of ma. This is the case with haiku as well. The 'cutting' (kire) of haiku is there to create ma, and that ma is more eloquent than words. That is because even though a superior haiku may appear to be simply describing a 'thing,' the working of ma conveys feeling (kokoro).

In contrast to this, Western culture [as defined by educational institutions?] does not recognize this thing called ma. In the literary arts, everything must be expressed by words. But Japanese literature, especially haiku, is different. As with the blank spaces in a painting or the silent parts of a musical composition, it is what is not put into words that is important.

The reader of a haiku is indispensable to the working of ma. This person must notice the ma and sense the kokoro of the poet. A haiku is not completed by the poet. The poet creates half of the haiku, while the remaining half must wait for the appearance of a superior reader . . ."

"Surely, then," continued Hasagawa, "it must be more difficult in the West, where there is no concept of ma . . ." [None, or little?]

"Let me add here that from the standpoint of ma, 'junk' haiku are haiku that have

no ma."

Ma defined is ambiguous: time and space. How does Eastern and Western thought come to terms with the ambiguity of this definition, and are the interpretations that different? Sometimes two alleged chasms are not chasms but a difference in how something is explained.

To most Japanese artists, the time and space called Ma is a sensory space, an ambiguous something requiring both the artist and his fan's participation.

at the temple gate
a butterfly
shows its whiteness

Ikuyo Yoshimura
Japan

quick brush strokes
while the light holds
crickets

Peggy Willis Lyles
USA

In music, Ma becomes a combination of feeling and thought without form; a silence that speaks to you without words and cannot be sensorily heard audibly. The unsaid, ma, is a catalyst, which to a Westerner educated to rely primarily on sight and touch, and to take the intuition and empathy he felt as a young child for granted, is an odd concept that's hard to comprehend.

Ma is the pause (space and length of space) in a musical piece (physical and non-physical); the pause building anticipation, touching the senses, painting with the listener, a mood touching upon what is needed to interpret the musician's music. It's felt through the silences between musical phrases or single notes, yet even more.

The music, via ma, becomes the defining moment when both listeners and musicians toss out preconceptions and allow emotion to speak together in tongues. It is formless, devoid of shape or audio-bility from a non-metaphysical point of view.

I feel these pauses in Miles Davis' tune from his poignant Sketches in Spain performance of Concierto de Aranjuez, and similar pauses in John Coltrane's Alabama (an epitaph for a girl who was killed by racists in Alabama).

I experienced MA during the late 1960's, listening to the spontaneity of musicians

like Jimi Hendrix, exploring the wild west of whatever, less the promise of an ever.

Sang Hendrix:

"Even Castles made of sand, fall into the sea, eventually."

Says Indian musician and poet, _kala Ramesh:

"Our mind is a chattering box - we need to go into it to find ma. Ma is the unsaid and the unheard. In Hindu thought it [ma] is called 'anhad baani,' meaning: the un-struck sound. See the beauty in that term? It is there that the unsaid and the unheard resonate. Ma is formless."

According to theoretician, educator, publisher, poet, Denis Garrison, the prominent Japanese composer, Toshio Hosokawa posits:

"Western music is more concerned with how groups of notes function together . . . while Japanese music, on the other hand, focuses on each note's tone color, its birth and termination and, because of this, exalts the space that each note occupies."

What does Hosokawa mean by his generalization, Western music; and does he fall into the same trap as some in the West, lumping together the music composed from another geographic locale under one generalized classification, in essence, displaying a bias that "necessitates the theorization and dissection" attributed to Western thinking?

The definition of tanka: Japanese song

A strange thing in American universities today; a professor will assign a thesis asking students to give him their ideas and fact-based opinions on a particular subject and students come up to him after class and ask him what he wants them to say specifically. It puzzles many professors. Learning today resembles the entertainment industry: what sells!

"The facts are always friendly, every bit of evidence one can acquire, in any area, leads one that much closer to what is true."

Carl Rogers
American philosopher

"The University brings out all abilities, including incapability."

Anton Chekhov

Divorce yourself, for a moment, when listening to a musical master who allows

his instrument to play him and he, it, in a waltz of now, and let the metaphysical you felt as a child take over, unleashing the open minded tabula rasa of your inner child, your preconceptions gone. This is ma: the moment that isn't a moment, the word that isn't a word, a time without space or shape; yet is a space, in a dimension a young child, an Asian, or an indigenous being would understand clearly as timelessness, whispering leaves, the moon painting treetops, the tin man with a heart that can't be real, but is.

Many of the great Western painters understood the value of white space (another manifestation of ma), influenced by Chinese, Japanese, African, cave paintings, indigenous tribal art, and . . . children's art.

Pablo Picasso stated:

"Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up."

"Art is the elimination of the unnecessary."

Matisse wrote:

"I would like to recapture that freshness of vision which is characteristic of extreme youth when all the world is new to it."

Jean Miro sought to recreate what he felt and thought as a child while drawing and painting, unrestrained by an ism or school of thought:

"Form for me is never something abstract. It is always a token of something. . . . For me, form is never an end in itself"

As ma is sensory in relation to what is evoked in a person's mind when experiencing something, examining its relationship to the Japanese genres of Haiku, Tanka, and other forms of Japanese short form poetry, is pertinent.

To say these genres can deviate away from their origin and foundation in order to be westernized is more ambiguous to me than the definition of "ma" is to many Westerners.

A genre is a genre, and all genres have their own point of origin. In various cultures, a genre can have sub-genres; just as in science, phylums have sub-phylums. In Jazz, a genre indigenous to Afro-American origin, sub-genres have developed such as modern jazz, Latino jazz, etc.; but they are parts of one genre as they share a common heritage, musicality, and tonal exploration.

Dogs aren't cats, and haiku isn't free verse.

Adaptation is good. Basho welcomed it. Shiki did also, but within reason, not trying to change haiku and tanka, but to revitalize it and make it relevant to the time he was living in.

Adaptation and seeking freshness of voice is vital, but not if the adaptation is, in reality, a disguised term for literary surgery that alters a genre so dramatically that it no longer resembles the original.

Buddha too ---
he's opened his altar doors,
cooling off

mihotake mo / tobira o akete / suzumi kana

I who
hear the drums
from Yoshiwara
and alone late at night
sort out haiku

Yoshiwara no / taiko kikoete / fukuru yo ni / hitori haiku o / bunri su ware wa

Masaoka Shiki
Translated by Burton Watson

Porn author (Pirates of The Narrow Seas Trilogy), sailor, and poet, M. Kei, said in his introduction to a newly published book of poetry, *The First Winter Rain*:

"... many poets and readers are intimidated by the massive erudition demanded by figures such as Robert Wilson, managing editor of *Simply Haiku*, who maintains a strict focus on Japanese tanka as the sole arbiter of the genre. Two possible results can be imagined: readers and poets are turned off by the Japan-centric approach and abandon tanka, leaving it as the province of a small, highly sophisticated elite (as was the case with waka before the tanka reforms), or the Japanophiles will be ignored, and the broader tanka, by being more accessible, will permit more readers and poets to participate . . ."

Anyone can participate, but the composition of tanka is not an anything goes free for all orgy of whatever.

Spengler believed the visual space of perspective and lines of force extending into infinity define how Westerners should comprehend the field of action and space.

Gordon Rumsford in his article, *Methods of Genocide: The Abuses of the Soundscape in Extermination*, in 2000, contradicts Spengler, reminding readers that Western thinking before the advent of civilization thought differently:

"Until writing was invented, we lived in acoustic space, where the Eskimo now lives: boundless, directionless, horizonless, the dark of the mind, the world of emotion, primordial intuition, terror. Speech is a social chart of this dark bog."

Is writing, visualization for the "West's" conceptualization of the unsaid?

What defines the term Western? The term Western is usually associated with North American and Western European philosophical, theological, scientific thought patterns and conceptualizations of existence, and, as my father would say, "what makes things tick."

In actuality, North America and Western Europe are not truly Western, except geographically. North America was populated long before Anglo-Europeans claimed to have discovered the continent. North America's original inhabitants are a collection of indigenous tribes who were forced into servitude by their conquerors and reliance due to the robbery of their homelands and the diseases Europeans brought with them to North America that killed millions, because the tribal people had no biological defenses against said diseases. Europeans came to the North American continent to conquer, and had no patience or tolerance for the skin color or beliefs of the indigenous inhabitants.

They were treated as religious heathens and thought of as animals. In California, for example, Father Junipero Serra, currently under consideration for Sainthood by the Roman Catholic Church, forced Native American inhabitants into indentured servitude and slavery, using them to help him build missions in California, and forcing them to adopt Catholicism.

The same attitude towards indigenous people in North America, Canada included, was universal among the European conquerors. The Kawkwutl in British Columbia, and other arctic tribes were subjugated, and still are to a limited degree, to the forced eradication of their cultural patterning, practices, religion, and cultural memory.

Of interest to me is where many of the indigenous people originally came from. The Apache, Navajo, Hopi, and other tribal people in Southwest America belong to the same ethnic stock as do the Eskimo (Inuit) and related tribes (including the Kawkwutl); a grouping of people who, before and during the Ice Age, crossed a land bridge connecting Asia with North America in an area that's now called the Bering Strait.

They descended from Mongolia and China, and those they intermarried along the route. They shared, and many still share, beliefs similar to those held by the indigenous peoples who played a major role in the development of Asian thinking today, including Japan and China.

The Navajo conceptualization of life, Diné Bahane, begins with the appearance of the Holy Wind: the mists of lights which arose through the darkness to animate and bring purpose to the myriad Diyin Dine'é (spirit people) who lived below the earth's surface

Life in this underground world was divided into four different worlds, where things were spiritually created in the time before the earth existed and the physical aspect of humans did not exist yet, but the spiritual did. Eventually some of the spirit people left their spiritual underground abodes to form the human race and interact with nature, co-creating a 5th world, consisting of the tangible and non-tangible: an animistic wild west of the now.

Is Western thought, in actuality, a term for Euro-Caucasian thought? The United States is a cultural melting pot. Over 50% of California's population is Mexican-American. Millions of Filipinos live in the U.S. as do millions of Chinese, Japanese, and other non-European/Caucasian ethnic groups and races.

Why then, do many claim Western haiku and tanka are different entities than those composed in Japan?

Erase the presence of African Americans, Asian Americans, Mexican Americans, all who came originally from indigenous cultures, with thinking more akin to Japanese thought than that propagated by Western universities, how many Euro-Caucasoid people are left over?

A large part of Western Europe was once a continent and island grouping too, made up of indigenous peoples (Picts, Druids, the Faerie Witchcraft Cult, etc) that were conquered by Romans, Greeks, Middle Eastern and Eastern European cultures that thought of the indigenous people (though Caucasoid) in this region as animal-like heathens in league with the Devil; indigenous people thought to have originally migrated from the Asian region, Iberia, with belief systems like those we experienced as children and toddlers, before we went to school and learned to question and analyze everything, distaining almost anything metaphysical or unseen.

Spengler and other theorists like him forgot that the world can be conceptualized in more than one way.

The Australian aborigines (from whom the original Filipinos, the Negritos, are descended from, coming to the Philippines in Southeast Asia via another land bridge before and during the Ice Age), believed in a dream time; that man didn't exist before they saw it and sung it. They believed a land that was not sung was a dead land, since, if the songs were forgotten, the land itself would die.

Posits Tony Crisp in his online article Australian Aborigine Dream Beliefs:

"There are at least four aspects to Dreamtime – The beginning of all things; the life and influence of the ancestors; the way of life and death; and sources of power in life. Dreamtime includes all of these four facets at the same time, being a condition beyond time and space as known in everyday life.

The aborigines call it the 'all-at-once' time instead of the 'one-thing-after-another' time. This is because they experience Dreamtime as the past, present, and future coexisting.

Although Dreamtime may sound rather mystical or mysterious to the Western mind, the experience is based on understandable and observable facts of social and mental life which are unfortunately little valued in Western society."

Continues Crisp:

"The aborigine people believe that each person has a part of their nature that is eternal. This eternal being pre-existed the life of the individual and only became a living person through being born to a mother. The person then lived a life in time, and at death melted back into the eternal life.

If we remember our early childhood, with the absence of an awareness of passing time, the fullness of each day, the eternity of a week or a month, the enormous and unquestioned – if still untraumatised – sense of connection with our family, then we will have an idea of the mental world of the older races. For the aborigines, these facts of their life were tangible realities, known through their inner experience in dreams and waking visions.

. . . It is what the baby experiences in the womb prior to the separation at birth and the development of concepts through the learning of language . . . Life in time is simply a passing phase – a gap in eternity. It has a beginning and it has an end. . . Dreamtime has no beginning and no end.

Like many tribal peoples, the Australian native people are deeply dependent upon their beliefs, the landscape and their inner life for their identity and strength. This makes them vulnerable to anything which disrupts their beliefs, although, apart from such vulnerability, they have a greater psychic sense of wholeness and identity with their tribe and environment than is common in Western individuals."

With this said, is Australia a Western nation? England used Australia as a penal colony, exiling their worst criminals there. These same criminals, in time, took control of the sub-continent/island, doing to the aborigines what European colonists did to the indigenous people in North America.

Crisp's description of the aboriginal dreamtime calls to mind what publisher, editor, poet, and academician Denis Garrison refers to as "dreaming room":

"I think the reason the phrase 'dreaming room' has found favor is that it readily evokes the necessary participation of the reader of haiku in the completion of the haiku. By 'dreaming room,' I mean some empty space inside the poem which the reader can fill with his personal experience, from his unique social context.

That empty space is not, as one might expect, impotent; rather, used properly, it is potent indeed. Hence, we speak also of the 'multivalence' of these empty spaces in haiku and tanka. As I wrote in the editorial, Dreaming Room:

'There is another lens through which to look at this same technique: the concept of multivalency. 'Valence' is used in biology to refer to the forces of reaction and interaction and is used in chemistry to refer to the properties of atoms by which they have the power of combination.

This informs the use of the adjective, 'ambivalent,' which refers to confusion and uncertainty. So, we use the term 'multivalency' to refer to the property of words to react to one another, interact with one another, to be fungible and suggestive. A multivalent tanka is one with dreaming room. It is a poem which may be read in many different ways, all of them correct. It is this freedom for the reader that we refer to as making the reader a co-creator of the poem. The reader's experiential context determines the true meaning of the poem, for that reader."

"This," continues Garrison, "brings us full circle, back to the proposition that, amongst traditional Japanese aesthetic considerations applicable to the art of haiku writing, *ma* is arguably preeminent for poets working in another language. Why? Look at what Western poets lose when writing in English. The vast treasury of traditional allusions is virtually lost in cultures for which those allusions do not resonate. The major technique of *kigo*, season-words, is also largely vitiated by the seasonal differences from those of Japan that apply throughout the world. In the world's briefest poems, such losses strip away a multitude of opportunities to convey much by few words. In such a context, it becomes really essential to not only make use of every word in the poem, but also of every silence in the poem. Even the spaces between words need to resonate.

Ma is the aesthetic from which techniques that can accomplish such rhetoric of omission can flow. I believe that assimilation of the *ma* aesthetic will indeed better equip Western poets to write haiku in English that have meaning and power."

The following two haiku exhibit the power and beauty of authentic haiku. The *ma* in Issa's poem comes after the word, leap, creating a power pause connecting the remainder of the haiku to a space and time, similar to the surfacing of the Navajo spirit people from the four worlds below the earth to a 5th world on the Earth's surface . . . a leap from one dimension to another, and a marriage of the two.

a single leap --- from
waterweed blossom to
that cloud in heaven

Kobayashi Issa
Translated by Sam Hamill

fresh sea breeze
the mimosa he planted
tall enough to wave

Peggy Heinrich

The ma in Heinrich's poem appears twice; the first at the end of line one, and the second at the end of line two. The first pause is a rope bridge connecting two contrasting images (juxtaposition), a short moment expertly used to invite the reader to interpret the haiku, not fully, but using yugen (depth and mystery) to illustrate and set the stage for the longer pause . . . that intertwines two dimensions, again the leap, impossible without the use of ma, exhibiting what haiku, and no other verse form, can do as effectively, via the utilization of minimalism and the unsaid, ma more than an aesthetic, more than a tool, becoming an invisible 3rd participant, sculpting the tangible with the intangible, to metaphysically bring one into the aboriginal "all at once time."

Pauses are important in poetry. Ma is an interval in time and space, yet more than mere space; Zen's "it is but it isn't." Onstage in a play, it is a dramatic pause, the look and timing after a line to emphasize feeling, humor, etc.

In Japanese short form poetry, ma calls attention to a tanka's and haiku's focus. It is the waltz of the unsaid, a porthole into a timeless headspace reaching for pure essence.

as a kid
it was piles and piles
of leaves
red in their sensual lure
toward the mystery of crisp

Sanford Goldstein
Japan

with her words
"How cold your fingers,"
I drew her close
on that night
of quiet snow

shinsin to / yuki furishi yo ni / sono yubi no / ana tsumetayo to / iite yorishi ka

Mokichi Saito

Translated by Sanford Goldstein and Seishi Shinoda

According to Lizzy Van Lysebeth in her book, *Transforming Traditions: Japanese Design and Philosophy*, Ma is a silent fullness. "It is a sort of untouched moment or space which can be completed by every individual observer differently, a moment or space in which one's fantasy can move freely. In this way the artist gets the observers actively involved in his work."

In Kakuzo Okakura's *Book of Tea*, Laotse is quoted as saying: "The usefulness of the water pitcher dwelt in the emptiness where water might be put, not in the form of the pitcher or the material of which it was made. Vacuum is all potent because [it is] all containing. In vacuum alone motion becomes possible. One who could make of himself a vacuum into which others might freely enter would become master of all situations. The whole can dominate the part."

Skillfully used, ma enhances a tanka or haiku, emphasizing important words, setting a mood, building anticipation, and more. Perhaps this is one of the reasons Masaoka Shiki felt that painting and poetry were in essence, the same. Both poet and painter begin their work, careful to leave white space for observers to fill in the blanks, making their work a participatory experience. It's dreaming room, a place where observers are free to explore.

In the depths of night ---
The sound of the river flowing on,
And the moonlight
Shining clear above the village
Of Mizuno in Yamashiro

Ton'a

Translated by Robert H. Brower

Ma is a principal experienced by many cultures and by most babies and toddlers, Occidental or Eastern. It is stepping outside of oneself as Buson would do in the forest, an emptied mind without preconception in touch with the unsaid. It is not a moment where a poet says, "I'll write a haiku about a duck." The poet thinks about a duck she saw once, seeing the duck through her eyes instead of through the duck's eyes, and somehow, joining together with the duck in a symbiotic oneness. Writing the haiku thus becomes an artistic process where one follows prescribed rules, precepts, and hell, even bends the rules, relying more on formula than aesthetics, saying nothing memorable, or stimulating; what Professor Hasegawa calls "junk haiku."

" . . . these 'realism haiku' contain a number of pitfalls. The greatest of these," says Hasegawa, "is that the haiku have lost kokoro (feeling, heart, spirit). From the time of the Man'yōshū, Japan's earliest poetry anthology, the Japanese literary arts have invested mono (things) with kokoro. Haiku are no exception. Even if they appear to be written only about things, there is definitely kokoro beneath the surface. However, because of the extremes of modern realism, kokoro is neglected, and only 'things' have come to be written about in haiku. These are what I referred to as 'junk' (garakuta) haiku. Sooner or later this tendency will have to be corrected. For one thing, it is a serious departure from the main principle of Japanese literary art. And more to the point, 'junk haiku' just aren't interesting."

Posits Bruno Descartes, from his article, *Aesthetics in Japanese Arts*;

"I think, as with any non-Western arts, if one has a fundamental understanding of the aesthetic principles at the basis of [most] Asian art forms, one might be better able to enjoy and appreciate them."

With footsteps of air
I draw near the steeple bells
that are dreaming me.

Agusti Bartra
Catalan
Translated by D. Sam Adams

Study of Japanese Aesthetics: Part II

Reinventing The Wheel: The Fly Who Thought He Was a Carabao

by Robert D. Wilson,

There is a folk story in the Philippines about a fly who thought he was taller than a carabao (water buffalo). Bored with the normal routine indigenous to being a fly, a young fly one day flew away from his home in a dung heap near a pig farmer's house to see what the world had to offer. Tired, after flying for what seemed like forever, which to a human is not far at all, the young fly decided to land, get his bearing, and rest, as the sun was about to set. He saw a black splotch and decided that'd be a safe place to land. Unlike the dung heap where he'd lived, his landing strip was furry and soft.

When the young fly woke up in the morning, the world seemed tiny compared to the world he usually woke up to. He didn't know he'd landed on the back of a sleeping carabao. The carabao was standing now, slowly walking to the rice fields, pulled by a young brown skinned human child. "How can I move," wondered the little black fly, "without using my wings?"

In the rice field, there were three carabao waiting to be yoked. Looking down at the carabao, and since he'd been transformed once before from a lowly maggot into a winged fly, the fly thought he'd been transformed into a giant fly, taller than the carabao.

The sea darkens ---
Faintly white
A wild duck's call

umi kurete
honokani shiroshi
kamo no koe

Matsuo Basho
Translated by Makoto Ueda

The Japanese poetic genre, haiku, became popular in the Western Hemisphere due largely to the influence of the poet, Gary Snyder, who, in turn, influenced Jack Kerouac, Gregory Corso, Allen Ginsberg, Michael McClure, and other Beat poets to write haiku. Snyder was an avid outdoorsman who taught himself Zen meditation techniques, and had been a student at U.C. Berkeley, where he studied Asian culture and language. At the time he met Kerouac, via Allen

Ginsberg, Michael McClure, and Gregory Corso, he was a part time student at The American Academy of Asian Studies where Alan Watts and Japanese Modernist painter, Saburo Hasegawa, were teaching. At this school, under the tutelage of Hasegawa, he learned that painting could be used as a stimulus and portal to meditation. Snyder applied this same concept in writing poetry. He saw haiku as a Zen poetic form that would adapt well to Hasegawa's theory regarding meditation. He began a serious study of haiku using the writings of R.H. Blyth and Kenneth Yasuda as guides. Later he would travel to Japan and convert to Buddhism.

Snyder encouraged his Beat friends to study the writings of R.H. Blyth and Kenneth Yasuda, as books in English about haiku in the 1950s were few and far between, including English-language translations of poetry penned by the genre's founding poets. Snyder saw in these books a poetry bathed in Zen, with a belief system that'd free him from the status quo he no longer was buying. Zen was a gateway to a metaphysical world that was whatever he wanted to paint; a liberation that was, in reality, an illusion his mind created; the is and isn't, co-captains on a flight with Captain Kirk on the US airship, LSD.

Snyder is not a great haiku poet and, although he credits haiku as having a big influence on his poetry and mindset, he didn't write a lot of haiku, preferring, instead, to write free verse, which he excels at. He credits the Imagist poets, William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound, as important influences on his style of writing.

The following two haiku by Snyder are subjective (object-biased) and focus on objects instead of on the process. They say nothing profound, and leave little to the imagination, being concrete, precise, and succinct (rules advocated by the Imagist movement.).

They didn't hire him
So he ate his lunch alone:
The noon whistle

A truck went by
Three hours ago:
Smoke Creek desert

An example of what Snyder called haiku, which is anything but a haiku:

pissing
watching
a waterfall

This incomplete sentence, far from being a poem in any form, lacks juxtaposition, metric rhythm, and literally tells all, which is the antithesis of haiku; which, out of

necessity and purpose, due to its economy of words, describes and hints at. It's also something a 6th grade student might say to another boy in prepubescent jest.

Studying Blyth's four book series on haiku, Snyder saw a haiku-like connection between some non-haiku poetry, which Snyder was drawn to, and haiku, as explained by R.H. Blyth, Kenneth Yasuda, Harold Henderson, and two professors at the American Academy of Asian Studies.

Many intellectuals in the West, especially those involved with the arts and philosophy, were tired of what they perceived was a watering down of thought and art; and the cloning of individuality. Influenced by Imagist poetry, Modernist poetry, haiku, the writings of Suzuki, the defining of aesthetics and thought by philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche, Immanuel Kant, Georg Hegel, and other outspoken Western intellectuals from the German-based university system, they were open to change. Armed with what they thought was a renaissance of thought and the seeds to recreate culture to their intellectual satisfaction, many in the Beat movement and other free thinkers perceived a likeness between some of the genres of Western poetry (primarily free verse Imagist) and haiku. The time was right for the beatification of thinking that would stretch boundaries, and forge new paths via exotic cogitation, especially the Zen of it is and it isn't, where man tuned in, turned on, and turned off . . . which Dr. Timothy Leary, a friend of Alan Ginsberg and Gary Snyder, used as an invitation to anyone who would listen, to pass go, purchase pure U.C. Berkeley laboratory grade LSD (a friend of mine was one of Leary's chemists), and receive instant nirvana without an ounce of effort. The West, beginning with The United States, was entering into a social upheaval that would dethrone Ed Sullivan, The Saturday Evening Post and Norman Rockwell as society's spokesmen, and replace them with Mr. Natural, Toulouse-Lautrec, The Beatles, W. C. Fields, Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, and Purple Haze acid, with strychnine thrown in as a cost cutting measure.

Prior to this, in Japan, towards the end of the 19th century, artists and intellectuals had grown tired of centuries old traditions, the follow-the-leader herd mentality that'd pervaded the Japanese cultural landscape before opening up its borders to Western influence in the latter part of the Meiji Era. When the borders were opened, a love affair with almost anything Western rose up like a brush fire out of control. Students studied in France, Germany, and some in America. Japan's Kyoto University, called by some the Yale of Japan, adopted the German-based University System and taught aesthetics from the Western point of view. Translations of European and North American poetry and novels were suddenly available. The extent of this influence was the atom bomb to Japanese thought and tradition. Soon, other Japanese universities would follow suit, inundating Japanese thought to a point near extinction, if Japan could not find a relevant way to teach these subjects in their tongue, and to rise above the o-hum of tradition and unquestioned norms. As a twist of fate, many in the United States were

equally hungry for the alternative mindset Japan and China propagated via religion, art, poetry, etc.

Wrote Professor Michael F. Marra in his book Japan's Frames of Meaning,

. . . "so much of modern Japan --- including the university system and modern organizations of knowledge -- were built on German models. Western hermeneutics had a profound impact on how philology, religion, history, and the humanities came to be articulated in Japan. In other words, whatever goes under the umbrella of Japanese literature, art, religion, history, philosophy, and so on would not exist in its modern form without the paradigms that hermeneutics provided in forcing Japanese authors to talk about Japan with a language that was originally devised for interpreting the Bible."

In doing so, there arose many misunderstandings between the West and Japan, some of which still exist today. The Japanese language wasn't a suitable vehicle to express, debate, or define their own philosophy and aesthetics, let alone to do the same with Western ideas and theories.

Enamored with haiku and Zen, Blyth, who resided in Japan, saw haiku as an expression of Zen, denying the relevance of any significant contribution to the genre via Shinto, which he called primitive (a biased insult to the Japanese people who have blended Shinto and Zen into a conglomerate religion that expresses their collective cultural landscape and memories.).

Added Blyth, "Taoism was animistic to a strong superstitious (shamanistic) degree. Confucianism, a yet stronger influence in Japan, as providing something lacking in the Japanese character, loved ritual rather than living creatures, and affected only the unsavably [the publisher's typo, not mine] un-poetical people . . ."

Blyth displayed an archaic colonist respect for the religious heritage of the Japanese or Chinese peoples save for Buddhism, which he interspersed with a love-hate combination of misinterpreted biblical scripture, and the morality that colored his cultural memory.

Blyth went on to state, "The Japanese, not in any case a nation of philosophers . . ."

Philosophy defined: The study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence when considered as an academic discipline.

A nation without philosophers is a nation without thinkers. The Japanese have many philosophers. Their language, as I previously stated, was not equipped to transfer their philosophy into words that would explain to the West what their philosophical conceptualizations meant. Japanese aesthetics and philosophy were

inbred, and a part of the Japanese culture. Japan is, and was, a nation with fine minds and great thinkers. With their doors closed to Western influence, the need for the Japanese language to express to others the meaning of their philosophy, etc. was moot. Now that the doors had opened, the nation as a whole had to rethink their belief systems and traditions, and find a way to express this body of thought to themselves and to those in the West.

In Blyth's four haiku book series, his view of haiku is more Western than Asian. He saw haiku in poems written by Wordsworth, Shelley, Thoreau, Keats, and other poets popular in America and England.

Wrote Blyth, "There were elements in the character of Keats which prevented him from writing much haiku poetry."

Keats didn't write haiku poetry nor did he claim to. Opined Blyth, "Of Wordsworth, it is not necessary to say anything. To The Cuckoo, The Glow-worm, The Green Linnet, A Poet's Epitaph, To My Sister, and a dozen others are full of the spirit of haiku and nothing else. In the poetry of Wordsworth and that of haiku there is this seemingly unimportant, but deeply significant common element; that the most ordinary people, those to whom Buddha preached and for whom Christ died, are able, if they will, to see it."

Blyth and Yasuda's writing exerted a great influence upon Gary Snyder and those he came into contact with; an influence tainted with modernist misconceptions, colonial thought, a lack of understanding and/or agreement between Japan and the West regarding the definitions of many aesthetic and philosophical terms and theories.

Snyder meeting Kerouac was a momentous occasion that started a domino effect, setting into motion a series of events and connections that would, in time, affect the Northern Hemisphere politically, spiritually, and sociologically. Had Snyder not met Jack Kerouac via Allen Ginsberg, and influenced him in regards to Zen Buddhism and haiku, haiku probably wouldn't have caught on with the number of people it did.

Kerouac's book *Dharma Bums*, published in 1958, a year after his seminal book *On the Road* was published by Viking Press, introduced Kerouac's conceptualization of Zen Buddhism and haiku to America's youth and disaffected intellectuals. *On the Road*, describing Kerouac's wild toad ride from the East Coast to San Francisco with Neal Cassady, was an instant hit with America's restless youth who were disillusioned with the Norman Rockwell/Saturday Evening Post/wear a skinny black tie and starched white shirt to church/Joe McCarthy/look alike/talk alike/ the commies are coming/oops, there goes the neighborhood/Reader's Digest/brusha brusha, new Ipana toothpaste/Marlborough Country/Burma Shave mindset of their parents and neighbors, who they felt had forgotten how to think, thus becoming puppets of the marionette master, Captain

Kangaroo.

Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* is credited with planting the seeds that led to the hippie/free love/turn off, tune in, and turn on socio-revolution in the mid 1960's that changed the face of North America and its allies, forever. Thus the reception for Kerouac's *Dharma Bums* was guaranteed.

"i see a vision of a great rucksack revolution thousands or even millions of young americans wandering around with rucksacks, going up into the mountains to pray, making children laugh and old men glad, making young girls happy and old girls happier, all of 'em zen lunatics who go about writing poems that happen to appear in their heads for no reason and also by being kind and also by strange unexpected acts keep giving visions of eternal freedom to everybody and to all living creatures"

Dharma Bums loosely chronicles Ray Smith's (Kerouac) friendship with Japhy Ryder (Gary Snyder). Japhy is portrayed as a mad lunatic Zen monk who's seen the flame of truth and introduces Ray Smith (who is the narrator in the book) to Zen Buddhism, haiku, and a mindset he felt let his soul out of jail. Jack Kerouac was a gifted writer who wrote the way he spoke, free from literary constraints, with a free flowing stream of consciousness his readers perceived as genuine and in tune with their disaffection. In *Dharma Bums* "-- colleges being nothing but grooming schools for the middle-class non-identity which usually finds its perfect expression on the outskirts of the campus in rows of well-to-do houses with lawns and television sets in each living room with everybody looking at the same thing and thinking the same thing at the same time while the Japhies of the world go prowling in the wilderness to hear the voice crying in the wilderness, to find the ecstasy of the stars, to find the dark mysterious secret of the origin of faceless wonderless crapulous civilization."

Kerouac wrote a few good haiku, which he included in his *Book of Haikus*. He was a natural writer and able to write almost anything at the drop of the hat, but to call him a serious student of haiku because he wrote a few hundred haiku, would be an untruth. The haiku he wrote and talked about in *Dharma Bums* were largely influenced by the teachings of R. H. Blyth and Kenneth Yasuda, thus rapidly spreading Blyth and Yasuda's influence regarding haiku, flawed as it was, to a huge audience.

Wrote Kerouac,

"The American Haiku is not exactly the Japanese Haiku. The Japanese Haiku is strictly disciplined to seventeen syllables but since the language structure is different I don't think American Haikus (short three-line poems intended to be completely packed with Void of Whole) should worry about syllables because American speech is something again . . . bursting to pop.

Above all, a Haiku must be very simple and free of all poetic trickery and make a little picture and yet be as airy and graceful as a Vivaldi Pastorella."

The rain has filled 4
the birdbath 3
Again, almost 4

In my medicine cabinet 8
the winter fly 4
has died of old age 5

late afternoon-- 4
the mop is drying 5
on the rock 3

Jack Kerouac
Book of Haikus

"' Look over there,' sang Japhy [Gary Snyder], 'yellow aspens. Just put me in the mind of a haiku . . . A real haiku's gotta be simple as porridge and yet make you see the real thing, like the greatest haiku of them all probably is the one that goes 'The sparrow hops along the veranda, with wet feet.' by Shiki. You see the wet footprints like a vision in your mind and yet in those few words you also see all the rain that's been falling that day and almost smell the wet pine needles." (A good description of Masaoka Shiki's shasei style of haiku mixed in with Imagist thinking.)

Jack Kerouac
Dharma Bums

The Beats weren't a disciplined lot, nor a cultural substrata that took kindly to formulaic artistic expressions. Many led nomadic lifestyles, their brains often under the influence of "something." They were "on the road," expanding horizons, trying this and that, grocery shopping in the market of now; sampling, tasting, and creolizing what they liked most into their own frames of mind. Needless to say, with few exceptions, the Beat poets were nomads; yet, it was through their experimentation, open-mindedness, and thirst for knowledge, coupled with others with a poetic leaning (my father was one of them), that sowed the seeds that fostered and stimulated the birth of the Western English-language haiku movement.

Kerouac's haiku was far from earth shattering. He didn't follow the traditional S/L/S metric schemata indigenous to haiku and lacked a solid understanding of the genre apart from what he'd speed read through in R. H. Blyth's four book set

on Haiku, and Kenneth Yasuda's *The Japanese Haiku: Its Essential Nature, History, and Possibilities in English, with Selected Examples*, coupled with conversations with Snyder and Kenneth Rexroth. With the exception of the second haiku, the one above and below are simple object-biased statements, focused on objects versus the process of becoming or changing. The second haiku about the winter fly is a good haiku, and indicative of what Kerouac could have done and improved upon if he were to have taken the genre seriously.

In a haiku, the object takes a back seat to the process taken to form a clear intuitive mental impression of the object(s) and to one's emotive reactions.

Wrote Professor Haruo Shirane in *Traces of Dreams*,

"The 'unchanging' implied the need to seek the 'truth of poetic art' (fuga no makoto), particularly in the poetic and spiritual tradition, to engage in the vertical axis, while the 'ever changing' referred to the need for constant change and renewal, the source of which was ultimately to be found in everyday life, in the horizontal axis."

Jack Kerouac, like the other Beat poets, tested the waters for a while but found a better reception for long free verse poetry. Zen was "in" towards the end of the 1950's with a lot of young people, thanks to the writings of Snyder, Kerouac, Ginsberg, Alan Watts, D. T. Suzuki, and the transcendental aura that experimentation with psychedelics induced; a mindset that blossomed during the mid-sixties into the Hippie social revolution. Blyth's connection with Zen and his belief that haiku was an expression of Zen, came at an opportune time: "... haiku is an aspect of Zen; that haiku is Zen, Zen directed to certain selected natural phenomena."

With the advent of the television, American students were no longer buying *carte blanche* the Stepford herd mentality. They no longer read the news, they saw the news, heard the news; a generation that was sense-oriented, the new media stripping away the isolation America harbored, esteeming itself as the bastion of democracy and all that's right: Norman Rockwell's America, Reader's Digest America, Joe McCarthy's America, Love it or Leave it America; its flag a god unquestioned like the Emperor of Japan was thought of until he was forced to sign and promulgate publicly the announcement that he was just a man, and not a Shinto deity.

By chance, fate, and timing, R.H. Blyth and, to a lesser degree, Kenneth Yasuda, played a pivotal role in influencing and shaping the North American haiku mind outside of the classroom. This influence is larger today than ever before.

Wrote Haruo Shirane in his book *Traces of Dreams*, "R.H. Blyth believed that reading and composing haiku was a spiritual experience in which poet and nature were united. Zen, which becomes indistinguishable from haiku in much of Blyth's

writing, was 'a state of mind in which we are not separated from other things, are indeed identical with them, and yet retain our own individuality.' Haiku is the appreciation of a thing by a realization of our own original and essential unity with it."

Wrote Blyth in *The History of Haiku, Volume One*, "There is no separation between the thing and its meaning, no finding the universal in particular natural objects, or human beings."

This is a belief many of us subscribed to during the psychedelic 60's. We'd drop acid (lysergic acid diethylamide) and wait for time and existence to melt into a now without boundaries, where mind and matter undulated in sensual intercourse, and what is, the canvas painted with illusions Buddhas dreamt in daydreams while awake.

Blyth's assessment that haiku "is the appreciation of a thing . . ." is biased conjecture and inaccurate, reflecting the influence on him by the Imagists and his negative reaction to Japanese Modernists who were, at the time, going through an artistic identity crisis, having a deep infatuation with Western thought that lasted decades, and set into motion a tide of restless disdain for Japan's poetic heritage.

Haiku is event-biased. It cannot have as its focus an object or objects.

R.H. Blyth and Kenneth Yasuda (influenced by Masoaka Shiki, who, in turn, was influenced by Western philosophy and aesthetics, especially impressionism) conceptualized haiku as a poetic genre centered around a concrete object which unveils its true self via the "haiku moment," that magical rabbit-pops-out-of-the-hat-and-hands- the-poet-a-pass-that-allows them-to pass go-and-collect the big aha!

The heart and soul of haiku

Informed haiku poets realize the importance of zoka (nature's creative spirit), which is never static, constantly changing, constructing, deconstructing and renewing itself in what Shirane refers to as the "horizontal axis."

Once nature's removed from a haiku, it ceases to be a haiku. Without zoka, words are just words, objects are just objects, everything static and unmoving like a still-borne child.

Zoka is the creative force of nature that creates, de-creates, and recreates the cultural landscape and nature as we experience it. Zoka is not an entity but a force. Without zoka, haiku is meaningless. True haiku cannot be contrived or subjectively sculpted to support one's personal mindset. It's a poet's conversation and interaction with a force that can't be harnessed nor controlled or conjured up

in a magical “aha” moment that causes an event to happen NOW; the poet and the object of nature becoming one.

Nature is more than words to include in haiku and tanka. Nature is more than postcard views and beautiful flowers. Wrote Professor David Landis Barnhill in his essay *The Creative in Basho's View of Nature and Art*,

“The creative animates all things, and in doing so, gives them the beauty of flower and moon. Life is animated by a divine breath, which unifies all things in a single cosmic vitality, yet makes all things distinct. Nature is ever-shifting, and these transformations --- of each moment and through the four seasons, are the flourishing of life. They give rise to deep feelings and to outstanding art. The artist, and every cultured person, should return to this cosmic creativity, recognize its beauty, and follow its movements.”

the winter sun ---
on the horse's back
my frozen shadow

Matsuo Basho
Translated by Makoto Ueda

What does it mean to “enter into a subject” in order to write true haiku?

Posits Professor Shirane, “. . . to follow the fundamental movement of nature and the universe and to realize the creative forces of the universe within oneself. If, as [Basho's] *Backpack Notes* observes, the artist follows the Creative [Zoka] and ‘makes a friend of the four seasons,’ a movement governed by Zoka, the artist will respond to the movement and rhythm of nature, especially of the seasons, which provide constant inspiration for poetry and art.”

Wrote Matsuo Basho regarding zoka,

“The fundamental spirit that stands at the root of Saigyo's poetry, Sogi's linked verse, Sesshu's paintings, Rikyu's practice of tea is one and the same. Those who practice such arts follow the Creative and make the four seasons their friends. What one sees cannot but be cherry blossoms; what one thinks cannot but be the moon. When the shape is not the cherry blossoms, one is no different from an animal. Leave the barbarians, depart from the animals, follow the Creative, return to the Creative!” (*Nihon koten bungaku zenshu* 41:311).

Haiku poets don't create in the same context as the zoka. One cannot speak an object into being simply by giving it a name. Zoka exists and is not dependent on anyone or anything. When a poet includes a kigo in a haiku, it's not a symbolic gesture, where a poet robotically adds a kigo to his or her poem in order to make the poem a haiku. This inclusion of a kigo is ersatz; of no value to the poem. It's

adhering to a poetic dictum to authenticate something that isn't understood, thus watering down a poem's depth and the connection it must have between the said and unsaid. In essence, this forms a barrier between zoka and object, between the creator and the created. During renga tournaments, public events, this was a different matter. The tournaments were thematic and not dependent on one's experience with the chosen theme, or whether or not it's fictional or nonfictional.

The use of kigo in Western haiku is poorly understood and blurred. This is due in part to inaccurate exegesis, inaccessibility to ancient manuscripts, a researcher's inability to read ancient Japanese Yamato text, a lack of familiarity with how the Japanese utilized Chinese characters in their prose and poetry, poor teaching, and/or lacking a deep understanding of the Japanese cultural memory and cultural landscape. Every kigo word had a specific meaning which all proficient poets were expected to know. The usage of words had to subscribe to the dictates of teachers and tradition. Japanese poets were highly skilled in hiding dissident political statements within the context of specific kigo, which had more than one meaning. Poetry in Imperial Japan was often used for this purpose.

As an example, read the following waka (tanka), authored by Ariwara no Narihira (825-880) that was included in the Kokin Wakashu, the first Imperial anthology of Japanese poetry, translated by Professor Helen Craig McCullough:

Longer than ever before
Is the wisteria's shadow ---
How many are those
Who shelter beneath
Its blossoms!

Saku hana noo
Shita ni aururu
Hito omi
Arishi ni Masaru
Fuji no kage ka mo

On first reading this poem, it appears to be a pretty nature poem. Due to the textural complexity indigenous to the Japanese language and the Japanization of the Chinese language, a kigo can have more than one meaning. What a word means overtly can mean something else covertly. Though beautiful with colorful spring blossoms, a wisteria is a vine that overcomes and strangles other plants. The character for wisteria was the same one used to write the name of the Japanese ruling family during the time of this tanka's writing, Fuji. The Fujiwara Family's name translated means: field of wisterias.

The author's surname, Ariwara, translated means: the field of the past. Writes Professor Michael F. Marra in his book *Seasons and Landscapes of Japanese Poetry*,

"In this poem, the poet Ariwara no Nahira, who was also a victim of Fujiwara power despite his direct descent from an Emperor, complains about the fact that everybody is now allying with the powerful field of wisterias, and forgetting about the past glory of his own family, Ariwara, which literally means: the field of the past."

When a Westerner composes a haiku, he or she isn't bound by these cultural distinctions. The weather in America is similar as is the flora and fauna. Western usage of kigo isn't bound or dictated by tradition nor is kigo used to transmit information. Authenticity is pertinent to haiku. To compose a haiku about cherry blossoms from one's home in the Arizona Desert would be a far stretch unless, of course, one has encountered cherry blossoms before in another place. The kigo used by Westerners need to reflect their cultural and landscape memories.

When one shuts out the individual subjective illusions that comprise human thought and tunes into the five senses, the mind becomes receptive to the unsaid and its connection to the exteriority of what on the surface appears to be a simple three-line poem, utilizing a vowel specific economy of words.

a late summer cicada
at the top of his voice
chirping, and chirping

Shiki

If one takes into context the origin of haiku, a different picture develops than what Blyth and Yasuda had painted. Haiku originally was part of linked verse (renga) and as such, the emphasis of haiku was not placed on a direct "aha" haiku moment where one obtains a momentary oneness with a thing or things. Instead, the purpose of linking was to provide a bridge that leads from one world to another, like when a person goes to an amusement park . . . a world where reality and imagination link together to form worlds, real or otherwise, that hadn't been experienced before: Fantasyland, Tomorrowland, Frontierland, and so on, in a continuum of time, one experience affecting the other, always changing, never a snapshot, or a glimpse of a singular "aha."

As Professor Shirane points out in his essay *American Haiku and Myths*, the world the participants in the haiku sequence (renga) created was imaginary: the linking of more than one participant's contribution and illusion, subjective and objective; a group activity. "The basic idea of linked verse was to create a new and unexpected world out of the world of the previous verse. One could compose about one's daily life, about being an official in China, about being a warrior in the medieval period, or an aristocrat in the ancient period. The other participants in the haikai sequence joined you in that imaginary world or took you to places that you could reach with your imagination. In short, linked verse, both orthodox linked verse (renga) and its comic or casual version (haikai), were fundamentally

imaginary.”

The composition of a haiku is not dependent upon a moment, as Kenneth Yasuda and R.H. Blyth stressed, based on the now, what some in the West refer to as the “aha” moment of illumination! What is now? By the time one composes a haiku reflecting the now and reading and rereading it until it has the right cadence and sound, the now is long gone.

Haiku can be inspired by something from the past such as a memory:

At sunset this fall
Evening, I wrote on a wall:
I've gone on ahead

Kobayashi Issa
Translated by Sam Hamill

A haiku can also be a reworking, revisioning, or a response *mitate* of another's poem, like Buson did with Basho's famous poem:

By the old pond A frog ages – Fallen leaves

Yosa Buson
Translated by Paul Elliott

The old pond ---
A frog jumps in,
water's sound

Matsuo Basho
Translated by Makoto Ueda

Haiku can even speculate about the future such as:

Two cranes, side by side,
Forage on, unwittingly.
One will soon be dead

Kobayashi Issa
Translated by Sam Hamill

“There is no separation between the thing and its meaning, no finding the universal in particular natural objects, or human beings.”

This is veiled religious proselytism. Japanese aesthetics are essential tools in the formation of a haiku but one needn't think like a Zen Buddhist to write a quality haiku. Had Blyth done his homework, he would have known better than to label haiku a Zen genre requiring writers of haiku to think like a Zen Buddhist. We don't need to become one with a tree, a frog, the moon, or something else in Nature. What individuals conceive in their minds are individual allusions based upon cultural memory, education, experience, etc. It, therefore, is impossible to become one with an object in nature, as subjectivity defines what they see and feel.

A haiku can serve as a greeting

Writes Professor Sonja Arntzen, in the introduction to the new book she co-authored with Naomi Beth Wakan Double Take,

"I would suggest one reason for why short forms have had such a long life in Japan was the role they played in communication. If most members of society are going to compose poetry for impromptu exchange in day to day communication, it is simply better if the poems are short."

A haiku recognizes that nothing is static; that everything's in motion, and continually constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing. Nothing stays as it is. The Japanese see poems differently than their Western counterparts.

To the Japanese, fixed meanings are non-existent. A poem can mean one thing, yet when combined with contrasting lines, a whole new meaning is formed. This is what a juxtaposition is, contrasting two opposites together to say something completely different; including the said and the unsaid, aware that words cannot express what isn't said, unless they are incorporated into the poetic language that can say what prose cannot say.

For many adults in the object-biased West, juxtaposition doesn't sound logical. "It either is or it isn't." Ironically, as children, those with this mindset had no problem with what is or isn't, their minds open, not blurred by subjectivity and the indoctrination of Western educational institutions, their zoka unrestrained, unafraid to paint, to draw, and sing. Inhibitions come later when they're taught in school and by parents to see everything in black and white, to compare things with other people's "things," and to eventually compare themselves with others, closing their minds out of fear that they will not belong or be thought of as a loser . . . the West, a false reality fed to Westerners by the media who control what they see on television, hear on the radio, in the theater, on news broadcasts, music listened to, and much more . . . 1984 and the Stepford Children, dancers in a ballroom who keep their inner child locked up in closets they've lost the keys to.

Haiku and the haiku spirit offer poets and informed readers a path that will resurrect the Tin Man, the Scarecrow, and the Brave Lion via the juxtaposition of

Kansas and Oz . . . a word where thought isn't regulated by insecure people with the need to be in charge.

Kenneth Yasuda's aha moment is a myth. Time doesn't stop still. One doesn't write a haiku to see the light. He or she writes and reads a haiku as a greeting, a farewell, an exercise, a form of meditation, a transmission, a methodology to bring to light the unsaid. For many, the composition of a haiku is a serious avocation.

When I compose a haiku, I climb inside the poem, following the brush, the brush follows me, on a journey into the subconscious mind, where all my senses have been stripped, not searching for a magical apparition to appear out of nowhere, and hand me the whole enchilada on a silver plate, because, if one needs the magical aha to write a haiku, how come so much of today's haiku written by well-known poets are anything but an aha?

J.W. Hackett, an early pioneer of American haiku and a devoted student of Blyth's teachings, wrote in *The Way of Haiku* in 1967, the year I graduated from high school,

" . . . the best haiku are created from direct and immediate experience with nature, and this intuitive experience can be expressed in any language. In essence, I regard haiku as fundamentally existential and experiential, rather than literary."

This statement influenced by R.H. Blyth cannot be academically substantiated unless a writer adheres to modern Western philosophical and aesthetic thought. To write about Japanese haiku one must wear the sandals of those that wrote the haiku. To do otherwise is to operate within a schizophrenic fog where one's mindset defines another's mindset.

Kenneth Yasuda is credited with introducing to English-language poets the concept of the experience-biased "haiku moment," which he claimed gives a poet the inspiration and motivation for writing a haiku. In essence, Yasuda claimed one had to think like a Zen Buddhist in order to write an authentic haiku.

If Western poets want to write quality haiku, they need to accept the fact that following a certain set of rules and using tools developed by the Japanese is important as the aforementioned are time-tried and established. Using these tools and adhering to the rules doesn't make a Westerner a Japanese wannabe or poser and more than someone following Zen Buddhism in America can be called a Japanese wannabe or poser. This goes with those who learn karate, and those who prepare sushi in their homes.

Our minds are our minds. Each of us is an individual. There is no one like any of us. Our lives are painted in our minds and psyche textured by cultural memory,

education, parental upbringing, experience, good and bad, no one able to inhabit the myth that conformity is king. We are individuals, regardless of the biospheric locale we are raised in.

Let's keep ethnicity and bias out of this. With every art or discipline there are time-tried rules to adhere to that were created to help us to do our best. Reinventing the wheel is unnecessary.

Although Japanese, Kenneth Yasuda's opinions regarding haiku were modernist, and influenced by Western thought. In Yasuda's translations, he used a strict 5-7-5 syllable count in English, which, as we know today, makes an English-language haiku sound awkward and, oftentimes, forced. Strangely enough, the first and third lines in his translations are end-rhymed. He mixed two opposites to create a whole, with the same success as someone trying to connect the wrong ends of two magnets together.

Kare eda ni / Karasu no tomarikeri / aki no kure

On a withered bough / A crow alone is perching / Autumn evening now

Matsuo Basho

Translated by Kenneth Yasuda

Yasuda's use of first and third line rhymes wasn't necessary. It's as if he were trying to make haiku more attractive to Western readers. Japanese short form poets don't write rhyming haiku. Haiku, when correctly approached, has its own built in metric schemata (5/7/5). The use of rhyming in a translation can be confusing, lessens the use of *ma*, and could serve as a negative model for poets of the mythical West.

Yasuda's Zen/pop "haiku moment" theory caught on with many haiku poets in North America. His Zen/pop aha moment sounded exotic, a concept that continues to influence many modern English-language haiku poets. In Japan, most of Blyth's and Yasuda's theories were rejected or ignored.

Blyth also erred in that his pronouncement isn't a universal truth accepted by a conglomerate of religious and philosophical belief systems interwoven into the poetry of Basho, Buson, and Issa, and the mindset of Japan's commoner peoples. Many in Japan today, as in the past, adhere to a belief system influenced by a combination of Zen Buddhism and Shinto. How or why Blyth didn't address the influence of the Shinto belief system that's tightly entwined with Zen Buddhism in Japan and to see its relevance, is a mystery to me.

Daniel M. P. Shaw, in his Master of Arts Degree dissertation entitled *The Way forward? - Shinto and a 21st Century Japanese Ecological Attitude* (2005), writes,

"After their cultural importation from China one-and-a-half thousand years ago, Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist beliefs and practices proceeded over time to be combined and exchanged with those of Shinto. This relationship was particularly true between Buddhism and Shinto to the extent that, for example, before too long, the grounds of many Shinto shrines were also home to Buddhist temples. This extremely close relationship was by no means just a physical one but metaphysical, too. The two religions spent centuries struggling over how to explain one in terms of the other. Of particular focus was the role of the Shinto kami within the Buddhist cosmological system. At one point in history the kami were considered to be Buddhas at their most enlightened form, at another, they were lesser spirits in need of enlightenment."

The kami is very important to Shinto. They are what the West refers to as spirits (Protestants and Catholics think of kami as demons [evil spirits]). To a Shinto follower, kami were everywhere, both in nature and in urban areas.

Kami are felt as spiritual presences in the world by a person or persons who are clearly felt as a spiritual presence(s), causing awe, fear, etc. Their presence can be felt, often strongly, emanating from natural flora, fauna, or as the origin of phenomena.

Continues Shaw,

"Such feelings are sometimes comparable to the Western aesthetic idea of the sublime. Certainly, under the towering Fuji, at the foot of a thundering waterfall, in the midst of a summer storm or struck by a plummeting gorge, the presence of kami is felt. However, it is also there when marveling upon the intricate minutiae of a beautiful flower, in the caress of a gentle breeze, the magic of birdsong and in the brief midnight encounter with a darting fox caught in headlights. Sensing kami can be uncomfortable, too, when hearing the wind moaning through trees, for example. The vital energies or powers sensed in each of these awing presences are not the kami per se. Mono, mi or tama are the Japanese terms used to describe the vital energy or power perceived in experiencing the kami. The very presence of this power is the kami.

It should be noted that kami do not discern strictly between the 'natural' world and the 'man-made' world. Followers of Shinto believe humans are very much a part of nature as well as all human creations."

This is a belief common to animism and subscribed to by most indigenous tribes throughout the world, including Native Americans, some of whom are descendents of pre-civilized Mongolians and Chinese who'd crossed the then existing land bridge from Siberia to Alaska where the Bering Strait is today.

Kami can be present in seasons or particular times in seasons (e.g. harvest) or even in Time itself, just as they are present in meteorological phenomena and

even concepts. Even people, dead or living, can become kami or manifestations thereof.

The Emperors of Japan were considered gods and are still considered by many in Japan today as descendents of the gods, knowing that Emperor Hirohito's announcement after the end of WWII was a forced "do or die" declaration. The Emperor wasn't deified by Zen Buddhist monks, he was a Shinto deity.

Flawed exegesis and research, though well meaning, can be damaging. The flaws in Blyth's interpretation and conceptualization of haiku went unnoticed when his four book series on haiku were published. Very little scholarship and quality translations were available to those outside of Japan. Blyth's books started a domino affect at a confluence of minds, fate, and timing, that popularized and educated people hungry to know more about Zen Buddhism, alternative paths, and things Asian. His writings did what a haiku should do: juxtapose two opposites in order to create a surplus of meaning that would allow the unsaid to merge with the said, thus creating a revelation that breaks through the mu (void, nothingness) into the ma (an objective, meditative 'now' unaffected by past or present) where one can see past "things" into an event-biased world that continually changes, as do those who enter this experiential plane, where words aren't needed, their use limited to the knowledge, experience, and cultural memory of haiku poets. The trouble with Blyth's equation is that the juxtaposition of two opposites never merged.

When composing or reading a haiku, it's important to ponder the surplus of meaning, and to be aware of the role played by expressive action in promulgating the Being (koto) of things. In a haiku, "the importance of objects (mono) described in haiku are nominal when compared to the process leading to the intuitive understanding of these objects and to emotional responses."

Translating a Japanese haiku into English is extremely complicated as there can be multiple meanings for a single word. The translator has to be familiar with the writer, seek the right translation, and somehow make the poem sound good for its readers, be in tune with the intuitive, the geographic mindset, and customs in place during the time the poem was written. The translator of poetry from another age must have a sound, thorough understanding of the Yamato language and modern Japanese. Add to this the absence of punctuation, gender, tense, and linguistic forms taken for granted by the Western world, it's easy for a translator to make errors, mistranslate, and, therefore, to reflect his own bias in a translation, as did Blyth with his firm, unbending belief that haiku was a Zen Buddhist poetic genre.

During Blyth and Yasuda's age, to translate a poem accurately from the Yamato language (which was the language Buson, Basho, and others of their age used) to the English language was and still is a major undertaking. How does one translate the word "beauty," for instance, into English, when there is not a word in the

Japanese canon that describes beauty as defined and understood in the West? Take, for instance, the term "individual expression." It was a foreign concept to a culture taught since birth to view life as a communal expression, a society that shared responsibilities collectively in the artistic arena: renga (linked poetry), the tea ceremony, musical expression, as well as haikai (haiku) and waka (tanka), which, during this historic passing from the antiquated to a contemporary world that could communicate globally, was predicated upon prescribed terms: Confucian morality, Chinese aesthetics, the acceptance of honkadōri, historically repeated formulas used as a base to build longer passages, etc.

Wrote Professor Makoto Ueda in *Basho and His Interpreters*,

"One should remember that the word-for-word translation is no more than a very rough approximation of what the original words say, since in no case does a Japanese word correspond exactly to an English word."

Asian and Western mindsets see things from different planes of thought; one prone to object bias, the other, event bias (the object versus the process; a process dependent upon cultural memory, influenced or uninfluenced by Chinese and/or Western mindsets). The term "Asian" is a conglomerate that may or may not define something specific in the indigenous mindset of the person describing the meaning of something another culture may not see or understand in the same light. The challenge for Japan when it opened up its borders to the outside world was how to communicate to a modern world what the Japanese thought and expressed with words and terminology in a conceptually different way.

An example:

Ernest F. Fenollosa, an American invited by the Japanese government to lecture at the Higher Normal School in Tokyo, which would eventually be named the Tokyo Imperial University, in 1898, on the subjects of aesthetics, philosophy, literature and the arts, was challenged with introducing to Japan's educated elite and University students, words, terms, and concepts foreign to their grasp of the aforementioned, the Yamato language by design, intuitive and unsuitable to explain and define metaphysical and philosophical concepts which the Japanese for ages understood via cultural memory and social absorption, and, therefore, had no need to have words to explain what they had been inbred to know. This lecture also presented a major challenge for those who were entrusted to translate Fenollosa's lectures in a way that the Japanese people would understand clearly. This ignited a duel between realists and idealists, which in turn led to a debate between two writers: Mori Ogai and Tsubouchi Shoyo, labeled "Submerged Ideas."

Ogai stood in one corner championing the notion of beautiful as symbolic of the idea lying behind all reality. On the opposite side of the ring, Shoyo said that art must be realistic and not idealistic due to the obligation of artists to report ideas,

not definitions, or to aid in the development of said ideas. That was a philosopher's job. Shoyo valued creativity above all, where an artist creates something realistic and, at the same time, this work becomes a mirror that his audience can identify with. Who won the debate? It was a draw. No one could agree on the definitions coming from distinctly different mindsets.

Imagine translating from English to the Japanese language concepts that have no name or definition in that language, and trying to somehow make your translation understandable to a people who wanted to communicate with and learn from the global world community.

Imagine the difficulties of translating the following section of Fenollosa's speech (Fenollosa had to speak as clearly as he could to his audience and the interpreters had to find the right words, terms, etc.; to even transcribe it so it could be understood.):

"There is no standard for its [art's] ultimate criticism, but the unique one, which it affords itself. Each great work of art prescribes its own law to itself; hence it is the sole business of the art critic first to divine sympathetically the idea intended, and then to comment on the purity of its realization. Hence, to train the pure art faculty to feel individual synthesis, is the primary object of all art education; and if all of the professional art schools in America were abolished tomorrow, it would be a far less serious matter than the possibility of introducing into our public schools a system of training which shall normally develop the art faculty among the people."

Note: Aesthetics is a Western term introduced to Japan. What Westerners call Japanese aesthetics, are to the Japanese styles of expression manifested through the arts (the style of yugen, the style of sabi, the style of impermanence, the style of shasei, and so forth). It was and still is a monumental task finding a common ground for Japanese and Westerners regarding aesthetics. The field was too new, and too little was written during Blyth's time.

Wrote Blyth, "Haiku is the poetry of meaningful touch, taste, sight, and smell; it is humanized nature, naturalized humanity, and as such may be called poetry in its essence."

Blyth was only partially correct in his assertion. Who is to say or judge what is and isn't meaningful in a poem? Touch, taste, sight, and smell are four of the five senses in the Western mindscape. The unmentioned sense is hearing. Hearing is vitally and culturally important regarding haiku. Haiku were, originally, meant to be spoken aloud as greetings, goodbyes, blessings, as part of linked verse competitions and assemblies, and as a vehicle to transmit secret codes by various poetic families (schools).

Japanese is a monotonous language that lacks inflection: the poetic beat of haiku

is its S/L/S metric schemata and the right choice of words. Like the cricket's chirp and the cicada's drone, the closer one listens to their tonal emissions, the more intricate and varied the intonations become. Haiku is a tonal poetic voice, a symphony of little, an epiphany of delicate undertones that reveal more and more, each time they are read aloud. After I compose a haiku, I recite it out loud, cognizant of where to pause, listening closely to each variable, looking for the perfect meter, one that gives life to a small creation with a surplus of words.

Writes Koji Kawamoto, "The late twelfth-century poet and critic Fujiwara Shunzei (1114-1204) aptly described this interrelationship between rhythm and oral recital in his Notes on Poetic Style Through the Ages (Korai fiteisho),

"Simply read aloud or recited (chanted) poems have a way of sounding strangely sensual and moving. By nature, poems sound good or bad, according to the reciter's voice."

Wrote a tone deaf Blyth,

"Haiku have no rhyme, little rhythm, assonance, or intonation. It is hardly necessary to read it aloud." (. . .) " . . . most Japanese can with difficulty understand a spoken haiku. Written in Chinese and Japanese characters it is grasped by the eye rather than by the ear or the mouth."

Traditional Japanese poetry to many Westerners is atonal and flat sounding based upon syllabic meter that lacks stress and accent. Posits Professor Shirane,

" . . . this is only true in a very narrow sense of lacking the kind of regulated beat found in iambic pentameter. When one or more phonetic qualities ---pitch, loudness, length, and timbre (fuzziness, hoarseness, sharpness, etc.) --are emphasized, as they frequently are in Basho's poetry, the syllable is stressed or accented, creating a rhythm. Equally important are the patterned or melodic variations or repetitions of sounds."

Professor Michael J. Marra, in his book Japan's Frames of Meaning, cites modern day scholar, Fujita Masakatsu, who in turn, interprets a passage written by the Japanese philosopher, Nishitani Keiji, ". . . the particles in poetry point at the place prior to the differentiation between feelings (koto) and things (mono). In other words, poetry opens up a view of the world of pure experience, while its language brings koto to light without ever exhausting it. Things (Ding, mono) are always particular things (aru mono) The fact that they (mono, koto) are is the difference that a thing makes to human beings (mono), and this difference is voiced by the language (Kotoba) of poetry."

Of the five senses, three are organ specific: smell, touch, and taste. The other two, sight and hearing, are essential to art, which includes poetry, painting, music, and prose. Take music, for example. A person can compose music, another

can play the music, and still another can derive pleasure by listening to the music: the intricacies of tone, melody, codas, rests, etc. that can touch the listener and the musician emotionally, affecting mood, demeanor, and much more, giving a person passage from exteriority to the internal, where kokoro (mind) and kotoba (words), which are the primary ingredients of Japanese poetry of aesthetics, exist.

The same principal applies to sight. A person can paint a painting, and others can enjoy the painting, which makes use of design, patterns, colors, shadings, and texture. Each of these can affect the subjective illusion of the viewer. Japanese poetry is not an art of exteriority. The internal is the breath and heart of Japanese poetry. Many in the West think of Japanese poetry as ambiguous, steeped in mystery, not comprehending fully what it entails to say much using an economy of words. This ambiguity is the poet's way to communicate and express in an understandable way what Toshihiko and Toyo Izutsu in their book *The Theory of Beauty in the Classical Aesthetics of Japan* (p. 28) term "the insubstantiality and delimitation of the human existential field." In other words, awareness and illuminative cognitive exploration of the unsaid and unseen can be accomplished, bringing about a comprehension and awareness that can only originate from within in the fragile eggshell of the human psyche.

Haiku is more than a three-line, S/L/S poem that anyone can effectively write or master in a year or two, then self-publish a book of their poetry, which is a common practice today. Much of the poetry labeled haiku in many journals and e-zines are amateurish, lack depth, ignore the rules, and are far from memorable, not because the poets aren't talented or dedicated to haiku, but because they have been misinformed by outdated research, and by those who advocate a short form three-line poem that pollutes the essence of the genre by championing the needlessness of kigo, the S/L/S metric schemata

Indigenous to the genre, and failing to recognize the depth and illumination possible through the use of Japanese aesthetic tools (styles). Like any art form, the composition of haiku takes discipline, practice, and study.

The Japanese language contains much more than what can be expressed with words, especially when confined to haiku. Writes Steven Heine in *Philosophy East and West*, " . . . the multiplicity of meanings of the semantic field cannot be contained by the syntactic grammar, and, therefore, require a suggestive and deliberately ambiguous expression which opens up rather than obstructs their philosophical ground."

Wrote Professor Marra regarding the poetic process essential to the composition of quality haiku,

"Man (the poet) and nature (the alleged object of representation) belong to the same field. The presence of nature is not denied by the imposition of the poet's

conceptual scheme over a reality that only exists in the mind of human beings. At the same time, nature produces and informs the conceptual schemes that the poet employs while talking about nature.”

This cognizance comes from the yoke of the delicate eggshell called human life, whose rightful spokesperson is poetry. Man is aware of his boundaries, but at the same time knows that beyond these boundaries is the unsaid that he cannot articulate. He either knows what he doesn’t know or, at least, has a sense of the unsaid, the nothingness that is more than darkness (wu).

It should be added here that colors, songs, textures, etc. would cease to exist without words. Words don’t create; they articulate out loud what one believes and thinks. Words are seen and spoken, internally and externally. They are the articulation of what the poet’s inner psyche makes of zoka. They are subjective as they articulate the poet’s illusion, indigenous to the individual poet’s mindset influenced by cultural memory, education, experience, parental upbringing, etc.

Someone might read the following haiku by Basho and say, “Whoopie, what’s so special about this?!?”

Oh, my!
What a beautiful dress I’m wearing:
The cicada’s shell.

Basho
Translated by Michael Marra

First of all, this haiku isn’t a shasei or someone’s instant coffee “aha!” Nor is it an assemblage of well placed words split into three sections. When a person speaks, the words come out in a stream of consciousness, every word connected to the next. When composing a haiku, a skilled poet knows to utilize cutting words, rests, stops, punctuation, something that tells the reader to reach out, using one or all of the five senses, to explore, dream, interact with the unsaid in an integrated, discontinuous synergy. Rests are often excluded by many Western haiku poets today.

Threaded into the words is something larger, deeper, and, more often than not, taken for granted and not understood: the poet’s spirit, breath, voice, passion, and intellect. When you take this into consideration, this haiku by Basho takes on a whole different dimension.

Words give existence to the existing when understood and used correctly. Words, therefore, become subjective if used incorrectly to describe something influenced by one’s limited knowledge.

Blyth believes differently, “ . . . a thing is really not a thing until it has a word, a

spoken word, as its own expression; and a word is not really a word, that is, is not a poetic word, unless it is a part of a thing, the extension of it, the thing heard, the thing speaking. Things without words, and words in a dictionary have no existence. They are either dead or not yet born. A (real) word does not express a thing. No thing can express another."

As I stated previously, words don't create; they articulate out loud what one believes and thinks. Words are seen and spoken. They are the articulation of what the poet's inner psyche makes of zoka. They are subjective as they articulate the poet's illusions, indigenous to the individual poet's mindset influenced by cultural memory, education, experience, parental upbringing, etc. Words are words, whether spoken or unspoken, as in thought. It is imperative also to recognize that mere words are just that: words. It is what we do with them, and how we interpret them, that give them substance and true meaning.

The wind is not an object per se. It cannot be held nor seen unless manifested by interaction between another element(s). If I don't have a name to call the wind, does that mean it doesn't exist? I can sense the wind, hear the wind, see its handiwork. It exists objectively (koto=thing as being) to make movement possible. Mono (thing as object) is the content of the movement. The wind exists (koto). What it contains is a thing or things (mono). If I see something, then I can expect to see something manifested. What I suspect is subjective, what is, without preconception, is objective. It preexisted, exists, and continues to reinvent itself, always changing, never static. In a haiku, the focus is not the specific object (mono) but the process (koto) that reveals the object (mono) and its interaction within the poem.

The Japanese language is complex. When one says BEING, the question to be entertained is what BEING refers to. The Japanese language is the soul of the Japanese people. It's more expressive and, like the Greek language, which is equally expressive, definitions of a single word can be exhaustive, having many meanings, depending on the context it is used in. The term "word" is not to be equated to Blyth's misinterpretation of the word when he cites the Gospel of John, verse 14, in the New Testament, "The flesh is made word, and dwells among us." Blyth twists the aforementioned scripture around to fit it into his rhetoric schematic. I use the New American Standard Bible here as I've found it to be the closest translation to the original Greek. Wrote Blyth, "The flesh is made word." The biblical Greek this verse was penned in says, "And the Word became flesh . . ." We are faced with two opposites, that which Blyth quotes, and the actual words themselves. The flesh is made word versus "the word became flesh." This illustrates the complexity of language and hermeneutics. In biblical Greek, Word in John 14:1 is translated: logos. Logos is not a grammatical word. It is similar in nature to zoka, meaning source or creator of life. In the West, this creator of Life is an entity, not simply a force. The word as used by Blyth when comparing a backwards version of John 14.1, cannot be defined by a dictionary without a context to place it in.

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Blyth's reasoning is akin to declaring that *mono* and *koto* are the same words; that *Zoka* is the same as the Biblical *Logos*.

Letters, by themselves, are things (objects). When letters are assembled to form words, the words in themselves are objects as well. Think of them as musical notes. When one composes music, the music comes about via the skillful assemblage of notes. They cannot be haphazardly assembled. Composing music to the Japanese is akin to the composing of haiku, as all poetry is, in essence, song. The Japanese language is a flat sounding monotone language. The rhythm in haiku comes from the haiku S/L/S metric schemata coupled with appropriate breaks brought about via cutting words, or, for Westerners, the usage of punctuation.

Contrary to Blyth's mindset, the Japanese have no trouble understanding haiku read aloud, and to hear them read by the right person, can be an aesthetic experience.

Wrote Professor Ikuyo Yoshimura from Japan in an e-mail to me this evening, "In a Japanese haiku meeting, we traditionally read haiku out loud which we select. We do not read our own. This is one of the reasons that haiku is the literature of group, 'Za no bungei.' 'Za no bungei' means literature made by haiku meeting."

Haiku, before Shiki, was called haikai. Haikai originally was the beginning of a linked verse in *renga* that consists of three sections, adhering to a 5/75 metric schemata. *Renga* was a verbal activity, a form of social entertainment. Some of the verses were made up and did not consist of something that actually occurred. Haikai, thanks to Basho and other poets of his day, was also used as verbal greetings and partings. For Blyth to say that haiku for the Japanese is something to be seen instead of to vocalize is a strange statement. Perhaps he spent too much time looking for comparisons between Wordsworth's poetry and haiku, a poet he mentions over and over in his writings. Wrote Blyth, "Haiku is at its best when it is simply Wordsworthian, that is, Wordsworth at his most simple, a sort of thought in sense. It is at this point that haiku and English nature poetry coincide."

Man is not above nature as the Judeo-Christian culture mistakenly asserts (first God, then man, and finally, Nature). As a person, I have no power over nature nor can I direct its creative force (*Zoka*). As a person, my thoughts will never be identical to another person. What is often promulgated by an individual is his or her illusion as to what something is or isn't. Nature cannot be defined nor can it be predicted. Nature is a continuum of motion that never stops. It invents, destroys, reinvents, and isn't dependent upon words or word definitions to exist. Imagine if there wasn't a word in Japanese that could define or classify a

typhoon. Does that mean it doesn't exist?

One cannot become a tree to write a haiku about a tree because to do so would require subjectivity, as all homo sapiens think differently, their thoughts (illusions) sculpted by experience, cultural memory, education, parenting, etc. To assume to become a tree metaphysically and to think like a tree is a far stretch and not a part of the Caucasoid cultural memory or Judeo-Christian beliefs. To dive into the Zen of this even more, who's to say if one tree doesn't think differently than another tree, and by whose definition do we define the existential heartbeat of a tree?

Wrote Professor Shirane in *Traces of Dreams*, "This 'self' (ga) . . . is not the modern notion of 'self' but a selfless state free of personal desire (shii). Only a selfless 'self' . . . one that 'follows the Creative' . . . can enter into the subject. If the poet's feelings are not sincere, the heart of the subject and that of the object will not be united, and the result will be 'verbal artifice' (sakui)."

Professor Shirane states eloquently, "Without spiritual cultivation and the ability to enter into objects [animism?], the haikai poet will not have the power to discover the high in the low, to find beauty in the mundane. . .

Object and self as 'one' and 'following the Creative' implied an approach that did not depict the external world or express an internal state so much as to explore the relationship between the two."

To put it plainly, the external becomes internal and the internal, external. Whether I'm outside and gazing at the moon, or have closed my eyes and see the moon via memory and past experience (as I'm sure Shiki must have done, being confined to his bed), I am seeing the moon exclusively through my eyes as influenced by my current emotional state and cultural memory. Haiku is a combination of "ever changing" and "non-changing." Nothing is static and unchanging. If a thing doesn't change, it doesn't exist. Without the concatenation, however, between the "non-changing" and the "ever changing," a haiku cannot be composed. To understand this concept clearly, think of the two terms as a juxtaposition, the combination of two ideas to form a completely different idea. The unchanging are the truths (makoto), rules required to formulate a haiku. Truth is not a thing. When a haiku poet juxtaposes the unchanging with the ever changing, a haiku is born. This is a concept that's not dependent on religion or cultural memory. Makoto is a reality. Every artistic discipline has rules to follow. Japanese short form poetry is not moral or amoral, beautiful or ugly. To make a distinction between two opposites necessitates subjectivity.

Can one get to a point where he or she is completely selfless; and by whose determination is this selflessness validated? Buson's writings and poetry have exerted a marked influence on my interpretation of this compound question. Yet

again, my interpretation is my interpretation. Ideally, I like to go outdoors and find a quiet place conducive to meditation and non-interference via human and mechanical noise. I remember one time sitting beside a stream-fed pond in a shady area surrounded by oak trees. I emptied my mind of thought and preconception, soaking in the sounds, feeling the breeze, sensing the silence . . . my mind, momentarily, a tabula rasa. When I opened my eyes, I continued utilizing my senses, and watched my blank tablet form thoughts directed by what was seen and not seen. When the unseen doesn't exist, comprehension of the seen becomes blurred. I saw what looked in my mind to be a belt wrapped around the tree's mid trunk. The haiku then began to appear.

Caucasian people in the West, with all of their senses intact, often take the totality of their surroundings for granted. I once took a group of 6th grade children on a night hike. One of the students hiking with us that night was blind. After the hike, I gathered the students together and asked them to share what they'd seen and heard. The blind student described more than anyone else who'd attended the night hike. Lacking sight, she'd learned to see with her four remaining senses.

As a minimal poem limited to 17 syllables, a haiku is not a realistic painting or a photograph. The Japanese language is rich, as many of their words entertain a multiplicity of meanings that cannot be contained or always expressed in a short three-line poem, thus the need for aesthetic tools (styles) like ambiguity, yugen, and suggestion. A haiku poet hints instead of telling all.

Granted, Westerners have languages (English, French, German, Serbian, etc.) that differ radically from the Japanese language. The argument could be made that those conversant in a language other than Asian languages don't have to follow rules that give breath, space, and depth to a poetic genre that's Japanese in origin because Westerners are faced with the same syntactical and grammatical limitations and problems. This argument, once a Westerner understands haiku as it's meant to be understood, becomes needless, as evident by reading talented Western haiku such as:

the old cat
hesitates on the doorsill—
a falling leaf

William Higginson

five hundred A.D. -
the Korean potter smiles
at a passing cloud

Hortensia Anderson

rising tide
a blue heron lifts
the dawn

Susan Constable

Though Yasuda's and Blyth's writings on haiku are immensely informative, they're interwoven with the flawed conception that haiku is a Zen Buddhist poetic idiom, which reflects their subjectivity towards haiku.

The "haiku is a Zen Buddhist poetic genre" theory has been debunked due to new research and the accessibility of Japanese texts previously unavailable to translators and researchers.

Posits Professor Peipei Qui in her essay *Reinventing the Landscape*,

"In order to reinvent the kikobun [travel journal] as well as the poetic landscape, Basho widely referred to the Daoist classics, especially the Zhuangzi, to generate its poetic essence."

Qui further states, " . . . the Zhuangzi appeals to haikai poets because it asserts an aesthetic attitude that sees beauty in ordinary and even 'low' things/beings, making it possible to discover profound meaning in the down- to-earth topics and vernacular language of haikai and to regenerate poetic essence. In other words, the Daoist classic can help transform a newly invented haikai word (haigon) into a mediating sign, which translates the superficial meaning of a verse or text into the intended meaning and provides the necessary context for poetic dialogue.

One can see clearly the Daoist influence in Basho's *Oi no kobumi*, which starts out with a self declaration by Basho, 'In my body, which has one hundred bones and nine openings, exists something I have called Furabo. I must have meant that my body resembles spun silk that is easily torn in the wind.' This passage was inspired by this passage in the Zhuangzi, 'The hundred joints, the nine openings, the six organs, all come together and exist here (as my body) . . . it would seem there must be some True Lord among them. But whether I succeed in discovering his identity or not, it neither adds nor detracts from his Truth.'"

There are many references to the Daoist Zhuangzi in Basho's haibun and poetry. Take, for instance, the following poem:

Is that warbler
Her soul? There sleeps
A graceful willow

States Professor Makoto Ueda in his book *Basho and His Interpreters*, "[this poem] alludes to a passage in the Chuang-tzu describing a daydream in which Chuang-tzu's soul becomes a butterfly and flitted out of his body."

The Chuang-tzu, interchangeable with Zhuangzi, is the Daoist scripture.

Writes David Landis Barnhill in chapter two of *Matsuo Basho's Poetic Spaces: Zoka: The Creative in Basho's View of Nature and Art*,

"The countless references to Chinese religious and aesthetic thought require that we place his [Basho's] texts in the context of Daoism and Confucianism, as well as Buddhism, and in the context of the Chinese aesthetic tradition (both poetry and painting), as well as Japanese literature. If we do that, we will find a wonderfully rich world view."

Let me add to Professor Barnhill's statement that Ainu shamanistic animism and the Shinto faith also affected Basho and his contemporaries' conceptualization of life, aesthetics, and art.

Japan at the time Blyth wrote his books on haiku was caught up in a tug-of-war between Western influence and its own beliefs. They were at odds with one another in that the terms Western theorists and philosophers coined for philosophical and aesthetic terminology, theories, and definitions were missing from the Japanese language. Most of what the Japanese believed philosophically and metaphysically were intuitive and ingrained in their cultural memory because, for the Japanese, aesthetics is more than a series of rules that dictate a course one must follow in order to create a certain tone, mood, or to illustrate something. Language is the spiritual heart of its people.

Writes Professor Donald Richie in his booklet *A Tractate on Japanese Aesthetics*, "What we would call Japanese Aesthetics (in contrast to Western aesthetics) is more concerned with process than with product, with the actual construction of a self than with self-expression."

The Japanese had to use words foreign to them, to convey to the object-biased English-language culture, their beliefs based upon an event-biased viewpoint. This created a lot of confusion and misconceptions on both sides. Equally, the Japanese in their thirst to learn beyond the walls of their country, which had for centuries been cut off from the Western world, found themselves attracted to the ways of the West, and since their language was unable to convey the philosophical and abstract terms in a way that coincided with Western meanings, a university system based upon the German model was formed in Japan that taught aesthetics, philosophy, hermeneutics, and literary theory from a Western point of view, necessitating Japanese students to study and speak with a language that was originally used for interpreting the Bible. This influence

changed the thinking of many modern Japanese poets and artists. The more they studied, the more indoctrinated they became with Occidental thought.

Even with this indoctrination, the Japanese people would never be able to fully assimilate Western thought, as their mindset was a part of their cultural spirit and memory. Much of the poetry produced by Japanese students using the Western conceptualization of aesthetics, hermeneutics, philosophy and art were awkward sounding, and failed to generate widespread acceptance. One can only be who he is, and who he is, is dependent on more than the education he receives. One's cultural memory plays an important role as does the way one is reared. A child is born with a tabula rasa (blank slate), and the first 5-6 years of life is a child's most formative years, cognitively.

This tug-o-war between the East and the West, caused a major upheaval which fueled the fires for advocates of intellectual change that, out of fear of reprisal, had remained overtly quiet regarding the arts, philosophy, and aesthetics during the Meiji Age, as Japan was passing into the 20th century, and wanted to keep pace with, and not feel inferior to, Western countries; the greater the exposure, the higher the flames. This upheaval posed questions that had to be answered. Haiku was in danger of being assimilated into something it wasn't.

Questions that needed answering amongst Japanese poets:

- * How do they maintain our own national identity?
- * Are haiku and waka (tanka) legitimate literary genres?
- * Can they adopt Western words to communicate Western ideas to their people, even though they've never used these words and terms nor have an equivalent in our own national language?
- * Do they reeducate society and jettison the old?
- * Is there a medium they can agree upon and meet each other in the middle?

Japan was entering the 20th century, a new era that necessitated changes in order to communicate globally in business, education, the arts, politics, diplomacy, etc.

Scholars like Blyth and Yasuda were caught in the middle. How to translate Japanese thought and words, archaic and modern, to the Western world that also was going through an upheaval of change, specially as it pertained to the arts? The old, the new . . . What is and isn't "beauty?" What's acceptable morally and by whose standards is this determined? The "what is and isn't" an invisible what without an ever, the West and Japan, viewing life through different lenses: "To be or not to be?" Blyth, Yasuda, and other like-minded academics were translating

and introducing Japanese poetry to the Western world at a time when Japan was going through an identity crisis. Add to that, the difficulties faced by Blyth, Yasuda, and others to communicate the Asian mindset to a people with a radically different mindset, one can see how easy it was to make mistakes. Perhaps if they had the tools that are currently available to translators and researchers, coupled with a deeper understanding and assimilation between the two cultures, the mistakes they made would have been lessened.

"Haiku is the poetry of meaningful touch, taste, sight, and smell ; it is humanized nature, naturalized humanity , and as such may be called poetry in its essence."

A problem the Caucasoid-dominated West has in interpreting and understanding haiku is how it perceives Nature. Those adhering to the Judeo-Christian faith are taught that God is the creative force, man ranks second, and nature is there for man's pleasure and use. Man is not part of nature nor one with nature. He is above nature, and its god (keeper). I say "Caucasoid" because most Native Americans, many Mexican-Americans, Haitian and Cuban-Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Filipinos have belief systems that differ from the generic Judeo-Christian belief conglomerate. The mythical West is primarily a Caucasoid invention brought about by aggressive colonization and a disregard for beliefs and social customs that differed from their Judeo-Christian conquerors. Many inhabitants of this invent are relatives who were forcibly taken from their homes in Africa, then shipped and treated like cattle by slavers and slave owners.

This mindset does not view life the same way as the Japanese whose cultural and communal identities are immersed in Shinto, shamanic animism, both tightly interwoven into the Zen Buddhist and Daoist theoscape that dominates Japan. The poet and the object of his versification, nature, are not different entities. Nature and man are both parts of nature and the creative force (zoka), instead of God, is nature. The reality that exists existentially in the human mind is an illusion, each person with their individual illusions based not upon science but on cultural memory, experience, geospheric conditioning, education, parenting, etc. There are no words to express the totality of nature and its creative breath. Exteriority is not a part of the Japanese poetical voice. Poetic ambiguity is a style (tool) that articulates the cognitive perception behind the imaginary and the determination of boundaries in the human conceptualization of logic.

Blyth in his pronouncement, "it is humanized nature, naturalized humanity," was defining Japanese poetry from a Western headspace; a headspace that, incidentally, was shared by many Japanese intellectuals to different degrees, including Masoaka Shiki.

Blyth was a product of his age just as we are a product of this age.

Some Blyth's colloquialisms:

"Haiku poetesses are only 5th class."

"Nowadays, most Japanese can understand with difficulty a spoken haiku."

"Haiku has no mysticism to it."

Time For a Change

Haikai in Japan, by the time Masaoka Shiki came into prominence (the passing from the 19th into the 20th century), had degenerated into a "you've heard one, you've heard them all" genre that had lost its relevance. The genre made extensive use of a vocabulary that was not in tune with the times. The haiku lacked depth, and said little. Haikai, in Shiki's estimation, had become the equivalent of Hallmark card poetry.

Wrote Professor Donald Keene in his book *Dawn to the West*,

"The innumerable thousands upon thousands of tanka and haiku composed since ancient times all seem different at first glance, but under careful examination, it becomes apparent how many are alike. Pupils plagiarize their teachers, and men of later generations plagiarize their predecessors. A man who can convert the stone of old poems into the jade of new ones is acclaimed as a master poet, even though he never presents an original idea."

The haikai world consisted of different schools, whose priority wasn't to write or promote quality haiku, but to enhance their reputations and pocketbooks, each claiming to be champions of Basho who had by this time been deified by the government as a Shinto saint.

Shiki took it upon himself to save the two literary genres, haikai and waka, from the lows they'd sunken to, to insure their survival in the 20th century. So the mediocre wouldn't be associated with true haikai and waka, he renamed both genres, haiku and tanka.

According to Suzuki Sadami, a researcher of Japanese literature and editor of numerous collections of important archival series, in an interview by Raquel Abi-Samara in May 2008, entitled "How would you define Japanese Modernism?":

"Around 1900, writers such as Masaoka Shiki and Kunikida Doppo embraced impressionism as a new style of poetry and prose that derived from European expressionist methods and that called for writing based on the five senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and tasting."

Japan's embracing of Western philosophy, aesthetics, and art would not only affect Japan's conceptualization of poetry but the world's as well. The world was at a crossroads poetically and artistically, the East and the West influencing one

another, with neither fully understanding the other, as words were inadequate to explain to the Japanese concepts they had no words to describe. Likewise, the Western world found it hard to comprehend and fathom concepts that were next to impossible to explain to them due to the inability of the Japanese language to communicate the unspoken, as well as the strong Judeo-Christian influence permeating Western culture, wherein the animistic beliefs of the Japanese were thought of as myths, folk tales, and superstitious beliefs that had no validity in the academic arena.

As previously mentioned, Shiki was strongly influenced by Western thought, philosophy, aesthetics, and art that was flooding into Japan during his time. One of these was the plain-air art of Europe; nature sketches from life, so to speak. It made such a great impression on him that he took it as the guiding motif for the new "haiku," and called it shasei, sketching from life."

He did not discover the term. It's a Chinese word that can be traced back to the Northern Sung Dynasty (969 AD-1126 AD). During Shiki's time, shasei was a word used to praise nature paintings, although originally it was a term used to indicate the way to figure things out in a painting without a need to use brushed borders (mogu). The process of brush bordering utilizes an intricate, careful layering where one using ink brushes and pens, stains and dyes the border of an art piece with little to no sketching or drawing, thus making it hard to see solid lines or curves in a painting. To Shiki, shasei was the elimination of extraneous ornamentation and an attempt to preserve and capture the essence of flora and fauna. The word's usage eventually evolved into a descriptive term that described the way to firmly comprehend the vital spirit of flora and fauna to reach the very breath of their innermost soul.

Chin Dynasty artist, Zou Yigui (1686-1772), in his treatise Notes on Painting of Oko-ban, refers to shasei, according to Saito Mokichi in his treatise on shasei, "as an expression of 'animation' or 'the divine soul' and never as a simple linear bordering of objects as contemporary Japanese artists and poets in general took the term to mean."

After discovering Western philosophy, Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902), a brilliant, determined, outspoken, and terminally ill poet and watercolor artist, grew disgusted at the sad state of Japanese poets and the schools that schooled them, more interested in building their reputations than with the composition of quality haiku and waka.

He saw shasei, as applied to painting, symbiotically compatible to poetic expression and changed his poetic voice to reflect his conceptualization of shasei. He was introduced to the term "shasei" by his artist friends, Nakamura, Fusetsu, and Asai Chu.

Wrote Shiki in Byosho Rokushaku, on August 7, 1902,

"Placing a vase of flower branches by the side of my pillow, I do an honest sketching of it and, while doing this, I feel as if I gradually understand the secret of nature."

Mokichi calls this "seeing into the reality of things." Shiki wrote this from in his sickbed where he was dying from tuberculosis and caries of the spine. He was unable to leave his bed and was in excruciating pain and under the influence of morphine, which was administered twice a day. Shiki'd been bedridden for the past seven years prior to writing this. His father was a samurai. True to his upbringing, Shiki was a warrior, a man determined to live life to its fullest and not be a prisoner to fear and self-pity.

When he painted from his bed, many of the things he painted did not exist in the small yard next to his room, which he could see through a window. Shiki had to rely on his imagination and the *zoka* to envision, sense, and feel with all of his senses the objects he painted. He closed his eyes and felt the colors, tastes, textures, etc. He felt a duty to awaken what Japanese artists had lost track of: a sincere respect and reverence for nature. It worked well for him as a painter, therefore, he applied it to writing *haikai* and *waka*, which he later renamed *haiku* and *tanka*, after having re-elevated and renamed the status of the two Japanese literary genres.

Shasei is not the shasei many today in North America classify as shasei. It is much more than the simple "aha" sketch of something outside that's visible and sown in the now. The farther the West gets away from using and recognizing the importance of *kigo* in *haiku* and *tanka*, the harder it becomes for Westerners to comprehend the intricacies of Japanese grammar and the theocratic inbred functioning of the unsaid, which is not a word.

Shiki introduced the concept of shasei ("delineation from nature" or "sketching") to describe his use of realistic images and contemporary language. The state of *haiku* as a literary art had ebbed and was no longer taken seriously by most intellectuals. Shiki sought to reverse this trend and spent the remainder of his short life to do so.

Haiku, of course, historically, was more than a sketch, a realistic painting that captures a given moment and, by the skillful use of words, instills in the reader emotions, an understanding of the unsaid, etc.

Writes Koji Kawamoto in his book *The Poetics of Japanese Verse*, "The *haiku* is a genre of poetry which consolidates everything it needs into its own seventeen-syllable universe, relying heavily upon the mental associations and inference of the readers who are brought into contact with its descriptions and images. The *haiku* poet says all he wants within the confines of his poem."

Haiku can't function as a painting as Masaoka Shiki conceptualized, that captures a specific moment. Haiku isn't a realist poem. It's suggestive, limited to a certain amount of morae, deals with past, present, and future, and can serve as a metaphor, allegory, or symbolic representation. Haiku can also be a vehicle that covertly transmits secret information, and makes a social statement by refiguring cultural memory.

Shiki defined shasei as the "depiction of objects as they are" or "the faithful representation of an actual scene" as opposed to ideals or imaginings. He saw haiku as a poetry of a single object. Writes Kawamoto, "[the problem with shasei is] Shiki's readiness to equate the ability of a verbal description of a concrete object to move men's hearts with the ability of the real object to do the same. Even a 'real' medium like a photograph leaves a large gap between the scene presented before our eyes and that actually experienced in person."

Wrote Michael F. Marra in *Essays on Japan*, "Language reconstructs experience by putting in grammatical form the results of introspective analysis. Therefore, by reducing experience to conceptual categories, language fails to represent reality; whose portrayal falls prey to distortion and error, since language cannot catch the immediacy of the experience."

" . . . the chemical analysis of the process of knowledge reveals that this is nothing but a series of metaphors."

Friedrich Nietzsche

A famous American photographer, my friend, the late Meryl Simmons, told me, when I asked him how he took photographs that resembled paintings, "The secret is in cropping, patience, and waiting for the light to hit the right spot, paint the right shadow, and envision at the same time, what affect you're hoping to bring into being." What he said next, took me by surprise. He told me that photographs are one dimensional illusions, not the real thing. thus concurring with Kawamoto's assessment regarding the ineffectiveness of shasei haiku. What portrays the real thing, and the real thing, are different entities. True shasei is unattainable. Its source is the fragile subjective human mind. Non-subjectivity is nearly impossible if the focus is an object or objects. The combination of object bias and subjectivity aren't the ingredients one uses to compose a haiku. They are, however, ingredients that would work well in an Imagist or Modernist poem.

Two examples of Shiki's shasei:

matsu no ne ni
usumurasaki no
sumire kana

at the root
of a pine tree
light lavender violet

koi shiranu
neko ya uzura o
torantosu

a fancy-free cat
is about to catch
a quail

Upon reading haiku like those two above, it was obvious to me that Basho was the better poet. Why then, did Shiki lash out against Basho and call him a second rate poet? Wrote Seishi Shinoda and my close friend, Sanford Goldstein, in their book *Songs From a Bamboo Village*,

"Shiki attacked professional haiku teachers who wanted to commercialize their idolatrous veneration of Basho" and how this crass commercialism produced plagiarism and second rate poetry that was destroying the credibility of haiku. Doing so got him an instant audience, as it was illegal to say anything bad about Basho, which was what Shiki wanted. One must remember that his days were numbered, and he had no time to waste.

Wrote Goldstein and Shinoda,

"... Shiki's primary aim was to show where Basho's real genius lay. Shiki used the tactic of shocking his readers by pointing out Basho's bad poems. Most of the master's haiku, wrote Shiki, were worthless, the good haiku, only a small percentage of the total number."

Shiki was a wise man and knew his audience well. He'd done his homework, thus, in speaking out, he wrote in a way similar to the way Marc Antony spoke in his famous speech to the Roman masses regarding Brutus in William Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*, "I come here to bury Caesar, not to praise him, . . . for Brutus is an honorable man."

Basho had been deified as a Shinto God. Shrines were built in his honor. It was against the law to criticize Basho or his poetry.

Stated Eiko Yachimoto in *Sketchbook* (February 2009):

"What annoyed him a great deal and made him furious at the end was the

attitude of quite a few tsukinami renku masters who were busy securing their businesses and social positions by building a Basho's pavilion, a Basho's haiku stone or the likes for his 200th death anniversary. Shiki deplored to see Basho turned into a religion that defied any criticism. He had to fight. His method was so practical that he dared to say: Basho wrote so many bad haiku, so few great haiku. He wanted to shock those who blindly followed the religion of Basho."

"Shiki's famous principle of shasei, or objective sketching, has a strong proof of success in his essay, brilliance in his tanka, but only rather occasional success in his haiku, which must have been inevitable because 17 syllables allowed for haiku that are often too tight if the poet depends on objective sketching only."

This haiku shows us that Shiki's conceptualization of shasei was changing as he grew sicker and sicker, and matured as a poet.

furusato ya
dorira o mitemo
yama warau

My hometown
wherever I look
mountains laugh with verdure [lush green vegetation]

This is a subjective poem, not an objective sketching. Nor is it realistic. Mountains don't laugh, at least not visibly (a Shinto follower may sense that a kami's dwelling in the mountain and, perhaps, sense that it is laughing). Shiki here is utilizing some of the aesthetic tools Basho used: yugen, makoto, ma, and personification (mountains laugh). Shiki admired Buson for his style, and economy of words. It should be stated also that Shiki admired Basho as a poet and said that he wrote 200 good haiku and called Basho's "frog jump" poem a perfect haiku.

Shiki spent his final years confined to a sickbed with a window to look out. One of his final three haiku written the day before he died is hardly a shasei:

The sponge gourd has flowered!
Look at the Buddha
Choked with phlegm.

Translated by Donald Keene
Dawn to the West

States Professor Donald Keene in his book Dawn to the West, "Sap from the sponge-gourd (hechima) was used as a medicine to stop coughs or break up phlegm, but his family had been too busy ministering to the other symptoms of Shiki's final illness to remember to collect the sap on the night of the fifteenth, as

prescribed. Now the vine is a flower. Shiki, sensing that nothing can cure him or even alleviate his pain, sees himself objectively (and, even with a touch of haikai humor) as a Buddha-to-be choking on his phlegm."

A shasei poem? No.

Shiki was a brilliant visionary, critic, and poet, who regenerated haiku and saved it from a slow death. Prior to his revision of haiku and his denouncement regarding what was then the current state of haiku, haiku had sunk to a state of mediocrity, the poems unmemorable, and save for a few, second class. Shiki rescued haiku from falling into obscurity, just as the Imagists in England and the U.S. were seeking to revive Western poetry from what they felt was excessive, too flowery, and corny. Shiki and the Imagist movement both had integrity, a mission to accomplish, and threw out life rafts to what they thought were sinking ships. All were good poets and the world is better off because of their courage and vision.

Every great person makes their share of mistakes. Shiki was not exempt. His remarks regarding shasei became a source of confusion in Japan and throughout the Western world.

Posits Kawamoto, "Shiki errs in assuming that these objects can be incorporated into a poem merely through the simple process of identifying them by name. The implication is that every object has an established name, and by merely evoking these names poets are able to recreate a portion of reality directly into their poems. In this way, the scene can spontaneously move the viewer's heart. But as Mallarmé sarcastically put it, 'The forest where the real trees flourish cannot be put on paper.' Saying 'dandelion' does not immediately conjure up a yellow flower before the eyes. What makes us believe that a dandelion really blooms there is a function of the poet's craft or, putting it more accurately, his ability to choose and arrange the right words to produce this effect."

The current state of modern English-language Western haiku:
Influences, practice, deconstruction, and death

As stated previously, R.H. Blyth's writings played a major role in influencing the direction and mindset of the modern English-language poetry movement taking shape in the United States in the 1960's. There was no official haiku organization or centralized voice. People attracted to haiku were without a sound, definitive definition of haiku. Only a few good books were at their disposal. Many drew their initial inspiration from the writings of Jack Kerouac and, to a lesser degree, by other Beat writers and poets, abetted by the love affair American college students and the intellectual elite were having with Zen Buddhism, . . . the exoticism of newness, counter to the accepted inbred norm of the follow-the-herd mindset indigenous to the era. Anthologies, handbooks, and collections of English haiku surfaced such as the Peter Pauper Press set of haiku and tanka books;

translations and exegesis by scholars like Donald Keene, and the publication of Harold Henderson's update of his book *Bamboo Broom*, with a new name *An Introduction to Haiku*.

In 1968, the Haiku Society of America (HSA) was formed, which by default and dedication, became the movement's leader. The HSA, however, did not, and still does not represent the majority of Americans, who were and still are taught the rudiments of haiku by the American public school system via textbooks whose authors don't take the genre seriously and lack a sound understanding of haiku. It's taught as a minor literary form with almost no reference to or understanding of the culture that bequeathed it to the Western world. Read one textbook, you've read them all. The authors echo one another like battery-operated parrots: Haiku is a nature poem consisting of 17 syllables and three lines using a 5-7-5 syllabic pattern that contains a nature word (*kigo*).

The modern English language haiku movement under the umbrella of the HSA, like David against Goliath, sought to educate the public and reform their conceptualization of what a haiku is and isn't, and with the advent of the personal computer and the Internet, their influence from 1989 to the present has spread world-wide, forming alliances with European and Oceanic nations who share like notions, and inspiring the formation of other American haiku clubs from California to New York. The United States still exerts the greatest influence on what has become a growing worldwide movement, under the umbrella of the HSA. This group and the groups they'd influenced have done both a service and disservice to the English-speaking world's collective conceptualization of haiku. Haiku in America was at its infancy and had very few resources to draw upon. They were also without the Internet, and, therefore, had only a small impact on the output of American haiku, their voice limited to and propagated by small press journals, word of mouth, newsletters, and a few well-written texts and translations by scholars.

After the formation of the HSA, the group formed a definitions committee consisting of Anita Virgil, William Higginson, and Harold Henderson, to clearly define haiku and *senryu*.

They defined haiku as a n "unrhymed Japanese poem recording the essence of a moment keenly perceived, in which Nature is linked to human nature. It usually consists of seventeen onji."

In 2003, the HSA, seeking to refine and improve upon the HSA definition of haiku, formed a definitions committee consisting of Lee Gurga, William Higginson, and Naomi Brown. Anita Virgil bowed out, seeing no need to change the existing definition of haiku.

The new definition said nothing new and read like a generalization that says nothing,

"A haiku is a short poem that uses imagistic language to convey the essence of an experience of nature or the season intuitively linked to the human condition."

Fortunately, they added the followed below the new definition,

Notes: Most haiku in English consist of three unrhymed lines of seventeen or fewer syllables, with the middle line longest, though today's poets use a variety of line lengths and arrangements. In Japanese a typical haiku has seventeen "sounds" (on) arranged five, seven, and five. (Some translators of Japanese poetry have noted that about twelve syllables in English approximate the duration of seventeen Japanese on.) Traditional Japanese haiku include a "season word" (kigo), a word or phrase that helps identify the season of the experience recorded in the poem, and a "cutting word" (kireji), a sort of spoken punctuation that marks a pause or gives emphasis to one part of the poem. In English, season words are sometimes omitted, but the original focus on experience captured in clear images continues. The most common technique is juxtaposing two images or ideas (Japanese *rensô*). Punctuation, space, a line-break, or a grammatical break may substitute for a cutting word. Most haiku have no titles, and metaphors and similes are commonly avoided. (Haiku do sometimes have brief prefatory notes, usually specifying the setting or similar facts; metaphors and similes in the simple sense of these terms do sometimes occur, but not frequently). A discussion of what might be called "deep metaphor" or symbolism in haiku is beyond the range of a definition.

These Notes are generalizations, lacking academic explanation, and bolster beliefs based primarily on the writings of Blyth and the Imagists. For instance, what is the reasoning behind the avoidance of similes and metaphors, the jettisoning of the S/L/S metric schemata?

Haiku pioneer, Michael Dylan Welch, offers the following definition of haiku,

"What, then, is haiku? Put briefly, haiku are short, objective poems conveying a keenly perceived moment of heightened subjective awareness. They present a distilled perception and apperception of the external world. In the sense that there are 'no ideas but in things,' as William Carlos Williams [an Imagist poet] has told us, haiku focus on the things of the external world, behind which may lie, by implication, the various ideas, biases, or emotions of the internal world. Haiku are imagistic in nature, use common language, and are best if devoid of judgment, analysis, metaphor, simile, and—in the Zen tradition—other rhetorical, intellectual, or ego-assertive devices. Haiku succinctly record the essence of a moment in nature, or reveal the truth of human nature. They present the 'thing' simply as it is, in all its rich 'suchness.' Indeed, as noted American haiku poet James W. Hackett has asserted, 'lifeliness, not beauty, is the real quality of haiku' (256). Further, haiku are open-ended poems of suggestion and implication, seeming almost incomplete on first reading, and do not explain or tell the reader

what to think or feel. Rather, they rely on the reader to have a common, universal response to the object or event portrayed. It is thus the haiku poet's burden to choose and craft his or her image to generate that reliably universal response. It is in the 'aha' moment of grasping the poem where the reader participates with the poet in experiencing the original moment of awareness—and it is this very process that makes haiku rewarding."

These same pioneers were also greatly influenced by the Imagist school of poetry, a short-lived, but highly influential movement made famous by Ezra Pound, T.S. Elliot, William Carlos Williams, H.D (Hilda Doolittle), Amy Lowell, Wallace Stevens, D.H. Lawrence, and other well-known American and English poets.

Wrote Haruo Shirane in his book, *Traces of Dreams*, referring to the haiku in *The Haiku Anthology*, edited by Cor van den Heuvel, published in 1974, which was the first major anthology of English haiku,

"Much of the haiku, which is usually written in three lines, focuses on moments of intense perception, especially the sensory aspects of physically small objects, or on a particular instant in time, commonly referred to as 'haiku moment'."

Shirane further stated, "The majority of these haiku in English as well as haiku translations from Japanese are done in the style of the Imagists and Modernists such as Stevens, Elliot, and Williams."

Rebelling from the popular poetry of their day (by Longfellow, Wordsworth, etc.), this group of poets jettisoned moralistic poetry and flowery speech, opting instead for an economy of words, concrete imagery that focused on a succinct, specific thing (object-biased), to discover its essence, utilized the vernacular of everyday speech, positing that the autonomous individuality of a poet was better expressed via free verse than the norm practiced at the time by Wordsworth, Longfellow, etc.

Ezra Pound in the pages of *Poetry Magazine*, published in America, penned the following manifesto to define the fundamental tenets of the Imagist movement:

1. Direct treatment of the "thing" whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.

Below these tenets, Pound added:

"An 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time."

A simpler way of putting this is found in the introduction to *The Imagist Poem* (William Pratt, Dutton, 1963), "Essentially, it is a moment of revealed truth, rather than a structure of consecutive events or thoughts."

The Imagist movement dealt a severe blow to the iambic pentameter. Influenced by haiku, European philosophy, the Modernists, and the itch for something beyond the mundane, they sought to change the Occidental poetic landscape which, until then, had been the drumbeat tapped by Wordsworth, Longfellow, and other poets of that age; a drumbeat that had, in their eyes, become stale, well-worn, and passé.

Theirs was a cadence of free flowing verse whose cadence was determined by the individual poet, versus the poetic norm: a no nonsense versification that was concrete, used no unnecessary words that communicated "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time."

Ezra Pound's famous Imagist 14 word poem, *In a Station at the Metro*:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

Like the Beat poets in the 50's and early 60's, many haiku poets today are abbreviating and reconstructing the genre, lacking a sound understanding of haiku, and thus, without malice, are unknowingly bastardizing and watering down what they call Modern American Haiku, which, in reality, is haiku-like poetry that's more akin to Imagist and Modernist poetry. Kigo is being disregarded, meter's become unimportant, as long as the poems in mention are no longer than 17 syllables. The S/L/S metric schemata is rarely followed; Japanese aesthetics, the tools used to give haiku its heartbeat, are more often than not, ignored, and those using them are sometimes accused of being Japanese wannabes, which to me, is a racist innuendo that's part of the cultural memories of Caucasoid Americans.

R.H. Blyth wrote, ". . . even where English haiku lack a season word, when they are too long, or have too many adjectives, or tend to morality or emotionality or philosophy, they have something in common with Japanese haiku."

Blyth goes on to say, "This common element is sense in thought, thought in sense, the thought is not mere thought, but the thought subsumed in sensation; the sensation is not simply sensation, but the sensation involved in real thinking, that is, poetical thinking. When they are divided or divisible, when the word and the object, the man and the thing are in anyway separated or separable, no poetry, and especially that of haiku in any language is possible."

Blyth's postulation sounds reasonable via a quick read. In actuality, however, it's

not accurate. The Japanese mindset and the Caucasian Western mindset are very different, and come from different sources. Caucasian thought comes from a cultural landscape steeped in Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian, and Teutonic influences. How the West understands a given word and how Japan or China perceives the same word can be poles apart.

Without clearly definitive rules, a growing number of Western haiku poets are composing whatever comes to his or her mind, the result: a non-poetic fart. Sameness in difference; proportion and balance, must exist in order to form a haiku.

Imagine a gymnastic event at the World Olympics, in which the athletes have no set rules, and are free to do their own thing within reason, as long as what they do resembles the gymnastics routine they are participating in. How would the judges score the athletes and by what standards? The Zoka isn't stifled by the rules of the genre it helped to form. It's people who stifle the Zoka. In nature, there's balance: the food chain, tidal currents, interdependency, etc. and we are today experiencing what happens when human kind upsets this order: Global Warming, the extinction of animals, insects, flora, and perhaps the extinction of life as we know it if this disregard for nature's order continues to escalate.

Wrote Lee Gurga in 1997,

"An important change that is occurring in American haiku is the decrease in those being introduced to haiku through Japanese culture and an increase in those discovering haiku from the poetry-writing arena . . . I think that the world's haiku poets recognize our common heritage in Japanese haiku, and at the same time acknowledge that Japanese and American haiku will likely grow apart."

There is no reason for American haiku and Japanese haiku to grow apart; nor is there a justification for the bastardization of a genre that is occurring amongst an extremely small group of haiku poets in colonized America.

There is no need, nor impetus to reinvent the wheel and alter haiku to a point where it is beyond recognition, where people call a poem a haiku because it has "the haiku spirit." The best English-language haiku composed by Americans are miles above what The Heron's Nest recognized as the publication's top two haiku in their quarterly February 2011 issue:

migrating geese ---
the things we thought we needed
darken the garage

Chad Lee Robinson

Looking
Not looking
Roadkill

Christopher Herold

Perhaps like the fly who thought he was a carabao, Gurga fails to see the entire picture, thus distorting his importance. What good is a common heritage if some Westerners jettison literally everything that makes a haiku a haiku?

Some other examples of short poems being heralded today as good haiku:

Christmas pageant ---
the one who had to get married
plays virgin Mary

Lee Gurga

Gurga's poem is not a haiku except in appearance. It is object-biased and not event-biased. The focus is on a cute play of words, the juxtaposition between line one and lines two and three ineffective, as the combination of the two segments fails to create a new entity or reveal the unsaid. It is a subjective poem that reads more like a comedian's joke.

This is a close relative of Cor van den Heuvel's

dark road
sparks from a cigarette
bounce behind the car

Cor van den Heuvel

What is special or memorable about this haiku-like poem? It's a poorly written shasei, capturing a common everyday sight like that captured in an Edward Hopper painting, only emotionless, leaving no room for interpretation, and unable to develop a surplus of words. He sees something and writes down what he saw using a short compact generalization.

Cor made a mockery of modern English language and literally snubbed his nose at convention by penning what he labeled a one-word haiku. Meter? No. Aesthetic? No. Event-biased? No! This kind of "aha" revelation reminds me of the instant revelations uttered by people tripping on LSD. Words are objects, nothing more. Their purpose is to name other objects. The color red, for instance, wouldn't exist if it had no name. A poem is formed when a person expertly assembles a rhythmic unit that gives life and substance to the unsaid. Without meter, a haiku is not a haiku nor is it a poem of any kind. This is what I am

referring to by asserting that haiku is being bastardized and has lost any sort of unified identity, and is in no way like the haiku the Japanese call haiku. Basho would shake his head at this mockery. So would Buson, Issa, and Chiyo-ni. Even the outspoken critic of traditional Japanese haiku who called Basho, in essence, a second rate poet, Shiki, would shake his head. This is not what Shiki envisioned when he set out to reform haiku, and later, tanka.

Tundra

Cor van den Heuvel
(Curbstones, 1998)

The following by Michael Dylan Welch is a close relative of Cor van den Heuvel's so-called one-word haiku:

night
falling
snow

Michael Dylan Welch

A haiku? No. A poem? No. Shasei? No. Shiki would never call this incomplete sentence a poem. If this so-called haiku and the one-line faux "aha" by Cor van den Heuvel are indicative of modern English haiku, the time isn't far off when the global haiku community will need a Shiki to come along and rebuild a sinking ship.

after-dinner mints
passed around the table . . .
slow falling snow

Michael Dylan Welch

Where is the mystery in this haiku-like poem? Where is the meter, the unsaid, that certain something that makes this poem different from an Imagist poem? Welch writes some beautiful haiku as well. When he writes haiku, he is either on or off, his meter is inconsistent. The following haiku by Welch is well-crafted, meaningful, with an excellent command of imagery:

wet beach sand—
a sandpiper's song
of footprints

I stayed up all night
trying to dream about you

Paul David Mena

Mena's poem is a sentence; a statement. It says nothing new. It has no meter.

The following haiku by veteran haiku U.S. poet, Billie Wilson (no relation), was awarded the distinction of being named the Heron's Nest POEM OF THE YEAR for 2010:

campfire sparks-
someone outside the circle
starts another song

Billie Wilson

Compare this haiku-like poem with the eloquence of Bruce Ross' haiku. The difference is night and day.

sleepless night
the space between
two stars

Bruce Ross

Campfire sparks . . . someone outside the circle starts another song.

Billie Wilson's poem consists of two parts; an incomplete sentence and a complete sentence:

1. Campfire sparks
2. Someone outside the circle starts another song.

Sparks (object) someone (object) circle (object) song (object)

There is an active campfire. Someone nearby is singing a different tune than what is sung at the campfire. The juxtaposition between lines one and two and three is ineffective as what was meant to be a contrast is a comparison of two similar activities at and near the campfire that's not uncommon, nor can the combining of the two parts create a surplus of words, that in turn makes sense of the unsaid, thus creating an entirely new picture.

In contrast Bruce Ross' haiku is activity-biased, objective, with a focus that's not centered around as object like Imagist poems usually do. Ross' focus is the space

between the two stars. How is the space between two stars causing sleeplessness? It is a poem that invites the reader to complete it using his or her own cultural memory and life experiences.

sleepless night (object)
the space between
two stars (object)

Bruce Ross

Billie Wilson's haiku-like poem is an object-biased poem more akin to a bland Imagist poem. I say "bland" when I think of Ezra Pound's famous Imagist 14-word poem, *In a Station at the Metro*:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough

Haiku is not a schizophrenic entity with multiple personalities. A frog isn't a toad, and a tadpole isn't a sperm cell. This, however, is what many are thinking; there are two forms of haiku: English haiku and Japanese haiku. In some ways, the North American English-language haiku movement is championing the mediocrity of haiku that Shiki went up against at the beginning of the 20th century. The only difference is the mediocrity composed during Shiki's era (Meiji) was the result of crass-commercialism and the idolatrous veneration of Basho by competing schools of haiku each claiming to be the true champion of Basho and his haiku. It should be noted that Basho was deified by the Japanese government in 1879.

Richard Gilbert inadvertently below describes the bastardization of haiku and the reasoning behind it,

"To a large extent, the evolution of form in English haiku has been wedded to the qualities Blyth (along with others) outlines above, whether considered from an aesthetic, experiential, or literary perspective. That is, the Japanese haiku, and the literary culture which bore it, has provided a model example for a new form of English, and indeed global, poetry." (vol. 4, p. 980).

Blyth, Yasuda, and others made some glaring mistakes in scholarship and, instead of setting the record straight, some like Gilbert, justify these errors by saying, in essence, that since Blyth's books have already influenced the English speaking world's perception of haiku, it is best to accept those mistakes; mistakes he acknowledged has altered the English-language conceptualization of haiku poetry.

What Gilbert describes below is Imagist and Modernist poetry calling itself haiku.

"English haiku has firmly established itself as a distinct free-verse poetic form, and in general, the passion for some sort of 'mirror-like' emulation of the

Japanese haiku has in many quarters either devolved into or achieved (depending on your point of view) mere inspiration, complete autonomy, or divergence."

As a "distinct free-verse poetic form", why is English haiku still being called by a Japanese name. Either it is haiku or it's not. The dictionary definition of "distinct": recognizably different in nature from something else of a similar type: the patterns of spoken language are distinct from those of writing (Apple Dictionary). This not new, however, but a continuation of the kind of haiku that was included in *The Haiku Anthology*, edited by Cor van den Houvel, published in 1974, which was the first major anthology of English haiku.

Wrote Haruo Shirane in his book, *Traces of Dreams*, referring to the haiku in the aforementioned *Haiku Anthology*,

"Much of the haiku, which is usually written in three lines, focuses on moments of intense perception, especially the sensory aspects of physically small objects, or on a particular instant in time, commonly referred to as 'haiku moment'."

Shirane further stated, "The majority of these haiku in English as well as haiku translations from Japanese are done in the style of the Imagists and Modernists such as Stevens, Elliot, and Williams."

"English haiku has firmly established itself as a distinct free-verse poetic form ..."
By whose measure? English haiku as conceptualized by the small word-wide group of English-language haiku poets under the influence of on- and off-line haiku journals and workshops, small press publishers, and local, regional, national, and international haiku organizations unrelated to Japan.

Why does Gilbert omit the millions more educated in English-speaking university and public school systems not under the aforementioned influences, a body of people including students, educators, those harboring beliefs counter to the aforementioned clusters; experts in the fields of hermeneutics, aesthetics, and English literature, etc., who see things through different eyes?

Adds Gilbert, " . . . the passion for some sort of 'mirror-like' emulation of the Japanese haiku has in many quarters either devolved into or achieved (depending on your point of view) mere inspiration, complete autonomy, or divergence."

Many people, including myself, who adhere to the Japanese conceptualization of haiku, are not emulating Japanese haiku when we compose haiku. We see within the genre a path, a way to compose poetry that adheres to tenets that are proven, work well, and produce first-class haiku. This posture by some spokespeople for the so-called English Haiku Movement is defensive and accusatory. M. Kei, Captain Haiku (Welch), Paul Miller, etc. hurl these accusations and faulty reasoning whenever someone questions their assertion that English haiku and/or tanka is a separate genre.

To compose “mirror-like” emulations of Japanese haiku is impossible.

Bruce Ross perceptively notes in 1993, wrote,

“The fourth generation [of the mid-1980s on] of American haiku poets has through experimentation all but obliterated the requisite form and substance of classic Japanese haiku: there is a consistent lack of seasonal references, surrealist techniques and figurative expression are introduced, regular prosody is eliminated, and human, rather than nature, subjects are increasingly emphasized. Contemporary American haiku has been made a poetic vehicle for eroticism, psychological expression, political and social commentary. ”

Regarding the importance of meter in haiku, Koji Kawamoto writes in his book, *The Poetics of Japanese Verse*, “ Line length, as we have noted above, is the determining element in Japanese moraic meter. While this fact remains unshakable, closer examination of the matter reveals, however, that in addition to the larger framework of seven- and five-morae verses, there indeed does exist a system of smaller, less immediately apparent rhythmic patterns functioning at the level of the individual line. These patterns serve to bring a degree of variation to the otherwise monotonous movement of seven-five (or five-seven) rhythm -- a fact which, taken to its logical conclusion, clearly suggests that there is more to Japanese meter than just counting morae and pausing at verse breaks after all.”

There are several excellent English-language haiku poets on terra firma who compose first-class haiku that captures the essence of true haiku. They are not Japanophiles or copycats. Their haiku are far superior than what many are passing off as modern haiku today. They make use of Japanese aesthetics because these tools capture the true essence of haiku, which is not subjective or object-biased. They respect the genre and its spirit. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, just the need to understand and learn from the wheel.

Some examples of English-language poetry written within the sphere of haiku poetic rules and guidelines:

ground fog
up to my ankles
in moonlight

Jim Kacian

Kacian’s a talented haiku poet and someone who’s studied the form. The above haiku follows the S/L/S metric schemata, effectively utilizing Japanese aesthetic tools, and allows room for a surplus of words to express the unsaid in his haiku. His use of juxtaposition is excellent, contrasting line one with lines two and three, the two opposites forming a symbiotic whole that gives Kacian’s poem a whole

new dimension, inviting the informed reader to interpret the haiku.

Ground fog + ankles and moonlight = an event-biased haiku: the poem is not focused on the fog or the ankles. The focus is the connection between line one and lines two and three. Ground fog tells that it is cold, the air conjoined by hot and cold air. Combined with moonlight, we know it is either nighttime or pre-dawn morning. How does moonlight tie in with the fog? Why is the moonlight shining on his ankles up to his knees? This is an area each reader has to answer for him or herself. This poem is rich in yugen. At the end of line one, though not using a substitute for a cutting word (punctuation), the juxtaposition causes the reader to stop and reflect in what is referred to as ma.

The following haiku are written by American haiku poets. They are event- biased, adhere to the S/L/S metric schematic indigenous to haiku, kigo is utilized, as are Japanese aesthetics. They are beautiful haiku that allow room for an informed reader to interpret the haiku according to his or her own cultural memory, experience, etc. They have depth and make excellent use of the unsaid. Haiku of this caliber is true haiku. Reading these haiku convinces me that American haiku and Japanese haiku don't need to be two different entities. North Americans and the Japanese may have different cultural memories and cultural landscapes. The two cultures can have different meanings for words and view life from different spiritual or Gnostic eyes. The Japanese aesthetic tools used are, as the Japanese define, styles. They are styles (tools) that work to unearth the unsaid in a poem utilizing an economy of words. Think of them as tools. And remember, one needs a full toolbox to build something correctly.

mother's scarf
slides from my shoulder . . .
wild violets

Peggy Willis Lyles

morning bath
clouds & birds float between
still wet limbs

Anita Virgil

traveling, too,
on a seat by the window
green melons

Michael McClintock

A small group of people who claim to be the vanguard and spokespeople of the so-called Modern English haiku movement in America, are just that, a small group

of people whose influence doesn't go far beyond the on- and off-line journals, magazines, private web-pages, self published books and anthologies, how-to books, and haiku association meetings that, with few exceptions, fall under the umbrella of the HSA. The majority of people who write haiku in North America don't belong to online workshop, haiku associations, or reading on- or off-line journals. The majority who write haiku are the product of the education debacle in the U.S. public school system where haiku is taught by teachers with little to no understanding of the genre and wouldn't know Basho or Issa from the man in the Moon. They plan their haiku lessons around a paragraph or two in the teacher's edition of their English Literature textbook written by sound alike pseudo scholars who parrot one another by writing principally the same definition. This should be the number one priority of the movers and shakers of the so-called vanguard and spokespeople of the Modern American haiku movement. Until this debacle in the public school system is replaced with a credible alternative, the vanguard and spokespeople of the Modern American haiku movement needs to influence school districts, textbook publishers, county superintendent of schools offices, and the State and Federal Departments of Education.

Blyth's books contain excellent material and scholarly translations. Even with some mistranslations and flawed concepts, his work is pivotal, providing the English-speaking world with an understanding of haiku they otherwise wouldn't have had access to. With this said, Blyth's books influenced many North Americans. Nevertheless, misconceptions and errors in translations can affect the conceptualizations of haiku and related genres of those relying on their scholarship for answers and understanding, thus the huge responsibility a translator and researcher must bear and take into consideration.

The following interpretation of a Japanese modernist poet's haiku is an example of how Blyth's misconceptions regarding haiku are currently affecting English-language haiku:

Paul Miller in his review of Ban'ya Natsuishi's book, *The Flying Pope*, made the following exegesis of Basho's famous "frog" poem:

the old pond— a frog jumps in, water's sound

Writes Miller, "What makes Basho's iconic 'old pond' work is that he gives the reader a comfortable base to start with before he makes any imaginative leap. Everyone knows what an old pond is, so when the reader gets to the last line he or she is pleasantly surprised by the freshness of the sound moment."

A good way of saying nothing about the haiku's essence.

Acclaimed Japan haiku poet, Madoka Mayuzumi, in a lecture given on January 25, 2010, at the Cultural and Information Centre of The Embassy of Japan in Brussels, Belgium, wasn't impressed with what she calls a poor understanding of

haiku by the French people.

Reports Dr. Gabi Greve, "Observing the seasons is ingrained in Japanese culture, and these arts also use a minimalism which creates much more than meets the eye. In haiku, there is that empty space between the lines, which speaks at least as much as in the lines themselves. The writer will say the bare minimum -- and then, the educated reader will understand what has been said and what has not been said."

A haiku must have this elusive "blank" or space which expresses meaning as much as the words contained in the haiku. In translation, she called this the "literature of silence" or of "things unsaid" (in Japanese, yohaku 余白) -- but the educated reader would understand what had been left unsaid. Haiku is a joint undertaking between the author and the reader.

States Dr. Gabi Greve in her account of Madoka Mayuzumi's speech, "She compared haiku with a tapestry of words -- the spaces between the threads are as important as the threads themselves."

Haiku avoids the direct expression of emotions, which it arouses in the reader or listener, and therefore transcends them.

A haiku must have kigo -- without a kigo, it is not a haiku.

She told us about the wealth of vocabulary that exists in Japanese, e.g. for the mountains in different seasons. She told us that the Japanese observe the moon very carefully, and that they love it when it is almost perfectly full even more than when it is perfectly full.

She asked us how many words exist in French for rain. Ten perhaps? In Japanese, there are about 440... just an example... this is because Japanese people have been observing nature and the seasons closely and writing about them for centuries.

She also told us that every letter written in Japanese must start with a seasonal reference (or if not, must contain an apology for its absence).

She had been asked about the rules -- why does such a short form of poetry have to have so many rules? Her answer was that because the rules are fixed, poets can develop a high level of artistry within them. She compared this to the floor exercises of an Olympic gymnast. The floor perimeter is perfectly defined, and the best gymnasts know how to use this space to the full -- not to remain only in the centre, and not to place even one toe outside it.

In Japan, she said, haiku were returning to loving the rules after a period of experimentation.

The English haiku community doesn't have to be the fly who thought he was a carabao. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. Quality haiku is attainable without a need to change the genre into something it's not. English-language haiku doesn't need a facelift. English-language poets must accept the challenge, be disciplined, and strive, as the Japanese still do, save for those influenced by Western thinking and misconceptions that run counter to Asian thinking, to work within the rules to compose haiku that is far superior to the "junk" haiku showcased and heralded by those who have swallowed and added to Blyth's and Yasuda's errors.

When Marc di Saverio submitted the haiku below, I found myself doing what I rarely do after reading a haiku. I read it and reread it, and each time I read it unveiled new truths. Most haiku are not memorable. Many in the West are object-biased and leave little for the reader's imagination. di Saverio's leaves a pleasant aftertaste. It employs yugen with his haiku's usage: why the slow windless steps?

What did that have to do with winding the dandelion clocks?

What is a dandelion clock?

now with slow
windless steps I wind the
dandelion clocks

Marc di Saverio

steps: object
dandelion clocks: object
now: present tense

The two objects in di Saverio's haiku are not the poem's focus. The focus is unseen, without a word to describe it. As an informed reader, it's my duty to complete di Saverio's haiku with my own interpretation. If a haiku can be easily understood, it's telling too much. The magic of haiku is its ambiguity, the hints and visual juxtaposition between opposites, the unsaid and the said, and the use of other aesthetic tools (styles) that, when understood and used correctly, create a surplus of words that stimulate one's imagination. An event-biased haiku is in a continuum of motion. Nothing thought by the human brain is an object. The brain is a computer.

Thoughts are born, figured, refigured, and very much alive. Once a thought enters the brain, it's combined with other thoughts. These thoughts and their assemblage deepen the cognitive process. No haiku can be purely shasei, as shasei is a sketch of nature, based on what one sees. In reality, every human paints his or her own illusions based upon cultural and landscape memories,

experience, education, parental influences, etc. When I read a haiku, I don't try to understand what the poet who composed it meant unless I am studying the haiku. I let the reading of it (silently or audibly) paint thoughts in my cerebral cortex. Because objectivity is almost impossible at this point, I interact with my subconscious mind, entering into the interpretative; every thought signaling a synaptic nerve to ignite another; concatenating every associative thought and visualization until a canvas of understanding is painted. No other person can paint the same exact painting you or I may paint in our individual minds. A good haiku is alive.

Haiku is the scent of green tea, the space between this and that, the giggling stream, the visualization of zoka, the marriage of contrasts, the fragile reflection of the human psyche; construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction; the dance of leaves, the song of crickets, the unsaid, the "aha" that comes from meditation instead of a magic wand giving one the impression that he or she has written a hot haiku; a tear, a breakthrough, the twinkle of stars, time and space, ambiguity, the sameness in difference and difference in sameness; activity bias, the re-animation of frozen sea slugs, the sound of a water jar on an icy night, crawling tides, tearful fish, the floating world, water's sound, the moon's mountain, rock's absorbing cicada songs, the loneliness of a crow swallowed by night, blossoms on the waves, gazing at the cut end of a tree, the Way, the Fuga, Heaven's River, clarity, the ushin, what Professor Esperanza Rameriz-Christensen in her book, *Emptiness and Temporality*, says: "embodies the essential nature of poetry in reflecting the depth of the poet's mind, it's utmost concentration, such that there occurs a felt fusion between mind and language, or subject and object, and words themselves are liberated from their finite semantic boundaries in ordinary linguistic usage."

Study of Japanese Aesthetics: Part III

To Kigo or Not to Kigo: Hanging From a Marmot's Mouth

by Robert D. Wilson

a crane screeches,
its voice ripping the leaves
of a banana plant

Matsuo Basho

Translated by Makoto Ueda

A friend asked me recently, after reading a popular Japanese haiku journal, why much of the haiku she'd read, composed by Japanese poets, were similar to the haiku she reads in various Anglo-English language haiku publications, some even excluding kigo. She posed a solid question. This essay is my answer.

"Space and time are like the two lenses in a pair of glasses. Without the glasses we could see nothing. The actual world, the world external to our minds, is not directly perceivable; we see only what is transmitted to us by our space-time spectacles. The real object, what Kant called the 'Thing-in-Itself', is transcendent, beyond our space-time, completely unknowable... Perceptions are, in a sense, illusions. They are shaped and colored by our subjective sense of space and time."

Martin Gardner, Mathematician

Brains and Reality by Jay Alfred (prologue)

Before time existed, when poetry was a way, and time was a bamboo leaf hanging from a marmot's mouth, there lived a little boy whose mother and father were lowly servants for the rich man who owned the land that looked like a school of fish, an archipelago of stones that stretched across rainbows, off the coast of China, the land that later was christened, Japan. Although the boy didn't attend school due to his lowly rank, he was a very intelligent child who asked questions about everything he saw and touched. The kindly rich man took a liking to the young boy and taught him in the early mornings, while his parents were cleaning his house, how to read and write. "When I was your age," said the rich man to his pupil, "I too asked thousands of questions. Remember this: memorizing the answers is meaningless. What you do with the answers is the proof of your learning."

Every morning, the old rich man, with few exceptions, save for sickness or an occasional royal visit, taught the young boy to read and write. It was something

they both looked forward to. The boy was a fast learner, with the heart of a poet. His was a world of experience versus subjective aha's and definitions that change as often as the tides, a blob of paint yielded by the moon. The rich man was a wise teacher and taught the boy, who now had reached the age of puberty, to seek out the wisdom of the clouds, the rain, the wind, and the other forces in nature that were continually reinventing themselves in a continuum of time without beginning or end, an oil painting that never dried. The servant's son saw all of these forces as teachers, and through them, learned to think beyond human experience and subjective thought; the latter, a wide path that changes like a drunk man walking in circles in a square room.

The day came when the boy, now a young man, longed to see what was beyond the rich man's kingdom. He asked his father for permission to travel into the unknown, a canvas of white space his parents had never traveled. His father took his son to see his master to seek out his counsel and obtain his permission.

"My son," said the young man's father, "has reached the age where mirrors are no longer relevant. He wants to travel beyond your kingdom into the white space that has no name. I'm uneducated and have not been there. I humbly seek your counsel, oh Lord."

The rich man smiled, then asked his young protégée a question:

"How do all things come into being?"

"What is, isn't; and what isn't, is. I must find out for myself," answered the young man. With that answer, the rich man clapped his hands and said, "You are ready to go. Follow the pipes of heaven."

Introduction

In the Wild West before dawn, when the moon was full, and women were giving birth to babies in corn fields, white men, who came to North America from Europe, were up late thinking of ways to steal land from those they labeled heathens, not knowing that many brown-skinned people didn't believe in owning land, that it belongs to the deities that dwell below the surface. They saw themselves as caretakers using earth, flora, and fauna to exist, not to reinvent the world into their own insecure images. There is much the Anglo race can learn from the indigenous peoples inhabiting this earth.

Is kigo and nature important to the integrity of haiku composition?

Why are some in the Anglo-West advocating a haiku-like poetry, they label haiku, that doesn't see a necessity for kigo, let alone resemble the genre the Japanese shared with the Anglo-Western world over three centuries ago? Why are many justifying this stance by declaring that American haiku is a distinct genre apart from haiku?

Are Japan and the Anglo-West as different as some posit to justify the stance taken covertly and overtly by some American haiku poets that American haiku is a separate genre from Japanese haiku, and, therefore, necessitates a different set of rules? Take note, this is a stance taken by a vocal, well-organized minority of

Anglo-American haiku poets who don't speak for the majority of haiku poets in North America; a majority who don't belong to haiku organizations or read North American haiku journals, blogs, e-zines, and self-published books of haiku.

Ironically, this vocal grassroots minority has trouble defining their so-called "breakaway genre." Disagreement and confusion are rampant. Some say metaphors are taboo; others say they should be used sparingly. Some pontificate a necessity to jettison the S/L/S metric schemata indigenous to haiku, saying the English language is structured differently, and doesn't have to follow the aforementioned metric schemata. To do otherwise, they claim, would be the Japanization of Anglo-Western "haiku," negating the Anglo-American cultural identity, which in itself is a mixing pot of cultures and subcultures, so vast and interwoven, one wonders how they can claim that haiku as the Japanese handed down to us long before the Anglo-Western colonization of Japanese universities is unsuitable for English-language usage.

Writes veteran Canadian haiku poet, George Swede, regarding the use of kigo in American haiku:

"I believe they are not necessary, but neither do I think that they should be ignored. Many fine haiku clearly indicate the season and many do not."

He further iterates:

. . . of the "elements absolutely vital to the definition of haiku, the conclusion is unavoidable—season words are not necessary, although a knowledge of them can be useful, both for the composition of haiku and for the understanding of work written in foreign lands."

The Haiku Society of America webpage, regarding Anglo-American haiku, as defined by the Society's definitions committee, consisting of Lee Gurga, Naomi Y. Brown, and Bill Higginson, states:

*"Traditional Japanese haiku include a **season word** (kigo), a word or phrase that helps identify the season of the experience recorded in the poem, and a **cutting word** (kireji), a sort of spoken punctuation that marks a pause or gives emphasis to one part of the poem. In English, season words are sometimes omitted, but the original focus on experience captured in clear images, continues."*

Wrote Michael Dylan Welch in his essay, Up With Season Words, in his blog, Graceguts:

*"I think seasonal references do often improve a haiku, but aren't essential. Ultimately, I agree with the **manifesto** of the First International Contemporary Haiku Symposium, in which the first of seven conclusions is, quite simply, that 'Season words' are not absolutely necessary for global haiku. Whatever our preference regarding season words, each of us must find our own balance."*

Wrote veteran haiku poet and publisher, Jim Kacian, in his paper: Beyond Kigo: Haiku in the Next Millennium for Acorn Journal (2000):

"In the new way of reckoning, however, a kigo is not an assumed part of a haiku,

but a keyword is . . .” “Kigo, then, operate as one large and important subset of all keywords, but are not the only words which a haiku may employ to the same effect.”

"Consider some poems from the recent international compendium Knots: The Anthology of Southeast European Haiku Poetry. While there is certainly plenty of 'spring rain' and 'autumn sky' as there ought to be, there are also poems such as these:

my best friend died –
some tiny grains of dust
on our chessboard

Robert Bebek

deserted town –
hungry war victims
feed the pigeons

Mile Stamenkovic

*"These poems," states Kacian, "choose obvious and important subjects for their **haiku moments**. They are closely observed, have a moment of insight, have an emotive core which touches the reader. **Few people would argue** that they are not some **sort of haiku**, even though they do not contain kigo. But clearly 'dust' and 'victims' work in an analogous way here, and are the pivot and purpose of the poetry. **These are not non seasonal anything. They are poems that work in the tradition of haiku which call upon a larger context than even kigo can supply for their impact. Recognizing and exploiting this is one of the chief characteristics of much of contemporary international**, including Japanese, work. It seems somewhat beside the point to insist upon the one, **when the other, more inclusive**, covers the situation. There are **many, many** more such examples as these in Knots and in other contemporary books and journals of haiku."*

Kacian's sounds like a carnival barker when he pontificates:

"Few people would argue that they are not some sort of haiku."

In other words, Kacian is saying, *"If you don't believe like we do, than you are in the minority. I am stating what the majority 'in the know' think."* That kind of logic might sell circus tickets or cars, but it's not sound academically (and lacks the facts needed to back it up). If the majority call a crab a lobster, does that make the crab a lobster? In the same light, Kacian states, *"There are many, many more such examples [poems like the two above] as these in Knots and in other contemporary books and journals of haiku."* If others are doing it, then it must be right. If Kacian were on debate team at Harvard or Yale, his team would lose the debate using unsupported ambiguities to prove their point.

Continues Kacian, **"Keywords, then, can replace the notion of kigo completely, and successfully, without radically altering the nature of haiku as we know it.** And this is a successful, perhaps the only possible

successful, means of doing so." Only an individual with a flawed understanding of the role of nature in haiku would make a claim like that. In essence, Kacian is saying, *"What was appropriate for Basho and his contemporaries, is outdated. Poets have since evolved. Haiku is no longer limited geographically to Japan. In an international forum, haiku needs a richer voice, one that can communicate internationally."* The voice he talks about is the voice of the Anglo-Western mindset emanating from the same German-based university system Japan adopted near the close of the Meiji Era: a mindset that doesn't view philosophy, poetry, art, theology, and aesthetics the same way that pre-colonized intellectuals and thinkers thought, when the Japanese cultural memory was defined by the Yamato language. This is something he'd be aware of had he done his homework before selling tickets to passersby.

What is richer than the unbridled creative power of nature? Humankind steps outside of nature, as if they were superior to all life forms, and want to shrink it to fit a mindset set on destroying this planet in as short a time as possible: Japan, Chernobyl, oil spills, global warming, racial and ethnic genocide, wars, etc. Nature is the only force humankind, in their ignorance, can't control, let alone predict. This calls to my mind the "Chaos Theory" talked about by a mathematician in Crichton's novel, *JurassicPark*. Scientists experiment and theorize to the point of playing god at times, but nothing in nature can be choreographed, and when scientists try to do so, the consequences, like what we are seeing in Japan, have been disastrous; and more often than not, covered up. Nature will go on; humankind, however, will kill themselves, unless they listen to and respect nature.

The unbridled, unpredictable, *creative* force of nature: the Zhuangzi's zoka, Basho's zoka, Asian poetry's zoka, shamanic animism's zoka, has much to teach the human race. Matsuo Basho said it was beast-like to ignore the zoka writing haiku. The central base for haiku is not Kenneth Yasuda and R.H. Blyth's **"haiku moment,"** a concept borrowed from their misinterpretation of Zen Buddhism (a religion they mistakenly thought haiku was a literary invention of). Kigo is not a nature word in the sense that the German-based university defines and categorizes nature; nor is haiku a nature poem in the sense that the German-based university system defines and categorizes nature. The nature that Basho and other poets advocated and taught about to their disciples isn't a part of Zen Buddhism per se. It's a Daoist principal that I'll go into deeper in this article; one that found a kindred spirit with Shinto and Japan's indigenous shamanic animism, which Blyth called superstitious.

*"In the next millennium, then, **international haiku,**" expounds Kacian, **"will have dispensed with the notion of kigo in favor of the more overarching concept of keyword. This process is more evolutionary than revolutionary."** [Word has it that humans will have to apologize to the apes for claiming they're descended from the apes]. *Through such a development haiku will continue to be grounded in a universal system of value which is communicable to its practitioners and readership; there will be a smooth transition since none of the 'classics' of haiku need be thrown out due to the**

adoption of **radically new values**; and new work which speaks to a far larger and perhaps more contemporary audience will find acceptance within the canon of haiku **because of the enlarged understanding of how such poems function** [from a Western point of view]. And it is possible that one of the niche forms of haiku will have become the personal provenance of a truly unique sensibility, which might further restructure the way we look at haiku. It will be interesting to watch these developments over the coming decades as our old haiku **becomes new. And this is necessary, since an unchanging art is a moribund art.** Haiku, beginning its new international life, is anything but." **The creative force of nature unchanging?** It's interesting that the basis for this theorization comes from a mindset that did not give the world haiku nor has a haiku master among them.

Writes Abigail Friedman in her book, *The Haiku Apprentice*:

"Much of the challenge and excitement of writing haiku in the West comes from the fact that there are no commonly agreed-upon rules. This is not so far removed from the situation in Japan. There, contemporary poets are challenging the existing haiku rules; in the West we are struggling to create them."

Professor Michael F. Marra in his book, *Modern Japanese Aesthetics*, cites a series of lectures Nishi Amane gave in 1877 in the presence of Emperor Meiji, later published as *The Theory of Aesthetics*. In these lectures, Nishi, credited by many as a driving force behind the modernization of Japanese art and the introduction, conciliation, and acceptance of the German-based university system by Japan, having returned from two years of study in Holland, sought to introduce modern aesthetics that were heavily infused with the theories posited by Joseph Haven, in his book, *Mental Philosophy*, which Nishi translated into the Japanese language. Though a modernist influenced by the German-based university system, Nishi posited: *"If one composes poems and songs without following rules at all, merely expressing whatever comes to mind, surely what results is not a form of poetry. If a road is very dangerous, winding to the right, returning to the left, climbing a precipice, then it must not be called a road. This necessity of sameness in difference: proportion and balance cannot be lacking."*

Translated by Professor Michael F. Marra
Modern Japanese Aesthetics

Lee Gurga wrote astutely in his introduction to *Toward an Aesthetic for English-Language Haiku* in 2000: *"A crucial American deficiency is an incomplete or flawed understanding of what haiku is. Excessive individualism leads to the posture of whatever I want to call haiku is haiku."*

"We have our own culture." "We have our own aesthetics." "We have our own language, which, hermeneutically and philosophically, doesn't jive with the Japanese conceptualization of expression, thought, or biospheric identity." Are these valid assertions? If so, how come they mimic, in many ways, the stance taken by R.H. Blyth and Kenneth Yasuda regarding Anglo-Western English language "haiku?" Why does their stance lack validation from the greatest Japanese short form poetry scholars in North America, including Donald Keene,

Haruo Shirane, Makoto Ueda, Steven D. Carter, David Landis Barnhill, Peipei Qui, the late Michael Marra, etc.?

To address this stance and those related to it necessitates a series of articles. This paper is the third in a series of articles. In this article, I address this vocal minority's position regarding the use of kigo in Anglo-American haiku.

Nature in haiku poetry is one of the least understood facets of the genre

American haiku is an impoverished subgenre of haiku. It is not a distinct genre. There cannot be two genres calling themselves haiku (a Japanese name for an American genre that claims to be distinctly different from haiku?) Either one is and the other isn't. The following can be found on the Haiku Society of America website:

WHAT IS HAIKU?

"Haiku is a form of traditional Japanese poetry that involves a 17-syllable verse form comprised of three metric units of 5, 7, and 5 morae, which correspond to English syllables. In traditional Japanese methodology, the haiku is not only a poetic form of expression but also a manner of understanding the world. The brevity of haiku sometimes mistaken for simplicity, is meant to capture the world and existence in a single moment. It can be considered the form in which an epiphany is expressed. The deep sense of the transient nature of all existence present in haiku is rooted in its close associations with the religion of Buddhism and the Japanese concept of Yugen, a term for beauty that implies mystery, profundity, and a trace of sadness referred to as sabi."

HOW TO WRITE HAIKU:

"Haiku imagery usually revolves around nature and communicates an abstract notion. Since the restricted form of the haiku does not allow room for much terminology, choosing phrases that are packed with verdant description while setting a certain tone is essential. These phrases are often compiled by using kigo, or words that are specific to each season . . . Above all, it is important to be specific and conjure imagery that opens up a full view into the moment you are experiencing and writing about."

MODERN HAIKU:

"Although traditional haiku adheres to strict form and meter principles [?] and is bare of poetic adornments, modern haiku has extended the poetry form to fit the life and time of today. Modern haiku is sometimes looked down upon for its lax syllable count, use of metaphors, similes and rhyme, and unnatural images as its central focus. Modern haiku is also often described as the poet's direct experience of the world. However, it is hard to say whether the original masters of haiku would have focused so deeply on maintaining the tradition of the form or the simplicity with which it conveys what it expresses. Instead, it is surely possible that they may have considered the essence of the finished product more important. In this way, haiku has not changed much from the days of medieval

Japan. Sarcasm and irony are tools that modern writers enjoy implementing within their haiku. Although haiku enthusiasts irritably disagree on a common definition for modern haiku, the main idea to remember is that the spirit of the haiku is what ultimately survives within the mind and heart of the reader."

Note that form, rules, and more importantly, following the zoka (the creative, untamed spirit of nature, essential to haiku according to Matsuo Basho), are not considered vital in the HSA's definition of Modern Haiku. This organization, claims Michael Dylan Welch, in his essay, Up With Season Words, in his blog, Graceguts "*. . . can take pride in its central role in the history of haiku in English, in its ambiguous definition of modern haiku, the main idea to remember is that the spirit of the haiku is what ultimately survives within the mind, and heart, of the reader."*

States Professor Gilbert in his paper, The Disjunctive Dragonfly: A Study of Disjunctive Method and Definition in Contemporary English-Language Haiku: "*Given that the Japanese haiku is reductively misinterpreted and the English haiku undefined, the HSA definition seems a figment of culturally projective desire."*

HSA: "*Haiku enthusiasts irritably disagree on a common definition for modern haiku . . ."*

Michael Dylan Welch (Up With Season Words): "*The Haiku Society of America simply isn't as relevant, or even as necessary, as it used to be. It needs to change what it does and what it offers, or its membership numbers will stagnate or fall."*

Writes Professor Richard Gilbert in his paper, Kigo and Seasonal Reference: Cross-cultural Issues in Anglo-American Haiku: "*The central issue for haiku in English may not be so much related to kigo and cultural superficiality, as with a central question Beat writers such as Snyder first articulated in the 1950s: 'How do we grow our own souls?' That is, how do we grow our own culture?"*

George Swede in his paper, Towards a Definition of the English Haiku: "*Season words are not necessary, although a knowledge of them can be useful, both for the composition of haiku and for the understanding of work written in foreign lands."*

Marlene Mountain, from the mountain/backward, section two: "*My current definition of haiku is that haiku can no longer be defined."*

Which form of haiku is legitimate and endorsed by the Haiku Society of America? The traditional? The modern? Or, does it matter?

One can't ride the fence or a donkey backwards. If this minority of Anglo-Western poets have a distinct poetic genre, they should make a clean break, and give this new distinct genre a different name coupled with distinct rules (guidelines). Or, is this to be a genre without guidelines? The prevailing form most commonly featured in today's journals, e-zines, and workshops is the aforementioned modern haiku: the anything goes, no set meter, object-biased (mono), Imagist-

oriented tossed salad that say little compared to the haiku penned in Japan prior to the Anglo-Western colonization of Japan's universities that began in the late 1870's.

The Merriam Webster Dictionary definition of GENRE:

"A category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content."

The sphere of those writing haiku in North America is too unorganized and divided, making a consensus as to what is and isn't an Anglo-North American haiku, next to impossible.

Abigail Friedman could easily be the HSA's spokesperson with her statement: *"Much of the challenge and excitement of writing haiku in the West comes from the fact that there are no commonly agreed-upon rules."*

To kigo or not to kigo?

Australian poet, John Bird, in an e-mail to Beverley George published in an online Workshop recently, wrote:

"It is sufficient that we acknowledge the separate identity of Japanese haiku and English-language haiku."

"Seasonality will not provide depth to English-language haiku, as it does for the Japanese."

States Professor Richard Gilbert in his paper, Kigo and Seasonal Reference: Cross-cultural Issues in Anglo-American Haiku:

*" . . . it may be asked, what is the true intention of kigo? As a young genre, the English haiku has a unique opportunity to forge a refreshed sense of culture with regard to nature, and there may be more relevant philosophical issues at hand than the question of how to connote season words. A question yet to be addressed in English haiku is, **what do we mean by nature?**"*

Continues Gilbert: *"One area of debate in Anglo-American haiku criticism has concerned the importation of kigo as a necessary concept for haiku practice. As haiku in English have no abiding kigo tradition, in some quarters the genre has been described as lacking in artfulness and depth. Attempts have been made to institute kigo practice, largely via the publication of saijiki (season-word glossaries); however, there is little evidence of poets having sought out these works, over the last several decades. As viewed from an Anglo-American perspective, kigo of Japan seem to convey a naturalistic indication of season, but little more."*

As previously mentioned, the majority of Japanese and Anglo-American haiku poets are confused as to the role of the kigo in haiku. Contrary to Gilbert's assertion, many Anglo-American haiku poets inhabit a watered-down kigo-challenged culture taught to them haphazardly in a school system that doesn't take the genre seriously, as evidenced by the references to haiku in most North American school textbooks. They have also relied too heavily on the outdated and

faulty research of R.H. Blyth who was not a scholar trained in Japanese hermeneutics, aesthetics, or linguistics. *"The Haiku Society of America,"* says Michael Dylan Welch in his essay, *A Look to the Future of Haiku in English*, *"can take pride in its central role in the history of haiku in English."*

Iterates Welch (Captain Haiku as he calls himself in the online blog with the same name) in his paper, *A look to the Future of Haiku*:

"The American haiku community would surely be amorphous and unfocused without the unifying presence of the Haiku Society of America. Through its meetings, presentations, contests, and poetry readings, and through the sharing and discussion of haiku by its members, the Society has provided a dynamic literary forum central to the growth, study, and appreciation of this poetry. No doubt many haiku poets from Maine to California and beyond would have never met (even if only by correspondence) without the shared resource of Society membership lists and its members' mailing addresses. It is in the details of this common interaction between haiku poets where the art and craft of haiku evolves. These details are vital brush strokes in the unrolling scroll of English-language haiku."

Welch claims the HSA is the unifying thread that works together with other haiku publications and journals, North American haiku groups, as their spiritual guide, to popularize and spread haiku: *"Before the Internet, the Haiku Society of America was the chief conduit for connecting with other haiku poets in the United States—and beyond."*

In the same essay, Welch writes: *"The Haiku Society of America simply isn't as relevant, or even as necessary, as it used to be. It needs to change what it does and what it offers, or its membership numbers will stagnate or fall. A recent reduction in members might be attributable to the economy, but perhaps not. The HSA needs to offer new content or services of significant value that people cannot get online easily or for free."*

Welch feels this decline in influence can be partially altered by getting away from the Japanese conceptualization of haiku, prior to Shiki, as practiced by Basho, Chiyo-ni, Buson, and Issa:

"The future of haiku in English has also been engaged recently with a movement towards gendai haiku. Gendai simply means 'modern,' and in Japan, while it might be foolish to attempt a definition, gendai haiku tend to be more subjective, abstract, and even surreal in comparison to more traditional haiku, even while retaining the form and other characteristics of the genre. This development is a positive sign for haiku in English in two ways. First, haiku poets writing in English are clearly paying attention to contemporary haiku in Japanese, rather than just the old masters, and perhaps for the first time American haiku poets are not decades (or centuries) behind developments in Japanese haiku."

Welch and many other well-known members of this vocal minority should look within themselves for the answers, as reinventing themselves implies failure, doubt, and a poetic schemata that's outdated. Welch urges HSA members and

friends to follow the lead of Japanese Modernist poets, stretching haiku to new limits and vistas. What he and other HSA members fail to realize is the aforementioned Modernist Japanese poets are following what has been taught to them by the German-based university system they adopted in the 1920's, the same university system used in the Anglo-West.

Welch contradicts himself and other vocal HSA leaders, when he postulates: *"More recently, subjectivity and abstraction, thanks to gendai haiku, is gaining more attention. But the gendai development is really the first shift towards a new type of haiku that finally mirrors what has been happening in Japan for several decades. This development is a positive one for English-language haiku because it facilitates greater range. It will hopefully not dilute haiku, but will enable poets to be attracted to the type, or types, of haiku that most appeal to them. As more types of haiku gain literary credibility, the potential is greater, too, for increasing the size and vibrancy of the haiku community and those who appreciate this poetry."*

If American haiku is a distinct poetic genre, why are they, as Welch claims, *"paying attention to contemporary haiku in Japanese, rather than just the old masters, and perhaps for the first time American haiku poets are not decades (or centuries) behind developments in Japanese haiku?"* Why would a literary group say American haiku is a distinct genre, while at the same time adhering to and publishing the above? A genre doesn't try to emulate another genre nor to catch up with it.

Writes veteran North American Charles Trumbull insightfully in his paper, The Importance of Seasons:

"Arguments against using a season word in haiku are voiced by (a) people who find it too difficult or artistically limiting to do so, (b) those who resist the Japanese season-word system because they find it too highly formalized and inappropriate for English poetry, (c) iconoclasts who want haiku to be whatever they say it is, tradition be damned, or (d) poets who would really rather be writing senryu or zappai (verses in haiku form that, respectively, treat human nature or are intended as pure slapstick). But haiku is, after all, nature poetry."

Wrote University of Nebraska Professor Tom Lynch in his paper, Intersecting Influences in American Haiku, in 2001:

*"Since the mid-1950s, literally thousands of collections of haiku poetry have appeared in the United States and Canada. Hundreds of thousands of haiku have been published in scores of magazines, and the rate of publication increases steadily. Yet English language haiku **has not** been accepted as a legitimate form of poetry worthy of inclusion in [mainstream] literary anthologies and consideration in critical discussions."*

Many belonging to the vocal minority compose a haiku synthesizing transcendental and Zen traditions into a haiku-like poetic form that's a cross between Jefferson Airplane's White Rabbit, Whitman, Emerson, Thoreau, Suzuki, Gary Snyder, Mr. Rodgers, Jack Kerouac, Jerry Rubin, and William Carlos Williams.

To understand why American haiku has yet to be accepted as a legitimate form of poetry worthy of inclusion in mainstream literary anthologies and consideration in critical discussions, I have included in this paper a sampling of haiku accepted by various online American haiku websites including the Haiku Society of America website, and its literary journal, Frogpond, The Heron's Nest, Modern Haiku, etc. Most of them make no differentiation between haiku and senryu, and lump them together either as haiku or as haiku/senryu; a further indication of the confusion as to what is and isn't a haiku amongst this Anglo-American vocal minority:

breakfast cereal
with store-bought raspberries
Christmas morning

Jim Kacian

breakfast cereal with store-bought raspberries Christmas morning

breakfast: a time-centered object

cereal: an object

store-bought: a descriptive modifier

raspberries: an object

Christmas morning: a kigo (seasonal designator)

This haiku-like poem describes something the author apparently experienced. Sitting at his table, he savors a simple but delicious breakfast on Christmas morning. Eating a bowl of cereal with fresh fruit is delicious. Kacian juxtaposes lines one and two with Christmas morning. What does the juxtaposition do to unearth the unsaid, coagulate with the zoka, and say, other than to state the obvious, the color of the thawed red raspberries (out of season) calls to mind a primary color associated with Christmas: red; and the breakfast as a special feast, a present to himself on Christmas morning?

Object-biased? Yes. Subjective? Yes. Kigo-centered? No. What this short poem lacks is an identification and collusion with zoka.

States Professor Peipei Qui in my interview with her in this issue: "*Bashô considered following zôka **essential** to all arts in this philosophical context.*"

Basho's reference to zoka is not the object-biased physical side of nature. It is nature's unpredictable, always changing, creative power.

Says Qui in the same interview: ". . . following zôka to Bashô in the physical sense was to discover and appreciate the masterwork of zôka, and through doing so, to understand the way of a true artist."

In Kacian's poem, there is little left to the imagination, which is the opposite of the unpredictable zoka. A good haiku draws its readers into the interpretative process. The use of kigo in Kacian's haiku-like poem is dead wood, unable to do anything but invoke memories of Christmas in other readers. Little room is left for readers to interpret the poem; mystery and suggestion not evident. For it to be relevant, the poet needs to blow life into the poem, via the "pipes of heaven," infusing his thoughts with a strong connection to the zoka.

*summer's end—
rearranging gravel
in the Zen garden*

Carol Raisfeld

summer's end rearranging gravel in the Zen garden

Rearranging gravel in a Zen garden at the end of summer is nothing revelatory. It is an observation, nothing more. Raking gravel in a Zen garden at the end of summer is not a season event. Raisfeld's poem is not the fruit of a poet seeking to discover and appreciate the masterwork of zoka. "Summer's end" reads like an add-on. It's not the embodiment of kigo Matsuo Basho, Chiyo-ni, Yosa Buson, and other haiku masters of their day envisioned. Where in her poem is the voice of the unseen, the unsaid?

Professor Michael F. Marra in his book, *Japanese Aesthetics – The Construction of Meaning*, writes:

"The power of poetic language, thus, resides in its ability to say something by not saying it, or to say it by pointing at something else, or even by its indicating the opposite of what the poet intends to say."

*year's end—
what made me think I needed
a harmonica*

year's end what made me think I needed a harmonica

Carolyn Hall, Frogpond XXX:3

A haiku? No. It reads like an aside spoken jokingly by someone who's had a good year, although, at first, they thought it would be a bad year. Hall's use of "harmonica" refers to its use by American Blues musicians. This piece has nothing to do with nature. "year's end" is a kigo but, when appended to "me" and "harmonica" it loses its importance or relevance as a kigo.

Where is the true connection to nature as seen in the writings of Basho and Buson, literature that has withstood centuries, because haiku, when realized and understood, doesn't need to reinvent itself? I prefer the haiku of those who gave the world a genre of poetic expression unlike any other. That is what drew me to haiku in the first place. Haiku written without knowledge of what kigo is and represents, is lackluster, forgettable, and crude, as Basho admonished sternly to his students:

"Saigyô's waka, Sôgi's renga, Sesshû's painting, Rikyû's tea ceremony --- one thread runs through the artistic Ways. And this artistic spirit is to follow zoka, to be a companion to the turning of the four seasons. Nothing one sees is not a flower, nothing one imagines is not the moon. If what is seen is not a flower, one is like a barbarian; if nothing one imagines is not a flower, one is like a beast. Depart from the barbarian, break away from the beasts, follow zoka, return to zoka."

*summer evening
coarseness of gingham prints
in the quilt*

Lenard D. Moore

summer evening coarseness of gingham prints in the quilt

Where is the zoka in this short poem? "Summer evening" juxtaposed with "the coarseness of gingham prints in the quilt" is a nice sentiment. The heart of a kigo, in this instance, "summer evening," must be more than a mood setter, or a nice correlation. This verse hardly invokes an identity with the creative force of nature (zoka).

Compare this with a haiku by Matsuo Basho, and we begin to understand why Anglo-American haiku is not taken seriously as a literary genre as Professor Tom Lynch asserts.

the harvest moon ---
I stroll round the pond
till the night is through

Meigetsu | ya | ike | wo | megurite | yomosugara

Matsuo Basho

Translated by Makoto Ueda

Basho and His Interpreters

The "harvest moon" is a kigo that sets the stage for lines two and three, turning the haiku into an activity-biased poem concerned with an ever-changing process versus an object-biased poem that fails to show a correlation of any depth between the creative power of nature (zoka) and the coarseness of a "gingham printed quilt." Basho's haiku is of depth, complexity, that hints and suggests, without putting author-subjective words on the reader's tongue when the reader interprets the poet's verse.

"The harvest moon" is an autumn kigo (seasonal word) in Japan and North America. My brother in-law works for Gallo Wine, in California. Harvest season is when Gallo's employees work the hardest. A harvest can make or break a company such as Gallo. Their scientists study nature, soils, pest infestation, plant diseases, and other variables that can affect a harvest. These scientists take nature seriously and know too well that nature can be unpredictable. A haiku poet to write a memorable haiku must take and observe nature seriously. One cannot include nature in their poem credibly if they lack a competent understanding of its nature. A kigo is not a thing, it's a process that never stops processing. It's an object (koto) and not subjective (mono); the embodiment of a verb, always moving, changing, and totally unpredictable. Matsuo Basho lived amongst the trees, was exposed to the extremes indigenous to each season, saw nature's inconsistencies, and viewed nature as an equal. Whereas, an Anglo-Western poet has trouble accepting this precept, having been raised in a Judeo-Christian culture, where nature is looked upon as something God gave man to enjoy and

look over. The power in nature is viewed as an expression from God the creator (displeasure, punishment, reward, etc.). Anglo-Americans are taught at a young age to appreciate beauty. There is a vast difference between the pre-colonized conceptualization of the zoka and the Anglo-Western conceptualization of nature. Mitsuyo Toyoda in his thesis, *Approaches to Aesthetics: East Meets West*, in 2002, saw a sharp division in the areas of philosophy, science, and religion between pre-colonized Japanese and Anglo-Western thought. *"The traditional Western consciousness,"* expounds Toyoda, *"sees such characteristics such as regularity, uniformity, and symmetry as paradigms of beauty in Western culture."*

Professor Donald Keene identifies four aesthetic qualities peculiar to Japanese culture that counter the Anglo-Western conceptualization of aesthetic value and understanding: suggestion, irregularity, simplicity, and perishability. Further complicating this division of aesthetic sensibilities between the Anglo-West and Japan is the covert colonialization of Japanese thinking via the German-based university system, adopted almost universally by Japan in the later part of the 1920s, that educated and still educates Japanese students, scholars and future leaders in the aesthetics and philosophy indigenous to Anglo-West thought. This is why, as Welch writes: "for the first time American haiku poets are not decades (or centuries) behind developments in Japanese haiku."

His evaluation is faulty, however. Anglo-American haiku is not catching up with Japanese haiku. Instead, Japanese haiku and Anglo-American haiku are becoming more and more alike, with the Japanese assimilating and synthesizing Anglo-Western thought regarding social science, art, and philosophy with their own cultural identity which is passing through a cloud that is becoming harder and harder to navigate; time, a melting clock, like in the painting I painted in 1966, *Time is a Dirty Old Man*, which was hung in a display at Robinson's Department Store in Los Angeles, that distorts perception as time goes foreword, what we know and feel; subjective and less concrete, their memories influenced by a nonsymbiotic juncture of Anglo-Western and colonized Japanese thought.

Moore's poem lacks the conceptualization of zoka that Basho and other great poets had when utilizing kigo. In fact, Moore's poem is similar in many ways to the colonized haiku penned today in Japan by haiku modernists. In order for modern haiku, Japanese or Anglo-American, to transcend the mediocrity it has fallen into, they will need to take to heart these words from Fujitani Mitsue (1768-1822):

"The poet's anxiety results from the subjugation of the guts—the aesthetic sacred dimension to the political rules of the body, or external reality. The poet penetrates and communicates with the inner self (kami) of the reader by dwelling within the 'spirit of words' (kotodama), which awakens the reader to the truth of his real, 'unidimensional' Being."

Translated by Michael F. Marra
Modern Japanese Aesthetics

An example of Japanese haiku, which isn't much different than that penned in America:

Crab apple flowers are blooming
Bending their heads
Tokeiji Temple

Masako Kakutani
The Moss at Tokeiji

Kakutani says she was influenced by the works of Modernist Japanese poet and author, Hagiwara Sakutarō. She majored in English Literature and Psychology in a German-based university.

"*Crab apple flowers are blooming*" is a distinct kigo reference, but when juxtaposed with lines two and three, "*bending their heads at Tokeiji Temple*," the power and reality of the zoka becomes an adornment that paints a touching word painting, her tool to create this painting, a surrealistic, anthropomorphic scene . . . blooming crab apple flowers bending their heads at Tokeiji Temple, a temple that was a refuge for battered women.

Below is a photograph of a crab apple tree in full blossom, the second one, a close-up of crab apple blossoms. Neither photograph reflects the imagery of bowing women who have been battered. Neither do the two photographs indicate bowing women grateful for a new lease on life. Blossoming crab apple trees are not all the same. Some lean over when laden with fruit, but the blossoms aren't heavy enough to bend a tree limb, let alone a branch. Had the blossoms fallen, they would have called to mind the impermanence of life, the reality and acceptance of death, a far more poignant picture.





Basho's admonition, "Follow the zoka, return to the zoka," doesn't mean: "Students, remember to include a kigo in your haiku."

See the difference, when the true spirit of zoka is infused into a haiku:

the coolness ---
faintly the crescent moon
above Mount Haguro

Matsuo Basho
Translated by Makoto Ueda
Basho and His Interpreters

Basho's poem is an activity-(process) biased poem not centered around an object.

coolness: a condition caused by weather (a summer kigo in Japan)..Coolness is intangible and non-static.

the crescent moon: an object, that occurs.

Mount Harguro is a sacred Buddhist mountain. It's not a proper noun. Haguro translated literally means: feather-black. States Kato Shuson, a leading modern haiku poet, author, and critic specializing in Basho and his poetic style: "*Through its semantic and phonetic effect, it creates the image of a black, massive mountain looming in the evening dusk.*"

Basho's haiku is about a scene at night. Its subject is not an object or objects. The coolness, the outline of the sacred feather black mountain, the awe and spiritual reverence it inspires in Basho, collectively, centers the poem around the creative power of nature.

As a reader of haiku, it is my job to interpret the haiku I read. Basho's poem hints at and suggests. I cannot read into the poet's mind. His poem leaves room for multiple interpretations. Coolness, feather dark mountain, Buddhism blending with Shinto and Daoist thought, faintness of sight as the feather black mountain blends with the night, its faint outline barely visible due to the low light from the crescent moon. This is haiku at its best. This is why Basho's haiku are remembered today throughout Japan. The poet followed the zoka, saw it as a teacher, not as an actual entity, or seasonal indication marker, and by doing so,

breathed life and memorability to haiku. Kigo is the heart and soul of haiku.

Modernist haiku poets in Japan and America are straying from and even poo-pooing the use of kigo, replacing them, instead with "key words," unassociated with the zoka Basho sternly admonished his followers to follow.

*country churchyard
folding chairs
on new sod*

Paul MacNeil

Country churchyard folding chairs on new sod

"country churchyard": an object and a generalized locale juxtaposed with "folding chairs on new sod": objects (chairs); a non-season specific term used as a kigo.

I've grown grass in the U.S. in spring, summer, and early autumn. Grass grows quickly when seeded and tended to properly. Where is the zoka, the creative power of nature in this haiku-like poem? The juxtaposition doesn't form a contrast that unearths the unsaid. Neither does the poem hint at or suggest something deeper than that expressed on the surface. As a former church pastor, the scene MacNeil paints with words is common, especially in rural churches built upon a small patch of land. The outside lawns at many of these churches are used for potluck picnics, and other outside activities, depending upon the size of the yard. Where is the mystery, the impermanence, the unpredictability of nature? We don't have a clue as to the season or the weather condition. It's a very ordinary word picture, nothing more. One can grow grass in a week with proper care, two weeks at the most, as long as the sun is out, the ground has been tilled, watered daily, and fed the right nutrients.

Is this world-class haiku? Is this even a successful haiku? No kigo, no mystery, just an average scene, one would call shasei, an invent Japanese modernist poet, Masoaka Shiki, borrowed from the pleine air painting movement of Anglo-Western Europe, and insisted that his style would be haiku's salvation as the haiku penned in Japan during his lifetime, had fallen victim to mimicry, Basho worship, redundancy, and conformity, lacking almost any sense of freshness and vibrancy that had popularized haiku during its pre-formative and formative years when Basho, Chiyo-ni, Buson, and a little later, Issa, were literary pioneers, the common people and royalty applauding their work. Everything they introduced was a concatenate of Japanese and Chinese culture: Daoism, shamanic animism, Shinto, Zen Buddhism, other Buddhist sects, Confucianism, all interwoven with a love and respect for nature that is quickly disappearing in Japan thanks to the colonization by the German-based university system that interpreted philosophy, nature, art, and social sciences via a language unable to grasp or fully fathom the richness and breath of the Yamato Japanese language, a language not suited for the Anglo-Western world's view of the aforementioned, as much of what the Japanese believed in that regard was intuited and a deeply ingrained part of their socio-cultural memory. The word "aesthetic" did not exist in the Japanese vocabulary until it was introduced by Anglo-Western aestheticians via writings,

lectures, and Japan's assimilation of Western thinking. The Anglo-West's conceptualization of aesthetics was predicated upon a belief in a sovereign creator who made nature for the benefit of humankind. It was also predicated on the non-Judeo-Christian beliefs of those who worshipped Roman, Grecian, Babylonian gods, via Socrates, Plato, and other great minds. In time, many of these beliefs merged into a shared belief.

For instance, Christmas was originally a Babylonian holiday called Tamas. It was a celebration that celebrated the birth of their god, Tamas. They celebrated the event with Yule logs, decorated trees, etc. Easter was a day to celebrate the death of Tamas, and part of the tradition included the distribution of colored eggs (representing fertility). Even though the historical Jesus was born probably in June to a 13 to 14 year old girl engaged to a man near the age of 40, as was the custom at the time, to gain the allegiance of the masses who were converted to Catholicism, the two holidays became days to celebrate the birth and death of Jesus. The synthesis of various pagan holidays and beliefs with Roman Catholicism and, to a lesser degree, with some protestant sects, is still practiced today in Mexico, the Philippines and other countries conquered by the Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese nations during the 14th and 15th centuries. In Japan today, Shinto and Zen Buddhism are often practiced as a synthesis of the two, since animism is very much a part of the Japanese culture from before China conquered the Ainu indigenous peoples of Japan, and afterwards.

coolness . . .
the sound of the bell
as it leaves the bell

Yosa Buson
Translated by Robert Hass

coolness: a season specific kigo in Japan (summer). Important to the use of this kigo is its context in relation to verses lines two and three.

sound: an intonation heard, but invisible

bell: an object

leaving: an action verb giving life to an invisible intonation (sound)

This is an activity-(process) biased poem that is dependent upon the unsaid to give it meaning. What is the sound of a bell leaving a bell? What does coolness have to do with the haiku? The use of kigo is not a literary tool using comparative visual stimulation to bring its message home. It is the poet's job to compose the haiku and the reader's job to interpret it according to his/her cultural memory, biospheric locale, education, experience, etc. No one can climb inside the mind of Buson and know exactly what he thought when writing the poem. Hermeneutics, cultural anthropology, a close study of the Yamato language, and other influences must be considered when doing an exegesis of a style of haiku practiced by a given poet.

Nothing in nature is stationary when studied closely. Everything is changing, impermanent, unpredictable, inventing, reinventing itself over and over again.

The weather is crispy, cool, the area so silent one can hear the intricacies of the intonation of a sound emanating from a bell that has been rung. I think of early morning or late at night, when stillness of sound is most vivid for the majority of people. Yosa hears the bell rung, it is different than what he's heard before, something special, but intangible. For him, perhaps it is a religious epiphany, a moment of sudden revelation or insight. Nature speaks in its own way, not as an entity but as a creative power; the sound generated by the ringer of the bell, interacting with the "coolness" of the air . . . a merging of human and zoka . . .

It is such a poem, when the poet follows and returns to the zoka in the course of composing a haiku that gives life and deep meaning to this minimal word poetic genre that is unlike anything written by non-haiku poets. Basho, Buson, Chiyo-ni, and Issa are remembered for the life and depth they breathed into their haiku as students and observers of the zoka. In essence, oftentimes they would become one with the zoka while writing the poem. Not all of the poems they composed, however, were written during what some people misinterpret to be a haiku moment. Basho, for instance, inserted a few haiku he'd written during renga tournaments in a few of his travel diaries. Nevertheless, they are products of Basho's observation, understanding, and relationship with the zoka.

Consider the following haiku-like poem by veteran Anglo-American haiku poet, Michael Dylan Welch:

garbage strike
the neon Buddha
eats the rainbow

Michael Dylan Welch

Is it a haiku? Is it activity-biased or object-biased? Is there evidence of an in-depth understanding of and connection with the creative power of nature, the zoka? Of course, not. Welch is either copying or mimicking Japanese modernist poet, Ban'ya Natsuishi's *Flying Pope* series, one of the worst imports from Japan, where haiku, as an art and cultural memory, is becoming more and more like Anglo-Western poetry due to the covert colonization of the Japanese view of life? Natsuishi has been heralded by veteran Anglo-Western poet, Paul Miller, in a review he wrote in *Modern Haiku* for Natsuishi's book, *The Flying Pope*, as one of Japan's top poets, even comparing some of his writings with Basho's. Miller, like Natsuishi, obviously lack an understanding of haiku, both of them educated by the German-based university system that defines aesthetics from an Anglo-Western consciousness.

Confronting a flock of geese
the Flying Pope
suddenly stops

Ban'ya Natsuishi

Writes Miller:

"Despite its surreal nature, there is no doubt that this is a haiku. It has the

keyword 'geese' (Ban'ya prefers keywords to kigo) and a cut. It does what the best haiku do: it offers a discovery or surprise, and leaves any interpretation to the reader. More important to this discussion, a poem such as this releases the poet from discoveries that only the poet could make. It instead allows poets to use their imagination and approach perhaps staid topics such as migrating geese from a fresh perspective. The question is no longer what do the geese mean to the poet but what might they mean to a flying pope?"

Miller calls Natsuishi's poem a haiku because "it has the keyword geese" in it and a cut. A short poem is not a haiku because it includes a kigo or a keyword regarding nature nor is it a haiku because it uses a cut. Natsuishi's short poems remind me of the haikai Matsuo Basho sought to rise up from in order to legitimize haikai as a genre to be taken seriously. Haikai prior to Basho consisted primarily of crass humor and comic verse, most of it made up.

The Flying Pope
winks sometimes
to angels

Ban'ya Natsuishi
The Flying Pope

What Miller asserts is haiku Natsuishi is penning has nothing to do with the zoka and the Daoist beliefs regarding nature that dominated Basho's haiku and much of the haiku written by Basho's contemporaries.

I like the way Miller ended his review:

"I cannot think of a better way to end than with a haiku of Ban'ya's that seems to touch upon that very decision each individual reader needs to make [as to what constitutes a haiku and the boundaries one can cross]:

*Waiting
for the Flying Pope
on the cliff*

Ban'ya Natsuishi"

"The art of haikai places fabrication before truth." He also wrote: *"Haikai is a joke within a fantasy."*

A pre-Basho Haikai:

*The Sao Goddess
at the arrival of spring
stands when pissing*

Sokan

Comments Professor Peipei Qui:

"Sokan's verse is representative of the haikai spirit in its early stage, and this distinctive approach to language and poetry sets haikai apart from renga. However, because the appeal of early haikai lay solely in its boldness and humor,

even to the point of being crude and frivolous, these verses did not possess lasting literary value."

The majority of Japanese haiku poets, conservatives and modernists alike, have lost track of the true role and meaning of nature in their poems. Much of this is due, as mentioned earlier in this paper, to the Japanese adoption of the German-based university system in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the influence of modernists, both of which I will address further in greater depth.

Compare Welch's poem:

*neon Buddha
the exclusivity
of rhinos*

Michael Dylan Welch

. . .with the following penned by Natsuishi:

*How many hair roots
have disappeared?
Flying Pope*

Ban'ya Natsuishi

Whose is following who?

American haiku -- a distinct poetic genre?

Hoshinaga Fumio is one of Japan's leaders in the Modernist gendai poetry school. Declares Fumio in an interview with Richard Gilbert in 2004, for *Modern Haiku*: "I have repulsion, revulsion exactly against the formal rules and approach, *kigo*, and various formal necessities."

Twenty billion light-years of perjury your blood type is "B"

Richard Gilbert

Poems of Consciousness: The Miraculous Power of Language: A Conversation with the Poet Hoshinaga Fumio, pg. 172

Ni-ju oku konen no gishyo omae no B-gata

Hoshinaga's poem is not what one expects when reading a haiku by a Japanese poet. It resembles nothing written by Shiki, the so-called father of modern haiku; nor does it resemble the haiku written by Issa, Buson, Chiyo-ni, or Basho. It has no connection with the *zoka*, it's object-biased, subjective, and Anglo-Western in approach, expression, and style.

Another example:

Athlete's foot itches –
still can't become
Hitler

Hoshinaga Fumio

Adolph Hitler, the dictator Japan partnered with during World War II, juxtaposed with lines one and two, reads like a senryu or a segment from an Anglo-Western free verse poem. There is no connection with nature, the poem, if you can call it a poem, is object-biased, obtuse, and meaningless for someone in the Anglo-West. If discussed by a group of poets talking about its meaning in an informal get-together or at a meeting, the discussion would teach no one how to improve their craft, unless they saw it as something that should be avoided.

The examples of North American haiku I have included in my paper were penned by seasoned poets. I could have cited poem after poem written on online forums and workshops by new and understudied poets that receive praise and encouragement, which would make Shiki choke up blood; poems that break almost every rule, often tell too much, have poor meter, and lack a connection with the creative power of nature. But that would be unfair to beginners and the misinformed. I see on some of these same forums and workshops (some un-moderated) similar poems by Japanese poets. The gap between Anglo-Western haiku and Modernist Japanese haiku is closing.

Writes Professor Gilbert in his *Kigo and Seasonal Reference: Cross-cultural Issues in Anglo-American Haiku*: "From the perspective of the Anglo-American genre, as with all unique cultural treasures, *kigo* may be an achievement witnessed, studied and admired, rather than possessed. It is also quite possible that poets and critics will proceed along an entirely different line. In fact, for many it seems unclear how to proceed regarding the birthing of a *kigo* culture in English. Likely, poets themselves will open us to new haiku vistas, yet there also exists a need for further understanding."

Many Anglo-Americans from the outspoken minority of haiku poets under the umbrella of the Haiku Society of America believe that *kigo* is a cultural entity indigenous to Japan, as *kigo* in the Japan *saijiki* (book of approved *kigo*) does not represent their views of nature, nor cultural memory. They also believe they are forging a new genre, yet refuse to give it an Anglo-Western name: thus, paradoxically, two genres with the same name.

Writes Gilbert, "Kigo is a culture. Because there is a culture, there are generally trends, but sometimes the change is drastic. . . . The *saijiki* is a collection of *kigo*; however, the entries in the *saijiki* do not cover all *kigo*. The *saijiki* is only one standard of *kigo*; *kigo* are always being born and have died within the nexus of haiku."

Traditionally in Japan, a haiku poet is expected to use only words from an approved *saijiki*. If the season word they want to use as a *kigo* is not in the *saijiki*, it's not allowed. Each word in their *saijiki*s represent things sometimes exclusive to their culture. Some words have meanings that the English language doesn't have for the same word, necessitating a hermeneutical understanding of the Japanese cultural memory in the place and time when a haiku is written, and today.

Writes Gilbert, "It is imagined that the contexts of seasonal reference in English equates to that of Japanese haiku, and by implication, that the literal contexts are

virtually identical . . . What has been missing from these discussions of kigo to date is their cultural context, which reaches to the heart of their expression."

It didn't help that when Japan opened up its borders to the Anglo-West during the Meiji era, many Japanese, having no words in their language to express their philosophical, religious, and aesthetic beliefs, had to use a language used to translate the Bible to express these beliefs to their Anglo-Western counterparts. Unfortunately, as I mentioned earlier in this paper, English wasn't a rich enough language to define Japanese beliefs, as the German-based university system adopted by the Anglo-West, from which Anglo-Western beliefs emanate, has no conceptualization of the Japanese mindset apart from the subjective limitations of their mindset. This resulted covertly into the colonization of Japanese thought, which the Japanese, eager to fit into the Anglo-Western world, bought to the extent that they imported the German-based university system to their shores, the educational system used today in Japan. The result is a watered down culture suffering an identity crisis, as you can see in many modernist Japanese haiku, which explains why my friend asked me why so much of the Japanese haiku she reads today isn't any different or better than Anglo-Western haiku.

Writes Professor Michael F. Marra in his book, *Modern Japanese Aesthetics*:

"In the last three decades of the nineteenth century, Japan was faced with the introduction, study, and digestion --- or indigestion --- of more than two thousand years of Western thought."

"In addition," continues Marra, "to the problem of mastering in a brief period of time the secrets of the political other, Japanese intellectuals were faced with the delicate task of linking their traditional thought to the newly imported philosophical systems. In the field of aesthetics, the major challenge was to explain a basic paradox: how to make sense of fields of knowledge such as literature, for example, that for centuries had been justified by Neo-Confucian scholars in terms of ethical principles --- 'to promote good and chastise evil' (kanzen choaku) --- according to the Kantian notion of 'purposiveness without a purpose.' How could the dependence (either religious or political) to which art had been submitted in Japan, on practical grounds, be transformed to a moment of autonomy and freedom?"

One has to remember that Japan had cut itself off from Western influence for centuries. Haikai had stagnated, Basho was elevated to a Shinto Deity, existing haikai schools each claimed to be a descendent of Basho's school, monuments to Basho were everywhere; the poetry composed: legalistic and mimetic.

That separation ended due to the insistence of a demanding U.S. Naval fleet during the Meiji Era in the 19th century. When the bamboo curtain was lifted, a socio-psychological tsunami hit Japan's shores that would have a dramatic affect on how Japan viewed the world and how the world viewed Japan; a tsunami that has yet to crest.

Three events rose from that momentous time according to Aesthetician Yamamoto Masao:

1. The Period of Enlightenment (1868-1878): Nishi Amane translated and adapted several important Anglo-Western works on Aesthetics, and addressed his country's top leaders. Nakae Chomin and Kikuchi Dairoku also translated and adapted Anglo-Western papers and books on Aesthetics. This was also the time when American scholar, Ernest Fenollosa, toured Japan delivering lectures on Aesthetics and the arts. He was a brilliant aesthete and speaker who greatly affected the mindset of Japan's intelligentsia and its university system.
2. The Period of Criticism (1878-1888): A period represented by Tsubouchi Shoyo, Futabatei Shimei, Toyama Masakazu, Onishi Hajime, Mori Ogai, and Takayama Chogyu.
3. The Period of Reflection (1888-1910): it was during this time that Aesthetics was formally adopted by Japan's academia. Enter the German-based university system. Chairs for this new field of academics were filled at Tokyo Imperial University and Kyoto University, the first of many chairs. In time, chairs would follow in the fields of art, psychology, literature, etc.

Writes Michael F. Marra in *Modern Japanese Aesthetics*:

"Behind the vocabulary of aesthetics stood a thick layer of Western philosophy that extended from Plato's notion of Idea to the Hegelian system of Absolute Spirit. The importance of aesthetics required Japanese scholars to explain and justify the new 'science' in the light of Western epistemology."

During the final 30 years, give or take a year or two, of the nineteenth century, Japan was faced with the Herculean task of assimilating and fathoming two millennia of Western thought.

Someone once wrote, *"The nation who controls language, controls the world."*

For Japan to enter and compete intellectually with the Western world, they needed to communicate on an equal playing table with their counterparts. Aesthetics was not a term used in the Yamato language. Aesthetic principles were culturally transmitted and intuitive in nature. The Yamato language was equipped for writing poetry and communicating the doctrines and belief systems indigenous to Japan. Even the Chinese words spoken by the Japanese had been adapted for use by the Japanese and didn't always coincide with their Chinese meanings. Japan's intelligentsia had to hurriedly find a way to link their traditional mindset to the psychology of the West. How could Japan put into words that would effectively communicate fields of thought (literature, philosophy, theology, etc.) that, as Marra points out, *"had for centuries been justified by Neo-Confucian scholars in terms of ethical principles --- to promote good and chastize evil (kanzen choaku) --- according to the Kantian notion of 'purposiveness without a purpose.'"*

Nishi Amane's theory, who is looked upon by many in Japan as the driving force to modernize Japan and make it competitive with the Anglo-Western world, major focus was to make the ambiguity and abstract principles inherent in the field of aesthetics acceptable to the Japanese government and Imperial Court so that they would allow and sponsor the development of academic chairs in Japan's

university system. Japan views aesthetics differently today than it did prior to opening up its shores to the Anglo-West. Currently, haiku in Japan and in America are becoming more alike than different. Is the utilization and understanding of kigo and other aesthetic principles different between Japanese and Anglo-Western haiku as Gilbert asserts? Or, are the two styles of haiku merging into one specific mindset?

Kigo: The Heart-beat of Haiku

Kigo is the heart-beat and essence of haiku. The Japanese cultural memory is one entwined with Zen Buddhism, Daoism, Shinto, and the ancient shamanic animism handed down by the indigenous Ainu, the original inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago. There are those who claim that Japan is a Zen Buddhist country, but fact, and a closer look, negate this Blythian cogitation.

Almost every article or interview I read today in English-language Anglo-Western literary journals, blogs, and how-to books, classifies haiku as nature poetry. Nothing could be farther from the truth when nature is understood through the Anglo-Western conceptualization of nature. Haiku is the merging of nature's creative spirit (zoka) with a poet's . . . The emptying of self until one feels a sense of timelessness in a now without preconception; a headspace easily grasped by shamanic animists and Daoists, unmarred by Anglo-Western teleological, German-based thinking and Judeo-Christian beliefs.

Kigo is movement, one breath from a continuum of breaths: the poet and zoka merging momentarily, the synergy, the piping of heaven, the unsaid and said, the is and isn't.

Shinto and shamanic animism both believe that animism is an actuality, which to the West (including Blyth) is superstition and thought, relegated to heathens and uneducated people. In the West, Judeo-Christian thought has permeated the geoscape as has their German-based educational system, which places man above nature. To them, nature is not a force but the product of a Creator who controls its every expression and who assigns nature to be below and for humankind.

The pre-colonized Japanese mindset saw everything in life as its equal: nature constantly changing and never static. It cannot be controlled by man, and is unpredictable. The four seasons and the transformations they bring about are the flourishing of life, give rise to deep feeling, and artistic catharsis. Via all forms of Japanese art, every cultured person was taught to return to the cosmic, recognize its beauty and follow its movements.

Shinkei in the epilogue to Iwahashi Batsubun wrote:

"A man who is ignorant of the Way [of poetry] is blind to the shifting of the four seasons, unaware of the deeply fascinating Principle coursing through the forms and colors of the ten thousand realms. He spends his whole life before a blank wall with a jar pulled over his head."

Nothing is what it appears to be. Nature is not predictable. It is never stagnant or subjective. It is the zoka, what David Barnhill describes as *"the creative force of*

nature that has the spontaneous tendency and ability to exhibit transformations that are beautiful. These transformations occur at different levels, from the four seasons to the changes in a scene that occur from moment to moment."

Zoka is the transmutability of time and nature of intangible artists whose brushes never stop.

Wrote the Priest Shotetsu in Conversations with Shotetsu:

"...when one gazes upon the autumn hills half-concealed by a curtain of mist, what one sees is veiled yet profoundly beautiful; such a shadowy scene, which permits free exercise of the imagination in picturing how lovely the whole panoply of scarlet leaves must be, is far better than to see them spread with dazzling clarity before our eyes."

Translated by Robert Brower and Steve D. Carter

Nature is always in a state of metamorphosis. A poet has within his or her ability to perform as nature performs. To find the essence of creativity, one must differentiate between the disposition of nature and the creative force (zoka) of nature. This is not to be confused with a spiritual deity. To understand haiku, one must understand zoka, which is a concatenate of Daoism, Zen Buddhism, Shinto, shamanic animism, and more. The Japanese believe the zoka is beyond man's ability to define, categorize, or predict.

Wrote Basho's disciple, Doho:

"The Master has said: 'Learn about pine from the pines and learn about bamboo from bamboos.' By those words he is teaching us to eradicate subjectivity. One will end up learning nothing with one's subjective self even if he wants to learn. To learn means to enter the object, to find its subtle details and empathize with it, and let what is experienced become poetry. For instance, if one portrayed the outer form of an object but failed to express the feelings that flow naturally out of it, the object and the author's self become two, so the poem cannot achieve sincerity. It is merely a product of subjectivity."

Sazoshi, Kohon Basho zenshu

The majority of Basho's teachings regarding zoka and the path of poetry were influenced by the Daoist book, *the Zhuangzi*, which Basho studied, and adapted many of its precepts into his view of life and haiku.

An excerpt from *the Zhuangzi*:

"He sees in the darkest dark, hears where there is no sound. In the midst of darkness, he alone sees the dawn; in the midst of the soundless, he alone hears harmony. Therefore, in depth piled upon depth he can spy out the thing; in spirituality piled upon spirituality he can discover the essence."

The Complete Works of The Chuang Tzu [Zhuangzi]

Translated by Burton Watson

Writes Professor Peipei Qui in her book, *Basho and the Dao*: "Matsuo Basho (1644-1694), the founder of the Shoman School [of haiku] who gained

posthumous popularity as Japan's greatest haikai poet, repeatedly instructed his followers to study the Zhuangzi. According to his disciples, Basho's teaching on haikai "encapsulated the quintessence of Zhuangzi's thought." There has been up until Professor Qui's book (She speaks fluent Chinese, Japanese, and English, making her uniquely qualified, according to Professor Donald Keene, to write on this subject) nothing written in any depth regarding Japanese Daoism; and what has been written have omitted several important aspects that have yet to be explored.

"Part of the reason for this lack of Western Scholarship," states Qui, "has to do with the complexity of defining Daoism. Modern Chinese scholars use two terms to define Daoist thought and religion: Daojia sixiang (Daoist thought) and Daojiao (Daoist religion): the differences between these two terms have made Daoism (an import from China) hard to explain." Further complicating the issue, states Qui, *"is when we look at Daoism in Japan, where Daoist thought and elements of Daoist religion have mixed with indigenous Japanese thought and beliefs, to the extent that most Japanese people have never realized that there is any relationship between Daoism and Japanese culture. Not surprisingly, no consensus has been reached among scholars as to which elements of Daoism were transmitted to Japan and what role Daoism has played in Japanese culture."*

Studies regarding Daoism and its contribution to Japanese culture have increased in recent years but Western scholars have focused their research in the area of religion, leaving the influence of Daoist thought on Japanese literature untouched. Professor Qui's **Basho and the Dao** is the first monograph in a Western language on the influence of Daoist thought on Japanese literature. It must be noted, however, that haikai, as it originated and matured during Basho's lifetime, was also influenced by Buddhist and Confucian thought, as well as shamanic animism. Oftentimes many of these belief systems would fuse together into a concatenation of thought and theory blurring the boundaries of the aforementioned belief systems as well as others.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist, of course, to see the influence of *the Zhuangzi* on Basho. He quoted from *the Zhuangzi* in his poetry, travel diaries, and urged his disciples to read and know *the Zhuangzi*. Writes Qui, *"Basho put forth his poetic principle to 'follow the zoka (C. zaohua, the creative) and return to zoka.'* A notion originating in the *Zhuangzi* and widely used in Chinese philosophy and literary writings, zoka implies the workings of the Dao in the natural creation and transformation of all things and beings." She also points out that in Basho's well-known haibun, *Oi no kobumi* (Essays in my pannier, 1697), *"Basho declares that zoka is the single most important principle that runs through all the arts. This declaration --- one of the rare theoretical statements the master left in his own writings --- reveals the fundamental principle of his later years."*

Fortunately for the haiku world, then and now, many of Basho's teachings regarding haiku and haiku theory, were transmitted to others via the writings of some of his disciples. Says Qui: *"By drawing upon the Daoist ideas, he greatly reduced the formalistic limitations inherited by haikai and widened its latitude for*

spontaneity." These Daoist inspired teachings enabled Basho and his followers to transform haikai from a humorous, oftentimes bawdy hobby to a respected poetic genre.

Basho was highly influential, and although he did not invent haikai (later renamed haiku by Masoka Shiki, a product of the German-based university system), he elevated the poetic art form to a new level; one of respect and artistic integrity. Haikai poetry took on a new dimension via its identification with the creative force of nature (*zoka*) as taught in *the Zhuangzi*.

Not familiar with the influence of Daoist thought on haiku, R.H. Blyth, who was not a trained academic or researcher in the field, saw haiku as a Zen Buddhist literary genre. His teachings have exerted a great influence on Anglo-North American haiku and still do, teachings that have marred the understanding of *kigo* and its true relevance to haiku. The German-based university system adopted by Japan from the Anglo-West has done much to colonize modern Japanese conceptualizations of haiku. This is why I asserted earlier in this paper, that Japanese haiku and Anglo-Western haiku are becoming more alike.

We don't need to be a member of any religion or sect, nor do we need to be Japanese to acknowledge and see the value of the *kigo* in haiku as advocated by Matsuo Basho and many of his contemporaries. It is the essence of a haiku, the tool most adept at giving a voice to the unsaid. *Kigo* embodies haiku as a representation of the creative force of nature (*zoka*). It is not a nature word, a literary tool, or a seasonal marker. It is the breath and life of haiku poetry. A haiku cannot be a haiku without a *kigo* that identifies with the *zoka*.

Nature, in the haiku mind, to be authentic, serves as a teacher and guide for the poet and for the informed interpreting the poet's haiku. It gives a voice to the unsaid, paints a continuum that's objective, and is event-biased versus object-biased. A true haiku is not focused on an object. Objects are impermanent and external. The process is more important than the object. The unseen and unheard, the internal, when melded to the external, bring the poet to the floating world where intuition and perception are teachers. The Daoists in China called the creative force of nature *zaohua* (in Japanese, *zoka*: to create and transform) and *ziran* (in Japanese, *shizen* or *ji'nen*: natural and spontaneous).

Today, the word used to signify nature in general is *shizen*, but in Basho's writings it meant: natural and spontaneous, thus the danger of using modern day Japanese/English language dictionaries to translate text written in an earlier era. *Zoka* and *shizen*, as Basho used them, signifies nature's activity versus an object-biased subjective landscape or object in nature; process versus object.

This is why I say haiku is not nature poetry, at least from the modern conceptualization of nature. It is much more. It is this much more that will transform haiku into the quality of literature Basho, Buson, Issa, and Chiyo-ni penned and envisioned during their lifetimes; a literature that is slowly losing its collective identity, influenced by Anglo-Western thinking in Japan and in the Anglo-Western world. Yes, Basho told his disciples to be different and unafraid of change. His intent, if one does a hermeneutical study of his writings, and

teachings attributed to him by Doho and other of his disciples, was not to encourage them to bastardize the genre by turning it into something it wasn't meant to be. He wanted them to have a fresh voice, a fresh perspective in their poetry's content, of which the zoka, according to Basho, had to be present and understood if one's haiku were to be taken seriously and classified as a haiku.

The Chinese painter, Zhu Yunming (1460-1526), wrote:

"Everything in the universe has some kind of life and that the mystery of creation, changing and unsettled, cannot be described in forms."

As haiku poets, we can easily write haiku using a kigo, and the short/long/short metric schemata indigenous to haiku. We also need to understand and see the value of using Japanese aesthetics as tools or styles, remembering that as poets, we are dealing with an economy of words, which, out of necessity, must hint at, suggest and bring to life the unsaid.

To paraphrase a saying about playing the guitar by the late, great classical guitarist, Andre Segovia, *haiku is an easy poem to write, but one of the hardest to write well*. Most importantly, Kigo is nature unbridled. We can learn from Nature, by doing what Buson did when composing haiku: observe the zoka, the creative, unpredictable force of nature that constructs and deconstructs all objects. Once this is understood, a poet's haiku takes on new depth.

Let me put this into perspective:

The Chinese, of course, wielded a huge influence on the language, poetics, arts, and socio-theology of the Japanese people, having been the nation that colonized the Ainu (Japan's indigenous people) and introduced them to civilization. As time evolved, Japan's educated spoke Chinese, wrote in Chinese, and read Chinese. Education was limited to the inhabitants of the Emperor's Imperial Court. To be unfamiliar with Chinese poetry, for example, would mark a man as ignorant and unstudied. Poetry was revered by the Court and held in the highest esteem.

Let us examine a section of a poem composed by the Chinese poet, Lu Ji (261-303):

"He ceases his seeing and reverses his listening, / Thinking in depth and searching round; / His essence gallops to the eight extremes of the world, / His spirit wanders high to ten thousand yards . . . He empties the limpid mind, fixes his thoughts, / Fuses all his concerns together and makes words."

The poet, Lu Ji, saw vacancy of mind and oneness with the zoka as the ideal mindset for a serious poet. True insight when composing a poem comes via the *"observation in darkness"* of the cosmos, and the ability to flow with its changing process. States Professor Peipei Qui in her book, *Basho and the Dao*: *"Literary creation is based on the unity of the poetic mind and the cosmos."*

Compare Lu Ji's words with the teaching of Basho as shared by his disciple, Doho, which I quoted earlier in my paper:

"The Master has said, 'Learn about the pine from the pines and learn about

bamboo from bamboos.' By these words he is teaching us to eradicate **subjectivity**. One will end up learning nothing with one's subjective self [a concept that runs counter to Welch's belief that "the future of haiku in English has also been engaged recently with a movement towards gendai haiku. Gendai simply means 'modern,' and in Japan, while it might be foolish to attempt a definition, gendai haiku tends to be more **subjective**, abstract, and even surreal in comparison to more traditional haiku, even while retaining the form and other characteristics of the genre. This development is a positive sign for haiku in English in two ways. First, haiku poets writing in English are clearly paying attention to contemporary haiku in Japanese, rather than just the old masters"] *even if one wants to learn. To learn means to enter the object, to find its subtle details and empathize with it, and let what is experienced become poetry."*

"For instance," continues Doho in his recollection of Basho's teachings, *"if one has portrayed the outer form of an object, and the author's self become two, so the poem cannot achieve sincerity. It is merely a product of subjectivity."*

The stillness of one's mind is the sanctuary where true poetry is born; a concept both Anglo-Western haiku poets and gendai (modern) poets need to infuse into their poetry.

It is the absence of a true understanding of the kigo's importance to haiku, coupled with the object-biased subjectivity in much of their poetry that is turning haiku into an easily forgettable genre. Too much emphasis is placed on the mistaken precept, popularized by Blyth and Kenneth Yasuda, called "the haiku moment." The heart and magic of haiku is not a moment, an epiphany, a mythical "aha" which is oftentimes an "oh no." Haiku is a genre unlike any other. Because of the economy of words and its connection with the zoka, haiku is a verse form of great depth that relies on the said and the unsaid.

Wrote Basho:

"Haikai has three elements: Sekibaku is its mood. While having fine dishes and beautiful women, one finds true joy in humble solitude. Fuyu is its quality. While dressed in brocaded silks and satins, one does not forget those who are wrapped in woven straw. Fuku is its language. One's language should stem from loneliness and represent the substance of things. It is very difficult to stay with the substance of things while joining in emptiness. These three elements don't imply that a person who is 'low' aspires to the high, but rather that a person who has attained the high perceives through the low."

Translated by Burton Watson

Anglo-Western poets oftentimes see nature as something beautiful, worthy of being framed; an object to be enjoyed visually.

Wrote Katsuyo Toyoda in his paper Approaches to Nature Aesthetics, 2002:

"Beauty in nature cannot be described by the two-dimensional visual mode. Such senses as smell, texture, and sound need to be included in nature appreciation. Moreover, functional characteristics of nature also need to be included. If we

merely put nature in a frame, much of the natural beauty will be missed."

We need a broader concept of beauty beyond the Anglo-Western mindset conglomerate in order to understand the true aesthetic value of nature. If a visual appreciation is not sufficient for nature aesthetics, what natural elements other than visual appearance can we value aesthetically?

American haiku and Japanese haiku *are not* two separate genres. Haiku is a singular genre, a legitimate literary form deserving of serious consideration world-wide. Currently, like a drunk, haiku wanders aimlessly through the world's streets, confused, having little direction, forgetful of the zoka that forged it. It's sake, a concoction of this and that, invented by students enrolled in the German-based university system school of Culinary Arts.

Let us rise up from the mediocrity of hallmark card verses, Neon Buddhas and Flying Popes; from one word absurdities ("Tundra"), and subjective object-biased Imagist/Modernist short poems masquerading as haiku.

If we want our haiku to be taken seriously, we must do as Matsuo Basho admonished his students to do: "Follow the zoka, return to the zoka."

Wrote Makoto Ueda, *"In pre-modern Japanese aesthetics, the distance between art and nature was considerably shorter than its Western counterparts."*

The covert influence of the German-based university system and its interpretation of philosophy and aesthetics coupled with the missionary influence of the Bible on said subjects has done much to dilute Japanese haiku and foster the arrogant stance of a group of Anglo-Western poets who claim to have developed a distinct genre of poetry, unrelated as a distinct genre to haiku, which they ironically call American haiku, a poetry without agreed upon boundaries and definitions by its adherents, that lacks vitality, memorability, and the depth to become more than a wisp of wind that comes and goes. Until haiku (there is only one genre) can grasp the reality and empowerment of the zoka it will one day, as Shiki once said about the mundane quality of haiku composed during his lifetime, wither into obsolescence.

There is no need, as I posited in my previous article on haiku aesthetics in the Spring issue of Simply Haiku, to reinvent the wheel. Those who try, embody Trumbull's words: *"iconoclasts who want haiku to be whatever they say it is, tradition be damned."*

Writes Professor Donald Keene in his book *Japanese Aesthetics*:

"The Japanese aesthetic past is not dead. It accounts for the magnificent profusion of objects of art that are produced each year, and its principles, -- suggestion, irregularity, simplicity, and perishability -- are not forgotten, even in our modern world of incessant change."

The following English-language haiku proves there is no need to reinvent the wheel, to alter haiku into something that isn't haiku. These poems are activity-biased, display an understanding of the zoka, and make use of the unsaid. These are haiku that can revitalize and redirect today's haiku to the place it once held

centuries ago.

a drop of pond
at the end of a beak
setting sun

Brad Bennett

oh rock ...
how long will it take
to wear you down?

Ted Van Zutphen

Without a trail...
the silence of snow falling
around the mountain

Vincent Tripi

fields flooded
beneath the surface, somewhere
the river bends

Christopher Herold

a black split
down the boulder's center. . .
end of winter

Bruce Ross

at the end
of the coal train's sound
winter dawn

Anita Virgil

frozen branches
measure the emptiness—
winter sunset

Lee Gurga

the river
the river makes
of the moon

Jim Kacian

calling
for the lost cat . . .
windchimes

Tom Clausen

None of these haiku need commentary. They are haiku that see nature as more

than an object or objects. The nature in their poems are "nature words" used as a prop to paint a picture. Nature is the ever-changing, unpredictable creative force. They see nature beyond the surface, in depth, and it is this in-depth communion with nature that unearths the unsaid, which only haiku can unveil.

Wrote Aldo Leopold in his essay, *Marshland Elegy*:

"Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language. The quality of crane lies, I think, in this higher gamut, as yet beyond the reach of words. Our appreciation of the crane grows with the slow unraveling of earthy history. His tribe, we now know, stems out of the remote Eocene. The other members of the fauna in which he originated are long since entombed within the hills. When we hear his call we hear no mere bird. He is the symbol of our untamed past, of that incredible sweep of millennia which underlies and conditions the daily affairs of birds and men."

The future of haiku in English is the same as the future of Haiku in Japanese. Unless its march away from the heart and truth of haiku abates, it will cease to exist. If Basho, Buson, Chiyo-ni, or Issa were alive today, used an unknown pen name, and could write in English, their haiku would possibly be rejected by in-print and online journals. With their rejection notices would be the usual neo-intellectual advice such as:

- Personification is not allowed.
- Metaphors should be used sparingly if at all.
- Your haiku sounds too Japan-like.
- Join an online workshop and get some experience under your belts.
- The word you call a kigo is not a true kigo.

One editor or wannabe haiku master will mete out advice, while another says the opposite. The majority of haiku in today's journals, blogs, and e-zines are primarily Imagist-centric, short free verse poems that are subjective, object-biased, lack the aesthetic tools to adequately hint at or suggest, are void of memorability, and are divorced from the zoka Basho said was essential to the writing of haiku. Read a haiku in one of the journals, then read a haiku penned by Basho. Which one do you prefer?

Here are two haiku I gleaned at random. Read a haiku by Basho, then a haiku written today:

where is the moon?
the temple bell is sunk
at the bottom of the sea

Matsuo Basho
Translated by Makoto Ueda
Basho and His Interpreters

yellow leaves ...
I search for

a tennis ball

K Ramesh

While The Light Holds Anthology

twilight dawn

a whitefish, with an inch
of whiteness

Matsuo Basho

Translated by Makoto Ueda

Basho and His Interpreters

swarming flies ...

a mail order bride
to go

Svetlana Marisova

Which haiku above do you prefer and why?

Bruce Ross perceptively notes in 1993:

"The fourth generation [of the mid-1980s on] of American haiku poets has through experimentation all but obliterated the requisite form and substance of classic Japanese haiku: there is a consistent lack of seasonal references, surrealist techniques and figurative expression are introduced, regular prosody is eliminated, and human, rather than nature, subjects are increasingly emphasized. Contemporary American haiku has been made a poetic vehicle for eroticism, psychological expression, political and social commentary."

For those who insist on bastardizing haiku, refuse to follow and return to the zoka, let them write short poems, called something other than haiku that depict the world as they have shaped it . . .

John Steinbeck wrote: *"The new American finds his challenge and his love in the traffic-choked streets, skies nested in fog, choking with the acids of industry, the screech of rubber and houses leashed in against one another while the town lets wither a time and die."*

Notes:

- I have the highest respect for Professor Richard Gilbert, and my disagreements with some of the things he has written are not to be misinterpreted as disrespectful. He is a brilliant researcher and writer who has done much to further haiku in the English-speaking world.
- Jim Kacian is one of my favorite American poets.
- I have great respect for George Swede, Charles Trumbull, and Lee Gurga. They have done much to further haiku in the English-speaking world, and I often read and reread many of their papers.

Study of Japanese Aesthetics: Part IV

Is Haiku Dying?

by Robert D. Wilson

A stray cat
shits in my
winter garden

Masaoka Shiki

Transl. by Hirosaki Sato and Burton Watson

The Country of Eight Islands

Almost everyone's familiar with the children's tale *Alice in Wonderland*. A young girl named Alice isn't satisfied with her life and often imagines living a better life.

One lazy afternoon, Alice lapsed into a daydream while sitting on the manicured lawn behind her parents' huge country estate under an elm tree. A hare (jackrabbit) speeds past her in a hurry. Hares have longer ears than rabbits and are well-known for their speed, abetted with long hind legs. If you or I saw a hare speeding past us, we'd think nothing of it. Human's aren't their favorite critters for obvious reasons. Equally, hares aren't a human's favorite critter. Rabbits are better tasting than hares.

One moment Alice is under the shade tree thinking, and in the next, she hears the hare talking about being late, running like a human. Acting like this was a normal occurrence. Alice follows the hare to its warren, which, in the human world, is impossible to do due to the hare's speed, and suddenly she is free falling down what seems like an endless black hole, her dress acting as a parachute.

No thud, horrific splat, a peep. The room she landed in was filled with light without a source. A strange new world without Aldous Huxley, in a continuum of time, where nothing was permanent, blue was green, and walls spoke in tongues. Alice grew, shrunk, and walked around as if she knew the place, and didn't think it odd that giant cats talked, caterpillars smoked, and oversized playing cards waited upon the Red Queen without a heart, who had a thing for chopping off heads. Did the Mad Hatter slip a tab of LSD in Alice's tea?

Daydreams aren't always like the dreams one has at night. One enters a world that is not always what it seems to be . . . a dream within a dream, half awake, half asleep? A slow motion dream deeper than a regular dream? An ether world transference, a psychedelic journey into illusion she thought was reality. Hours in dreams are mere seconds. In time, Alice tired of the dreams she'd painted, an attack on the subconscious mind, where everything is and isn't, where you can remain forever or leave the moment you find the roadmap and know what the

hell to do with it.

Alice had no control over what she saw and experienced. Her conscious and unconscious minds were in a tug-o-war, so real, she didn't know that whatever she wanted to think or see she could think or see. It was her movie to write, direct, and star in, in HD cinematic-color. Her unconscious mind was winning the tug-o-war so far, and she wanted to leave the warren, but like most dreams dreamt awake, Alice had to find the way out alone. What to do? Nothing was as it should be and there was no one around to help her.

Alice opened her eyes, and found herself under the huge tree behind her parents' house, as if nothing has occurred, which we as readers know did occur, or are we the dreamers, and Alice, the canvas we make with subjective illusions, thinking we know the answers, which cannot be because no two people think the same, whatever reality is or isn't? Plato wasn't Lao Tzu's classmate in grade school, nor was the Buddha, Jesus' classmate.

Once upon a time, whatever the hell time means, the average Anglo-Westerner thought and perceived words differently than most Asians. Then again, no one on the planet thought or thinks the same. Not everyone with almond shaped eyes think alike. Not every Native American Indian shouted, "Wooooo, Woooooo," and lived in a tepee. The Chinese and Japanese think differently. Croatians and Serbians, though neighbors, think differently. It applies to then and now, which just became then. Everything's in a state of constant change, nothing is something; impermanence, a reality.

Anglo-Western science and philosophy cannot deny; is and isn't, not a telegram to Alice from Wonderland wired by Al Hooka the smoking Caterpillar . . . just because you can't see something, or understand it, doesn't mean squat. Today, humankind has traveled through space; yesterday they thought the world was flat. A century from now, quantum physics will make what we know now, fossilized dung.

The more I study haiku, the more I find the Anglo-Western conceptualization of haiku to be a blender full of pride, laziness, misinformation, inbred racial prejudice (part of America's cultural memory is related to the attack on Pearl Harbor and the genocidal response by the U.S. Military via the dropping of two atomic bombs on two major Japanese urban centers, Hiroshima and Nagasaki); a watercolor of the subconscious mind playing hopscotch with a lack of discipline, and a big dollop of Japanese haiku theory influenced by the German-based university system's definitions of what is and isn't, thus the similarity today between Japanese and Anglo-Western haiku.

This is an area that demands study. There is a catalyst and an aftermath that has created a domino affect, with no end in sight. Haiku is quickly changing into something it isn't, with many claiming it to be an indefinable genre. Perhaps some haven't found the way to escape Wonderland.

Different traditions, East and West, have come up with different ways to treat the subject or nature of aesthetics, from the bare perceptual data to illusions created

by mirrors; from Plato, Socrates, and Nietzsche, to Confucius, Gotama Buddha and Fujiwara no Teika; a lot of neurochemistry, some damaged chemistry, and a restless brush. Maybe teachers and students, via a course of events in Japan, have lost track of haiku's essence, regardless of the language they used to express themselves poetically. Think about this as we examine haiku; and do it with an open mind.

Many poets in Japan are jettisoning mimesis, are too proud to say their styles of haiku emanate from Western-influenced Shiki onward poetics; and see the type of poetry Basho composed as the way to become a mush melon. They forget that Matsuo Basho went against the rank and file of his day, inserting common language and new kigo into his hokku. His concept of change was not with the form, or in the dismissal of kigo; or changing its look. He was an intellectual, not a thinker. He had better insight into kigo than anyone of his day, and saw its becomingness as haiku's activity-biased heart. Had Matsuo Basho not rebelled against the popular tide of the era and turned the haikai that was hokku into a separate genre made available to commoners, via the usage of common language and re-infusing *zoka* as the heart of hokku, none of us would be writing haiku today, in Japan or in the Anglo-West.

Wrote Yone Noguchi in his book *The Spirit of Japanese Poetry*:

"It is my own opinion that the appearance of Basho, our beloved Hokku master, was the greatest happening of our Japanese annals; the Japanese poetry, which had been degenerating for centuries, received a sudden salvation through his own pain and imagination. His greatest hope, to become a poet without words, was finally realised; he was, as I once wrote on the Buddha priest in meditation:

*'He feels a touch beyond word,
He reads the silence's sigh,
And prays before his own soul and destiny:
He is a pseudonym of the universal Consciousness,
A person lonesome from concentration.'"*

He sought change by instructing his followers not to imitate his poetic voice, but to find a fresh voice of their own. This is the duty of every good teacher: to teach the basics and teach them to be creative. Voice and structure are separate terms. How much more creative can one be if he or she is taught to follow the creative energy of the universe? Matsuo Basho's greatest change to haikai was turning it into a serious genre that took life and nature seriously, called hokku. He was one of a kind. Basho made poetry available to those living outside of the Imperial Court, thus letting the masses know that they too could compose haiku.

No haiku poet can be what Matsuo Basho called "a mush melon," if we are true to the haiku spirit and follow the *zoka* as our guide. Basho said we'd be copycats (mush melons) if we copied his style. He urged haiku poets instead to learn from *zoka*, which is unpredictable and impossible to completely ascertain. The man or woman who can understand *zoka* just as well ordain him or herself as God. As individuals, what we think are ours alone, illusions patterned after culture memory, experience, reactions to events, parental upbringing, education,

geographical biospheres, etc. Basho, Shiki, Shinkei, Shotetsu, Buson, and other great poets from the annals of Japanese poets taught us to study past masters, even those we didn't agree with. Basho never suggested that people reinvent a genre to suit personal conceptualizations to the point where the genre was no longer identifiable as haiku.

Japanese, Anglo-Oceanic, and Anglo-Western poets need to read and reread the words penned by Kenneth K. Inada, excerpted from his book *A Theory of Oriental Aesthetics*, Vol. 47, 1997. Inada's words are not an easy read and require contemplation and study; but by reading them in full, you'll gain a better understanding of this paper's importance.

Up until now, most Anglo-Westerners and many Japanese see and conceptualize haiku through the same academic mirror, though many are quick to say the opposite. Anglo-Westerners and the Japanese are proud people who think they are culturally superior. No living thing is superior in the Universe, including you and I.

Writes Inada:

"Sophisticated logical forms, from the emotional to the psychological, the visceral to the non-visceral, from the intuitive to the obvious, from the imitative to unguided cerebral exploration, permanence to impermanence, from pure science to theory, a being that's an object to a being that's in a constant state of metamorphosis, even after it's no longer; but who's to decide an eternity we have no conception of past the realm of theory?"

Many nations, influenced by the German-based university system, are in a state of confusion, caught between a restructured Japanese language that interprets many words and terms via the Anglo-Western mindset that the Japanese have bought into.

Continues Inada:

"All of the theories have presented us with some sense of what aesthetics is all about, but at the same time none has captured that sense with absolute certainty and universality. At this moment, to be sure, we are unable seriously to engage aesthetic elements that are absolutely certain or universal in either the East or the West."

Unlike Blyth, Yasuda and other scholars not versed in hermeneutics, aesthetics, anthro-linguistics, and pre-modern Japanese language, who saw haiku as a Buddhist genre, which no one thoroughly trained in the above would buy into today. Inada goes on to say:

*"The Tao is then the criterion for true natural existence, though invisible for the most part, and comparable to the Buddhist Dharma, the true norm of existence. **Both systems are in essence philosophies of process or becoming.** In the West, especially from the early Greek period, the process thought of such thinkers as Heraclites, for example, was overshadowed in time by the brilliance and dominance of Plato, who argued cogently for being over becoming,*

permanence over impermanence, in laying the foundation of epistemology. Henceforth, we have been heirs to this Platonic legacy for over two millennia. The introduction of Christianity undoubtedly had a great role in perpetuating this legacy, for example, in sustaining the spirit over the flesh."

--- And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and all over the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl in the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth ---

Genesis 1: 26-28
King James Bible

This view differs from the Japanese beliefs in Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Shinto, and shamanic animism: God the Creator versus Nature, a non-divine force that is always changing and is never static.

Writes Toneko Tohta in his new book *Poetic Conception on Living Things*, translated from the Japanese by the Kon Nichi Translation Group of which Professor Richard Gilbert is a co-translator:

"Human beings are living things, flowers and birds are living things, cockroaches are living things, tigers are living things --- equally all living things --- there is no need for one to obey the other. Human beings have parity with; that is, we are equal and equivalent as ikimono (living things, living beings)."

Tohta tells us this is the best concept to follow if we, as international haiku poets, want to build a beacon light of reason that will illuminate a new future for haiku poetry that will include acceptance by the Anglo-Western literary and Japanese literary mainstreams.

This is how the Japanese were originally taught to believe from the beginning, before the Chinese colonized their island archipelago. As for those from the Anglo-West who believe in one of the many conservative Christian-Judeo belief systems that take the Bible literally, these people must understand that what God created, according to the Hebrew Old Testament and Torah, was an ideal world to be inhabited and ruled over by sinless people. When Adam and Eve were booted out of Eden for disobeying God, they became sinners, people who insisted on doing things their own way, but blaming every mishap on God. Without God to guide them, they procreated a physical world they've been destroying at a momentum that is speeding up, and have caused the extinction and near extinction of thousands of living things, including the genocide of human beings

via an atomic power barely understood (March 11, 2011, Japan), global warming, warfare, pollution, tribal politics, greedy corporations, racial and ethnic hatred, and a quest for power. No creature is to rule over any other or over anything.

Maybe for now, unless humanity can get their act together one way or another, those in the Anglo-West, regardless of their belief systems, isms, or the lack of either, should heed Tohta's words; words that are followed by many of the world's indigenous tribes prior to and after the invent of civilization. Most tribal people learned to co-exist with nature. I call this paradise; a place where every kind of flora and fauna (including human beings) co-exist; instead of controlling and defining nature, we accept and learn from nature, taking nothing for granted. Currently in the world haiku community, *zoka* is primarily ignored as a teacher, with poets preferring instead, like Adam and Eve, to write whatever the hell they want to and still call it haiku.

In his book *A Philosopher's Poetry and Poetics* Kuki Shuzo makes an important statement regarding contingency that applies to the juncture of Japanese and Anglo-English-language haiku. A herpetologist encounters a two-headed snake that emerged from a snake's egg. The herpetologist, being a learned man regarding reptiles, doesn't find the phenomena surprising, whereas an unlearned person most likely will be surprised. Things in nature are unpredictable (*zoka*) and cannot be explained. There could be several reasons why a snake is born with two heads. Two different orders of cause and effect have met by chance.

"This is the world as totality that forces us to be surprised. We cannot ban the emotion of surprise toward the actual world. The actual world as a whole is a contingent being in which things that are things that are not have the possibility of becoming, and in which things can come into being with a different form. That is why we feel surprise for contingency, and here a big, deep problem is cast in a form that has no solution."

Like Tohta, Inada believes living beings are biological creatures, no more and no less, sculpting out their individual roles where they live, work, study and play, in wakefulness and in sleep. This creative endeavor is an experiential process in a continuum without end; a process involving non-perfect human beings, however, can be problematic, and slow down the perceptual process, when *"the empirical and rational faculties take brief (at times, extended) missteps by attaching to the data themselves [what they observe on the surface]."* This distracts one from his or her becomingness, an alternate mental pattern where one's senses and the mind hold sway over and direct the nature of an aware person's ensuing becomingness. This becomes a problem in that none of us are perfect, none of us are haiku masters, and none of us have arrived. Buddha's we are not!

Attachment and non-attachment, becomingness and non-being; permanence and impermanence; the said and the unsaid, activity-biased versus object-biased, koto versus mono, and other terms, weren't always understood the same way in Japan and as they were in the Anglo-West. This is still true in many ways today. To communicate on common terms, the Anglo-Western dominant German-based university system (that I continue to mention because its role in the alteration of

world haiku must be realized) chose the English language as its medium of instruction, which placed Anglo-Western thought as its springboard, making it hard for the Japanese people to express their cultural memory, which included defining words that didn't exist before this union was formed, or changing the meanings of words that existed in pre-modern Japanese.

Posits Inada:

"This is a natural occurrence not necessitating being or non-being to dominate the other. The things we understand and fathom the moment they happen are much deeper than what appears on the surface. To ascertain truth, one needs to grasp the symmetrical and the asymmetrical to see something clearly.

This dynamic perception is similar to the surging surf at a beach, where its active foamy appearance belies the constant support and content it is receiving from the unseen, intangible forces. With some imagination, I delineate the surging and rolling nature of perceptual phenomena thus:

If the symmetric nature depicts the so-called forward thrust in ordinary perception, the asymmetric nature, contrariwise, depicts a backward thrust, but here the nature of the thrust is significantly different in that it is without an act of dichotomy and consequent attachment. In this sense, the asymmetric represents the 'pure' content as contrasted with the 'impure' content of the symmetric... In its non-attached nature, the asymmetric is not only pure but also open. And so in its backward thrust, it absorbs and accommodates everything including the content of the past as it gives way to the forward thrust of the symmetric. But prior to giving way to the symmetric, the open and pure asymmetric thrust has already been incorporated via fresh new grounds, which will be taken over by the symmetric forward thrust. The asymmetric serves then as the pure potential of the momentary, i.e., the moment in its full realization, steps back, so to speak, before stepping forward. In this way, the symmetric-asymmetric relationship is a continuum of cyclic phenomena, a unique pulsation of interlocked momentary. Oriental dynamics, then, is always full or holistic, with the 'presence' of the unseen non-being or asymmetric component at play in the process."

When composing haiku, we must see beyond the surface, entering into the being-ness of nature as orchestrated creatively by *zoka*. Being-ness is a verb, not a noun. When everything we see, experience, smell, touch, and hear is in continual movement, it only makes sense to embody the object and enter into its becoming-ness, versus entering into an object with preformed subjectivity, seeing, in essence, only the surface of the incoming wave. Such a belief doesn't run counter to Anglo-Western theological and philosophical beliefs. Think of the new C-scans that take multi-dimensional pictures of a person's brain. The time will come, via quantum physics, that doctors will be able to get an entire movie of every part of the way, inside and outside, nothing excluded, that will enable them to operate on patients using such a device (instead of multi-dimensional they will be all-dimensional). Who would have thought at the beginning of the 20th century that one day people would be able to watch talking movies, let alone ascertain the concept of television and personal computers?

"To ignore this component," Writes Inada, "is to remain with a truncated vision and understanding ["the symmetric-asymmetric relationship is a continuum of cyclic phenomena, a unique pulsation of interlocked momentary. Oriental dynamics, then, is always full or holistic, with the 'presence' of the unseen non-being or asymmetric component at play in the process."]. But its 'presence' means the opening up of a whole new realm and vision of things that are in store for us. In this dynamic, the initial point of contact between being and non-being or symmetric and asymmetric is most significant and crucial. It is precisely here that I wish to make bold to assert that Oriental aesthetics begins at the very contact point of being and nonbeing (symmetric and asymmetric), a point where there is a 'balance,' though short-lived and momentary, within the becomingness of things. Yet it 'exists' in becomingness by virtue of its 'presence' as sensed in subsequent becomingness."

How one captures the existence and presence of something is not an impossible question to ascertain and answer. The answer is easy to bypass because some see it as a puzzle to figure out, like a Zen koan. The answer is: **Become the becomingness.** Don't become the wave as you see and conceptualize it from the surface. Each of us are in a continual state of becoming, therefore, we are becomingness. We all know there's more to us than our outer-selves. Who is the we inside of each of us? Are we in a state of becomingness, or are we actualized and no longer in need of growth? And when we die? Our thoughts continue, our heritage continues; my first wife's ashes were scattered in a year round stream; my parents' ashes were lowered with their fishing hats using a weight at the exact same sight in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Palos Verdes, California. Where the ashes go or how they are used or settled below the water isn't known. Whether or not there is an afterlife is for you to answer.

According to an old Chinese story, Ch'an Master Ma-tsu made fun of a monk for telling him that all of the wild geese had flown from the area. *"You say the geese have left,"* said Master Ma-tsu, *"but they have been here from forever."* Master Ma-tsu was teaching the monk that becoming is without direction nor objects to cling to; **the truth lies in the now of becomingness** instead of following what's presented by the senses (that can be bio-chemically damaged).

In a Daoist tale from the *Zhuangzi*, Chuang Tzu referred to goblet words (chih-yen) as representative of the nature of becomingness; in which a conversation using these words could transpire without a word being spoken that could be carried on all day long. Could Chuang Tzu find someone to talk to in goblet words? A goblet is a bowl-shaped cup made from glass or metal that can be filled with water or wine, and empties itself only to be refilled. The process is unable to be limited, but the job is done with ease. So should it be with all dialogues.

To compose haiku, every word counts. One's goblet needs to be filled. One has to say something deep in 17 syllables or less. The only way this can be accomplished is via the utilization of Japanese and other aesthetic tools, used not as a mimesis but as styles that bring to surface the unsaid. Personally, I prefer Japanese aesthetics (styles) as they've been used for centuries to give a voice to

the unsaid. It's when the unsaid and said conjugate via *ma* (the dreaming space just before the juxtaposition of two opposites), and the length of the *ma* that makes a haiku resonate like a monk's chant. Think of an orator building up to a climax, his voice rising, slowly at first, then building momentum . . . the audience in a state of anticipation, then suddenly, a semi-long pause, followed by a whisper, the speech's climax. This is *ma*; not a stop, but a state of becomingness; the audience thinking, dreaming, anticipating, becoming: an activity-biased space which appears on the surface to be a stop, but beneath the surface, there's a creative, intuitive movement the audience can't see, but feels. We must also be cognizant of the fact that anything can be poured into a goblet of words. It's the mixture, the ingredient, and the words that are formed that make or break a good haiku.

An example of a pouring mixed goblet of words:

Short one-lined poems that lack depth are easy to compose, and it doesn't take much thought or effort. Most modern English-language one-liners are incomplete sentences, possess no meter, and often tell all.

When I was studying for my teaching credential, I remember a professor friend of mine (we were the same age) who assigned a topic for his students, including me, to write an essay on. Several of the younger students came up to him after class and asked him, *"What do you want us to say? How Can we get a good grade?"* He looked at me astonishingly, then looked into his students eyes and said. *"I want you to think. That's why you are in this university. I won't give you an answer. Each of you knows how to think and have your own opinions. Express them well."*

"But, but . . ." they started to say. He ignored them, turned around, and asked me if I wanted some coffee. *"You know what?"* - he asked me on the way to the university cafe. *"Students today want everything easy. They want their grades handed to them on a platter. No one wants to think. All they care about are grades."*

The same goes with haiku composition. There's no formula to follow, though many use formulas: line one is reserved for a nature word which illustrates and sets the scene for the juxtaposition with lines two and three, which are usually object- (mono, subjective) biased, having to do with nature.

An example:

cinnamon breeze
his fingers as he dips
the churro

Deborah P. Kolodji
Wild Violets
Yuki Teikei Haiku Society
Member's Anthology 2011

This is a well-done Imagist short poem, and as such, it's a joy to read. In a paper

she penned included in the anthology *Urban Ginko* Kolodji talks about taking walks in urban areas, in which she takes nothing for granted, and writes down on a list, what she terms "haiku fragments":

" . . . I often write lists of haiku fragments instead of taking the time to try to compose a finished poem. I jot down everything I notice [which is a good idea]." Later, she'll "start to juxtapose the fragments I've written against each other." She is careful to separate seasonal observations from non-seasonal observations [another fine idea]:

Seasonal: *" . . . plastic poinsettias, winter solitude, winter streets, migrating birds, gray morning."*

Non-seasonal [a partial listing]: *" . . . musical ranchera, the smell of leather, toddler blows a toy flute, her nose ring, the bare skin of Aztec dancers . . ."*

Writes Kolodji:

"Writing haiku fragments is freeing, allowing me to focus on what I am experiencing in the moment, without the pressure of trying to make a poem work."

cinnamon breeze
his fingers as he dips
the churro

Deborah P. Kolodji

This poem isn't an activity-biased haiku. It is, however, a well-written object-(subjective, mono) biased haiku-like poem. There are those who'll disagree, of course, but said disagreements, more often than not, lack a well-researched academic basis with scant historical backing. It becomes a matter of friends backing up friends.

As an artist, I like Kolodji's short Imagistic poem. Its description, the "cinnamon breeze," illustrates the last two lines well, painting a subjective painting that tells all. As defined in The Dictionary App. included with the Safari OS: *"Juxtaposition is the placement of two things (usually abstract concepts, though it can refer to physical objects) near each other."* There is also the term, *"Random juxtaposition: two random objects moving in parallel, a technique intended to stimulate creativity."*

Kolodji's poem uses "cinnamon breeze" (which has no tie-in with *zoka*, the creative, unpredictable force of the universe), as a compound descriptive adjective. What's left for a reader to interpret? What gives the unsaid a voice? For a haiku to be a haiku, it has to follow specific guidelines. If one argues, as some do, that English- and Japanese-language haiku are two separate genres, then why are they called by the same name? Poetic genres are distinct poetic forms.

Kolodji uses a formula taught by many modern Japanese and modern Anglo-Western haiku-like poets. It looks like haiku, but technically, it isn't.

Since humans are a part of nature, and **if** *zoka* is vital to the composition of

haiku, as Basho taught his disciples, having learned this philosophy via the Daoist Zhuangzi and Buddhist teachings (in Chinese *zoka* is called *zaohua*), haiku poets should follow the examples of those who were successful before them; whose poetry is still remembered; those who believed in the becomingness of everything in nature, of which we are a part; orchestrated by *zoka*, the unbridled, unpredictable creative spirit of nature . . . : haiku masters like Buson, Basho, Issa, Chiyo-ni, and Hayano Soa (Buson, incidentally, who was held in high esteem by Shiki, worked for Soa as a domestic helper and scribe, having little financial resources other than the small amount he earned from selling some of his paintings. Soa admired Buson and took it on himself to be Buson's haiku teacher).

Wrote Makoto Ueda in his book *The Path of Flowering Thorns: The Life and Poetry of Yosa Buson*:

"Buson's master Soa, known as haijin in his earlier years, had studied haikai in Edo under Takari Kikaku (1661-1707) and Hattori Ransetsu (1654-1707), two early disciples of Basho."

Yuki Sawa and Edith Shiffert in their book *Haiku Master Buson* translated a segment from the Preface to *The Collected Haiku of Shundei [Shoha]* penned by his son, Shundei Kushu jo in 1771.

In the preface, Shoha's son cites a conversation between his father and Yosa Buson:

"There are no gateways to haiku. There is only the haiku gateway itself. Here, I will only quote a theory of fine art. Great artists do not set up a gateway [school]. A gateway exists naturally. Take all the streams into your water bag and keep them and choose for your naturally. It is the same with haikai too. Take all the streams into your water bag and keep them and choose for yourself what is good and use it for your purposes. Think for yourself about what you have inside yourself. There is no other way. But, still, if you don't choose appropriate friends to communicate with, it is difficult to reach that world."

"Shoa [Shundei] asked, 'Who are the friends?'"

"I answered, 'Call on Kikaku, visit Ransetsu, recite with Sodo. Accompany Onitsura [Basho's associates, all dead at this time]. Day after day you should meet these four old poets and get away from the distracting atmosphere of the cities. Wander around the forests and drink and talk in the mountains. It is the best way if you acquire haikai naturally. Thus should you spend every day and some day you will meet the four poets again. Your appreciation of nature will be unchanged. Then you will close your eyes and seek for words. When you get haiku, you will open your eyes. Suddenly the four poets will have disappeared. No way of knowing where they became supernatural. You stand there alone in ecstasy. At that time, flower fragrances come with the wind and moon-light hovers on the water. This is the world of haikai."

A swallow has erased a rainbow above the face of the sea

Kikaku

Trans. Hiroaki Sato and Burton Watson
The Country of Eight Islands

Under flying sweetfish clouds flow in a stream

Uejima Onitsura

Trans. Hiroaki Sato and Burton Watson
The Country of Eight Islands

**Harvest moon,
And mist creeping
Over the water.**

Hattori Ransetsu

Translated by Robert Hass

Writes Jane Baker in her paper *Soft upon My Shutters*, published in *Yellow Moon*:

"Ransetsu was concerned with time passing, with the transience of beauty, with capturing the unity of man and the natural order in the experience of natural phenomena and universal processes.

A hallmark of Ransetsu's work is his compassion for all living things and their condition."

**Taking me along
my shadow comes home
from moon-viewing**

Soho

Trans. by Fumiko Y.Yamamoto and Akira Y.Yamamoto
Haiku: An Anthology of Japanese Poems

Buson, in essence, was influenced by Basho via a student of his disciples. When studying the lives of Buson and Basho, one observes that the two were not equal halves of a mush melon. They did, however, have in common the belief in *zoka*. When we can go to and return to the *zoka*, and see nature as an equal, instead of an underling, we can transform our haiku into a form of becomingness: activity- (koto, process) biased poetry. So did most of those they influenced. Buson had more in common with Basho than Shiki had with Buson.

The opposite happens when a poet focuses his poem on an object. A photograph is taken, a painting painted. Nothing's forever except the universe; a continuum of time that builds, destroys, rebuilds, alters, with the metaphysical in its wake; a path built in the past that always was, never ended, and never ends. We are impermanent building blocks (our thoughts, our aura; our illusions and ashes) that continue what is and isn't. The becomingness of one who has become a partner with *zoka*.

Writes Professor Peipei Qui in her book *Basho and the Dao*:

"In his famous haibun, Oi no Kobimi (essays in my pannier [part of a skirt looped up around the hips], 1687), Basho declares that zoka is the single most important principle that runs through all arts."

Zoka is a Chinese principle that originated in the Daoist tome, the Zhuangzi, and was adopted by Chinese sages, philosophers, writers, artists, and poets.

States Qui:

" . . . zoka implies the workings of the Dao in natural creation and transformation of all things and beings. Applied to artistic creation, it refers primarily to naturalness and spontaneity."

To understand *zoka* and the real meaning of *kigo* from a pre-Shiki Japanese standpoint, one must enter into the Japanese mimetic Daoist mindset (their conceptualization of Chinese Daoist principles as applied to their culture). Prior to Basho, haikai was a comic verse not taken seriously (much like the quips and laugh-lines used by comedians and many poets who think they are composing *senryu*). Matsuo Basho and others wanted haikai to mature.

An example of a haikai composed by Zokan:

**The Sao Goddess
at the arrival of spring
stands when pissing**

Saohime no / haru tachinagara / shito o shite

Teimon haikai Shu, vol. 1, in KHT, ed. Nakamura Shunjo and Morikawa Akira, chapt, 1:44

Compare the haikai above to the following *senryu*, written by David Giacalone, in *Simply Senryu*, 2010:

**Palm Sunday -
the boys giggle
when the priest says "ass"**

David Giacalone

and to this haiku listed under the header:

Editor's Choices, in Heron's Nest, Volume XIII,
Number 3: September, 2011:

**nuclear disaster—
the heads of state
share a cucumber**

Robert Witmer

Writes Qui:

*"Through the dynamic process of reading and reinterpretation of the Zhuangzi, the haikai poets borrowed the foreign and the old to reinvent the indigenous and the new, transforming haikai from an entertaining past-time to a poetic form that was at once **uniquely Japanese and universal.**"*

The Japanese created the haiku genre. It is impossible to view haiku any other

way without either bastardizing haiku or turning it into an altogether different poetic genre, with a non-mimetic name. **To call two different genres with two separate outlooks the same name is absurd.** *Americans didn't invent haiku before the Japanese or haiku of any form.*

The American love affair with haiku came about a decade after the United States Armed Forces annihilated Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and took temporary possession of the country, which included forcing the Japanese Emperor to humiliatingly declare that he was not a God, and would never again lead his country politically. The American Government helped Japan form a democratic government with the contingency that they never use atomic energy in any way (March 11, 2011).

People at the time, in the United States, including children (I was one of them), were also indoctrinated by racist cartoons (remember Black Sambo, and the corny characterizations of Japan's emperor in Saturday afternoon movie matinees in the 1950's and early 1960's made by Looney Toons); the satirical comedians, and biased newsreels. Racial segregation was still practiced in many Southern U.S. states. Many people belonging to the Haiku Society of America lived in the 1940's and 1950's.

A thought, not a dictum: Is it possible that many Americans still do, like those living today in the Philippines, harbor a deeply embedded resentment and anger towards the Japanese, especially those reared in families that lost relatives in the war, or whose relatives were forced to walk in the infamous "death march" of Bataan? Could this, in any way, influence the desire of some Anglo-Westerns to turn haiku into an American genre free of what many label "**Japanization**"?

Only a blind person would deny the hatred many Americans have for Muslims after 911, and the prejudice of Whites towards Blacks, and Blacks towards Whites since the formation of the United States, a land stolen from indigenous tribal peoples.

Not everyone composing haiku in America today are liberal, compassionate, forgiving Buddha's. Prejudice often occurs when a person or race think they are better than others.

During World War II and after the war, many in America and its then territory, the Philippines, where babies were bayoneted and women forced into prostitution, were biased against the Japanese just as many Vietnam Veterans today are biased against Vietnamese people in the U.S. or in Vietnam. The running joke by many comedians after World War II was if something was cheap and poorly made, it was made in Japan. Prejudice is often culturally ingrained by major adult role models like one's parents.

**I'm not fond of Japs
But at least they're not Negroes
And Haiku is fun**

Mark Rivers

<http://www.vanguardnewsnetwork.com/v1/index270.htm>

Leaving the Mad Hatter's Tea Party

For literally eons, Buddhism and Daoism have served as guides for individual integration and emulation in Japan. Albeit, steady balance is a goal that's attainable by serious and dedicated training to fend off any movement toward the realm of being.

This is not to say that we must become Confucians, Buddhists, Daoists, Shintoists, and shamanic animists to compose haiku. It does mean, however, that we need to better understand the thinking behind those who gave the world haiku and to see Japanese aesthetics as a series of poetic styles (not belief systems) that unearth the unsaid, and make the best use of a minimalist poem consisting of 17 syllables or less. It is through study, daily in-depth practice, emulation, more practice, more composition, and the willingness to empty ourselves as beings that are or are becoming that we can better learn to compose haiku. A non-Japanese poet doesn't have to drink tea, sit on a bamboo mat, and write about cherry blossoms and silk sleeves to produce quality haiku. We must be ourselves, but also disciplined in how to write haiku. Non-adherents of Japanese faiths do not need to give up their belief systems to compose unforgettable haiku as Svetlana Marisova successfully pointed out via haiku expressing her belief in Catholicism:

deep within
I dissolve; I dissolve
into God

pouring blood
over the altar . . .
winter lamb

this stillness
in the still turning world . . .
my thunder

Svetlana Marisova

I wrote this for Svetlana a few days before she passed on:

in the palms
of God's hands, a light
with wings

robert d. wilson

Another example of a well-written haiku composed outside of a Japanese ethos:

under a wild sea
the earth's heart breaks open
into birth

Margaret D. McGee
Haiku the Sacred Art

Posits Onada:

*"It should be noted that the well-trained expert in any field, such as the martial arts, has by and large mastered this balance in perception and is thus able to function creatively. The expert is also at home with whatever techniques are required, but these are, in the final analysis, secondary and ancillary to the basic retention of balance in being-in-nonbeing. **In the creative realm, the aesthetic quality exhibits itself in terms of the sustenance of the balance in becomingness.** That is to say, rather than a once-displayed phenomenon of balance, the expert is able to preserve it in such a way that his work will issue forth something novel and unique. The aesthetic quality arises in virtue of capturing the balanced dynamic becoming or the fluid complimentary of sustained being-in-nonbeing. **It should be noted that any polarization in the realm of being and attendant attachment to its elements will prevent the rise of any aesthetic quality since becomingness will now be dominated by a mechanical nature procedure wherein elements are repeated in a strained sense.** We could refer to this mechanical and repetitive nature as a form of ontological lag because such a nature deviates from and blocks the harmonious function of becomingness. The lag specifically refers to the attachment to the diversionary elements and slows down, so to speak, the natural flow of things."*

nothing but ink to nail

Becomingness is a key concept in the composition of haiku. Haiku is not object- (subjective, mono, or static) biased poetry. To exclude the essence of nature, using it instead as icing on a cake or as a comparative illustration to something said or seen, destroys the premise of the haiku Matsuo Basho realized, and the waka poets before Basho realized. The same goes for all poets after Basho's death, who remained true to the foundation hokku was based upon: *zoka*, impermanence, and becomingness.

The word "kigo" is defined as a season word or indicator by most Japanese and English- language haiku journals, on-line and off-line. Nothing else is usually said regarding the definition of kigo. Kigo, however, is so much more. Because of the modern world's ignorance of the term, via indoctrination by the German-based university system, and the laziness of pseudo scholars, kigo is often thought unnecessary in Japan and in the Anglo-West. This is perhaps why some say a haiku like Claire Everett's below is not a haiku (it has no kigo in the Japanese *saijiki*), and why some poets are switching to key words not found in *saijiki*:

vagabond sun . . .

nothing but ink to nail

my shadow

vagabond sun... Vagabond nor sun is a universal key word
and we are not bound by Japanese
*saijiki*s. Here in the Philippines, for
example, the sun is almost always present.

my shadow Shadows occur all year long. To call one a seasonal indicator would be ludicrous.

The use of "vagabond sun" indicates an act of nature guided by *zoka* that cannot stay still, and is a continuum of becomingness.

A "shadow" is an act of nature caused by an interaction of darkness and light, without set design, also in a state of becomingness. Everett's poem, of course, is an activity- (process/koto) biased haiku not centered around an object described subjectively. It is the state of becomingness (the process) that makes her haiku stand out, and memorable. Because the sun is in a continual state of motion, it continually travels over high trees, behind mountains and clouds; her shadow, lightly visible, allegorically can only be still in the thick of darkness ("ink") enhanced by the word "nail."

Claire Everett

Simply Haiku, upcoming Autumn/Winter issue

Wrote Shinkei in *Sasamegoto* (13:139) and translated by Professor Esperanza Rameriz-Christensen in her book *Emptiness and Temporality*:

"A man who is ignorant of the Way is blind to the shifting of the four seasons, unaware of the deeply fascinating Principle [en fukaki kotowari] coursing through the forms and colors of the ten thousand realms. He spends his whole life before a blank wall with a jar pulled over his head."

Kigo is a *zoka* indicator. *Zoka* is the creative power of nature that sculpts the universe, creates the seasons, empowers the seasons, shifts the seasons, even when tampered with by humankind. No season is the same every year, nor is the weather. There are droughts, places in the Congo under an umbrella of dense growth that have never experienced sunlight, places that never experience rain; Arctic and Antarctic regions that experience sunlight for half a year, and nighttime for another half. Unfortunately, Japanese poets, by tradition, used kigo (nature) words from *saijiki*s that originated from Japanese Emperors and their Courts. They were limiting (because a poet could only use the words in said *saijiki*s to describe the season the *saijiki* said it designated, even if the word they wanted to use could be used to describe what was occurring in another season [a plasticity in a poem that was supposed to be based on truth]). As evidenced during the Meiji Reformation period, the Imperial Court ordered *saijiki*s to be rewritten, and even distorted historical facts, to reflect and maintain the Confucian reign of the Emperor, who feared that Anglo-Western influence would topple the government and introduce them to concepts that strayed from group think.

Writes Professor David Landis Barnes:

"Life is animated by a divine breath, which unifies all things in a single cosmic vitality, yet makes all things distinct. Nature is ever shifting, and these transformations --- of each moment and through the **four seasons** --- are the flourishing of life. They give rise to deep feelings and to outstanding art. The artist and every cultured person should return to this cosmic creativity,

recognizing its beauty, and follow its movements."

Wrote Kobayashi Issa:

"Single mindedly we should devote ourselves to befriending the four seasons, following the way of nature, and revealing the truth that lies in our hearts, instead of concerning ourselves with verbal elegance."

Transl. by Makoto Ueda

Dew on the Grass

You don't need a saijiki if you are alive and have been outdoors, or can see through a window, as Shiki did, when he was bedridden. Nature is everything natural that exists in a universe that has no beginning or end. *Zoka* is the creative force (not a deity) that shapes and reshapes the totality of nature, of which the earth and humankind play a small part.

Is there a vast difference between the Japanese terms "becomingness" and "non-being," and the following Christians terms:

"Be ye perfect," spoken by Jesus in Matthew 5:48 (NT) in his Sermon on the Mount (in the Greek language this term was penned in), is translated: 'Be ye continually growing' [becoming], and what Jesus said in Luke 9:23: "For he that is least among you all, the same shall be great."

Compare these definitions with this excerpt from the Daoist book *Dao De Jing*:

"A journey of 3,000 miles begins with one step. If one tries to improve a thing, he mars it; if he seizes it, he loses it. The wise man, therefore, not attempting to form things, does not mar them, and not grasping after things, he does not lose them . . . One must be careful to the end as at the beginning if he is to succeed."

Laozi

Dao De Jing

Chapter 64

Laozi's telling his readers not to interfere with the process of becoming. Becomingness is continual. Even when we die, the cycle of becomingness prevails. Some believe we enter a spiritual realm, some believe our memories continue to grow, sometimes as a reinvention. Nothing is static.

Whether there are vast differences between the two schools of thought presented above, given their opposite philosophical birthing grounds, is unimportant to a person writing haiku. One can even be an atheist.

Aesthetics, when balanced and used correctly via suggestion instead of "telling all," are valuable tools. The purpose of a haiku is not to convert one to another's religion or culture. The purpose of a haiku is to stimulate your mind and get you to step into an event- (process, koto) biased activity with a mind emptied of preconceptions and thoughts based upon the experiential; to interpret a haiku via pure observation and a concatenation with the unpredictable, non-static, creative power of nature; the birthplace of cognitive insight: *zoka* (something humankind has yet to control).

Problems arise when humans see into a haiku something they are looking to reinforce in their own lives. They want it to be a mirror instead of the Dao (translated: path).

For example:

Matsuo Basho composed a hokku for his students that was and still is grossly misunderstood by many Anglo-Western poets and the Japanese poets they colonized via getting Japan to adopt the German-based university system and its views of philosophy, aesthetics, the arts, poetry, prose, even science, though semi-mitigated, as the Japanese did with the Chinese language; this and the continued watering down of their language (modern Japanese) to accommodate this new thinking.

**Do not resemble me—
Never be like a mush melon
Cut in two identical halves**

Matsuo Basho
Transl. by Makoto Ueda
Interview with Makoto Ueda,
Professor Emeritus, Stanford University
by Robert D. Wilson
Simply Haiku/Autumn/2005

Said Professor Ueda in my interview with him for *Simply Haiku* in 2005:

"When a mush melon is cut in half, each piece looks the same. Thus, in the Japanese language, halves of a melon were often used as a simile to describe two identical things. Probably melon slices were served when Basho wrote the haiku in question. He compared himself to one half of a melon and told his friend not to be the other half that looked exactly the same. His friend was a merchant, so Basho had all the more reason to want him not to be like an artist. The haiku, when it is seen by itself, has more general implications: the teacher wants each of his students to develop his own talent and explore his own area."

Wrote John Brandi in *The India Journals* (Rio Arriba, N.M.: [s.n.], 2007):

"I toss in my tattered copy of Basho's poems, smudged and dog-eared, well broken-in with travel. I stop for a moment and randomly flip it open:

**Do not resemble me,
never be like a mush melon
cut in two identical halves.**

Basho advised students to cut their own trails, to not follow in his footsteps. Over the centuries that's exactly what's happened. Basho's influence, his dictums, his examples of poetry emerging, not from school rooms, but from a life fully lived, remain. But haiku has been transformed as it has traveled continents, cultures, and languages. Basho became his own frog, and disappeared into the water. He left only a sound, a splash, a lasting ripple spreading to the edges of the pond. Nakumara Kusatao, leader of Japan's Humanist Poets in the 40s, called Basho

'Japan's first modern poet' and said that his poetry represented 'art for life's sake.' Basho, on his many walkabouts, was always the 'absent traveler,' erasing the ego, looking beyond the self, yet seeking what was meaningful within.

Something to be considered deeply in this everybody-for-themselves era."

Wrote veteran American haiku poet, Anita Virgil, in her article Interim in the Summer 2005 issue of *Simply Haiku*:

"As this admonishing poem (given to a student shortly before Basho's death) implies, to emulate continually is not to permit one's own talents to grow:

**Do not resemble me—
Never be like a mush melon
Cut in two identical halves**

Matsuo Basho

Translated by Makoto Ueda"

What Basho was telling his student via this hokku, who, of course, shared this with fellow students, and the admonishment contained therein is that haiku poets must have a fresh voice and be original in style, subject matter, and voice. Clones are boring and their work is plastic. There can be only one Basho and there can only be one you. If future haiku poets mimicked Matsuo Basho, there never would have been a Buson, Issa, Shiki, an Anita Virgil, Claire Everett, or a Svetlana Marisova.

To the detriment of modern English-language haiku, Basho's haiku quoted above has been interpreted by many as a license to break every rule, to transform haiku into **a short poem that can't be defined.**

Is this undefined transformation by many a zappai or haiku?

Are many naively writing haiku-like zappai instead of haiku?

Kato Ikuya, according to Professor Gilbert in his book *Poems of Consciousness*, stated:

*". . . defines zappai as 'haiku schools' processing 'a wide variety of **uncategorized styles**. Taking this definition in its broad sense, we might say that 5/7/5 poetry, which exhibits uncategorized 'haikai taste', defines zappai."*

An example from Gilbert's book:

**at the red light
crossing all-together ---
fearless!**

aka shingo minna de watarreba kowaku-nai

Kitano "Beat" Takeshi

Current examples from The Haiku Foundation Haiku Now archives:

The morning is here—

Orange Juice in a Flintstones glass.
What should I do next?

—Cory Ryant

Haikunow!! 2010: A winner in the traditional haiku category

**through school vo
— the sic cal
ning win mu warm-
mor dow the up
spring of**

Rafal Zabratynski (Poland)
Haikunow! 2011: A winner in the
innovative haiku category

**no leaves
at all
behind you**

Scott Metz
Modern Haiku

Professor Richard Gilbert is, in my opinion, the world's leading expert on zappai poetry.

See pages 238-239 in his paper The Distinctive Brilliance of Zappai:
Misrepresentations of Zappai in the New HSA Definitions, *Simply Haiku*, 3:1.

Gilbert's paper was written as a rebuttal to the current Haiku Society of America's definition of zappai:

The [Haiku Society of America](#) refers to *zappai* as "*miscellaneous amusements in doggerel verse.*"

NOTE: This controversial rebuttal enraged William Higginson, a columnist for *Simply Haiku*, that consummated with his leaving *Simply Haiku*. In a farewell e-mail, addressed to me, he told me that printing Gilbert's critique of the HSA definition of zappai was a big mistake that will bring down *Simply Haiku*.

It didn't.

In the United States, a group of American poets guided by only a few available English-language books on the haiku genre, especially those penned by R.H. Blyth and Kenneth Yasuda, composed haiku in the 1950's, influenced by the faulty scholarship in these books. A few, like my father at that time, wrote haiku independent of Blythian dogma, but were still limited by translations that weren't cognizant of the differences between the old Japanese language, and the watered down modern Japanese language influenced by the Anglo-Western German-based university system, we'll study in depth later in this paper.

How do we in the Anglo-Western sphere of thought avoid becoming mush melons

and wax creative within a genre with specific rules dependent upon the use of styles ---defined today by the Anglo-Western dominated mindset? Is the answer a free for all, anything goes philosophy denying anything to do with pre-Shiki Japanese thought? Is it a denial of our own sub-cultural memories including prejudices that cause many not to adopt and utilize styles that are responsible for producing haiku with depth and memorability like those penned by Basho and other pre-Shiki pioneers?

Wrote Yoni Noguchi in his book *The Spirit of Japanese Poetry*:

"Basho always spoke from the same reason that there was no other poetry except the poetry of the heart; he never thought literature or so-called literature to be connected with his own poetry, because it was a single noted adoration or exclamation off-hand at the almost dangerous moment when his love of Nature suddenly turned to hatred from the too great excess of his love. It is the word of exclamation; its brevity is strength of his love.

Hokku means literally a single utterance or the utterance of a single verse; that utterance should be like a "moth light playing on reality's dusk," or "an art hung, as a web, in the air of perfume . . ."

Time to purify:
midwinter water dragons
writhe across men's backs

Kobayashi Issa
Trans. by Sam Hill
The Spring of My Life

plum flower scent ---
where has the snow woman's
ghost blown to?

Chiyo-ni
Woman Haiku Master
Transl. by Patricia Donegan & Yoshie Ishibashi

Mountains have darkened
and the field, in a twilight
with pampas grass.

Yosa Buson
Transl. by Yuki Sawa & Edith Shiffert
Haiku Master Buson

How tranquil it is!
Penetrating into the rocks
the sound of cicadas.

Matsuo Basho
Transl. by Piepei Qui
Reinventing the Landscape

Matsuo Basho's Poetic Spaces

Is Simply Haiku barking up the wrong tree with its insistence that haiku is haiku regardless of geological and ethnic origin, and that it's important to understand, study, and follow the traditional haiku form; that creativity comes with the expression of a fluid something versus non-structured subjectivity that leaves little room for the unsaid? Are we wrong to assume that Basho's teaching regarding mush melons was not about what is said, but about breaking rules and restructuring haiku into something Basho today would not recognize?

Recently, in a public statement made to readers of the Haiku Society of America webpage, veteran American haiku and senryu poet, Al Pizzarelli, admonished readers:

"What I see today with this "anything goes" mentality, is the beginning of the deterioration of haiku in the West. Heed my words O haiku aficionados! Today, the word "haiku" has become a mere adjective for anything that is "short" or "small" in size. I guess one would say that our Mini Cooper is a "haiku car". Seriously, one only needs to study the deterioration of haiku throughout the history of Japan, following the deaths of Basho, Buson, Issa, and Shiki, to understand the comparison here. The fact is, the finest haiku ever written, almost always conform to the essential poetic principles of the genre. The proof is always in the pudding. Haiku is much more than mere brevity, my HSA friends. So, sharpen your perception, write of moments of SIGNIFICANCE and CRAFT your poems. The difference will truly resonate as only true haiku poetry can do."

Pizzarelli is telling American haiku poets to study their craft, to take the haiku genre more seriously; that until they do so, the haiku composed and published in on- and off-line publications and in self-published books and chapbooks will not be representative of good haiku poetry, and could hinder American haiku from being recognized by the mainstream poetic world as a legitimate poetic form.

Wrote Nishi Amane in his *The Theory of Aesthetics*, translated by Michael F. Marra, in *Modern Japanese Aesthetics*:

" . . . if one composes poems and songs without following rules at all, merely expressing whatever comes to mind, surely what results is not a form of poetry. If a road is very dangerous, winding to the right, turning to the left, climbing a precipice, then it must not be called a road. This shows the necessity of sameness in difference; proportion and balance cannot be lacking."

All moments are individual moments that cannot be repeated, as life embodied in the reality of nature's creative force (*zoka*), is always changing, never static: the impermeability of reality. There is no duplicity in a continuum of time. None of us own the words we utter. It's the context of what we utter, to whom we utter, and the circumstances around said utterances that are unique.

As haiku poets, we have to write. It is a part of those of us who take this unique literary genre seriously. It's a path, a mirror, a way of seeing and expressing things in an individual manner that utilizes metaphysical styles to bring the

unsaid to the surface, and help ourselves and our readers to see nature as a teacher, a friend, and a mentor. **BUT**, and I emphasize the “but”, if we lack an understanding of the genre and the know-how to use the tools needed to create true, memorable haiku, our efforts are futile, the results, unworthy of notice.

There is great disagreement as to the definition of English-language haiku. The same is seen in other Western languages, and in Japan as well. No one seems to agree as to what is or isn't a haiku.

The most recent definition of haiku published by the Haiku Society of America:

A haiku is a short poem that uses imagistic language to convey the essence of an experience of nature or the season intuitively linked to the human condition. (A definitive definition? No wonder Anita Virgil declined to become a member of the HSA definitions committee, after serving on the first committee)

Fortunately, there's an accompanying note below the definition:

*"Most haiku in English consist of three unrhymed lines of seventeen or fewer syllables, with the middle line longest, though today's poets use a variety of line lengths and arrangements. In Japanese a typical haiku has seventeen 'sounds' (on) arranged five, seven, and five. (Some translators of Japanese poetry have noted that about twelve syllables in English approximates the duration of seventeen Japanese on.) [there is no clear definition of the Japanese term, **on**, nor how the use of **on**, instead of verbs, in a Japanese haiku makes a difference]. Traditional Japanese haiku include a 'season word' (kigo), a word or phrase that helps identify the season of the experience recorded in the poem, and a 'cutting word' (kireji), a sort of spoken punctuation that marks a pause or gives emphasis to one part of the poem. In English, season words are sometimes omitted, but the original focus on experience captured in clear images continues. The most common technique is juxtaposing two images or ideas (Japanese *rensô*). Punctuation, space, a line-break, or a grammatical break may substitute for a cutting word. Most haiku have no titles, and metaphors and similes are commonly avoided. (Haiku do sometimes have brief prefatory notes, usually specifying the setting or similar facts; metaphors and similes in the simple sense of these terms do sometimes occur, but not frequently. A discussion of what might be called 'deep metaphor' or symbolism in haiku is beyond the range of a definition. Various kinds of 'pseudo haiku' have also arisen in recent years."*

The word "**MAY**" is used a lot and only serves to confuse readers. It describes English-language haiku as different from Japanese haiku without any clear justification. It says kigo words in English are "sometimes omitted," again without an explanation. The use of the term "sometimes omitted" gives Anglo-Western poets a clear license to not use kigo if one chooses to do so. The omission of kigo in Anglo-Western haiku is now commonplace; and in most haiku journals haiku and senryu are listed under one category without further delineation, leaving it up to their readers to decide what's a haiku and what's a senryu.

Regarding the use of cutting words, the term **MAY** is once again used:

"Punctuation, space, a line-break, or a grammatical break **may** substitute for a cutting word." Reading these notes reminds me of the game I played as a child: **Mother May I**. Who decided on the "**MAY**" used in the note below the definition; and by whose authority, academically, is it predicated upon? The use of **MAY** gives **MAY NOT** equal authority. One final note regarding the ambiguity of the HSA's definition of Anglo-English language haiku: who came up with "*metaphors and similes are commonly avoided*"?

Knowing that Basho frequently used metaphors as did many of his predecessors, this statement gives one the impression that Anglo-English-language haiku and Japanese haiku are not the same. Since this concept was first brought up by Blyth, perhaps he should be called the father of Modern Anglo-English haiku; even though later scholars shot and are still shooting holes in many of his theories.

Al Pizzarelli said on the HSA webpage recently:

"Poetic devices, such as personification, simile & metaphor have no place in haiku poetry, because they do not allow the reader to stand in the poet's shoes. That's the power of haiku & what makes it a unique poetic form. The haiku related genre of Senryu, whose emphasis is on human nature, more freely allows for such poetic devices and rightfully so. As R. H. Blyth once wisely pointed out: 'When haiku and senryu come together, it is to the loss of both.'"

This is not an original thought, however, as it simply echoes the same admonition written by R.H. Blyth. It has no basis in Japanese haiku and tanka, nor by the world's leading academic scholars. Where people come up with such rules countering the Japanese conceptualization of haiku as developed by Matsuo Basho and other Japanese pioneers, puzzles me; and why does Al Pizzarelli admonish poets to following this line of thinking?

Writes Professor Haruo Shirane:

"I think this rule prevents many good poets from becoming great poets. Without the use of metaphor, allegory and symbolism, haiku will have a hard time achieving the complexity and depth necessary to become the object of serious study and commentary. The fundamental difference between the use of metaphor in haiku and that in other poetry is that in haiku it tends to be extremely subtle and indirect, to the point of not being readily apparent. The metaphor in good haiku is often buried deep within the poem. For example, the seasonal word in Japanese haiku tends often to be inherently metaphorical, since it bears very specific literary and cultural associations, but the first and foremost function of the seasonal word is descriptive, leaving the metaphorical dimension implied."

Beyond the Haiku Moment: Basho, Buson and Modern Haiku Myths, in *Modern Haiku*, XXXI:1 (winter-spring 2000), Haruo Shirane, Shincho Professor of Japanese Literature, Columbia University.

There cannot be two haiku genres. Nor is there a need for such, as evidenced by haiku penned by Svetlana Marisova in the English language:

closed daisies ...
the chain a child
makes of stars

across the swamp ...
a pukeko's cry
stretching out

And these haiku penned by Ted van Zutphen:

waves speaking
in ancient tongues . . .
spring morning

shrouded mountains ...
your presence pierces
the distance

Has the study and misinterpretation of haiku in the Anglo-West and Japan created the sense of haiku being indefinable?

The Japanese created hokku (later renamed haiku by Shiki) that's unlike any other genre of poetry. It looks deceptively easy to compose, but the opposite is true. The genre comes with a distinct set of rules (dependent on the skilled use of styles, currently referred to as aesthetics). These rules weren't developed over night. Much of the hokku written prior to Issa's death (with the exception of a period of about 35 years after Basho's death when competing schools made a god out of Basho and lost track of Basho's focus) was the art of hokku at its height. They are remembered today, and not because, as one person recently posted on an on-line haiku workshop, *"only the haiku of the dead are remembered."* **They are remembered because they are good haiku.**

After Kobayashi Issa's death, haiku poetry began a steady descent into mediocrity.

Wrote Professor Donald Keene in his book *Dawn to the West* regarding the quality of haiku during the Meiji Restoration:

"Not a single poet of distinction was writing; indeed, it had been almost one hundred years since anyone had composed haiku of unmistakable literary worth."

**I will shut my ears
And, thinking only of blossoms,
Enjoy my nap.**

Torigoe Tosai (1803-1890)
Transl. by Donald Keene

States Keene:

"The haiku poets of the day, occupied with petty matters, were not aware that their art had become stagnant and even meaningless . . . their good opinion of themselves was confirmed in 1873 when the Minister of Religious Instruction appointed four haiku masters [?] as special instructors, charged with identifying

haiku poetry with the policies of the Meiji government."

These were leaders of competing haiku societies each claiming a direct lineage to Basho's school of hokku. They were anything but masters, and each of the four became poetic puppets for the Meiji government, something a true poet like Basho would never succumb to. In 1887, to further the Meiji government's scheme to keep haiku from becoming Anglo-Westernized and to keep its citizenry in its Imperial neo-Confucian reign, and continued to deify Matsuo Basho as a Shinto God. The Imperial Court continued published Commentaries about Basho and his haiku, proclaiming that Basho preached Confucian virtues in his poetry.

Writes Keene, *"The government obviously wished to assert traditional Japanese values at a time when a flood of Western ideas had swept over the country, threatening the old morality. Haiku poets were especially urged to embody in their works 'respect for the gods and love of country.'"*

In other words, they were to follow the Emperor's will and his court. Japanese emperors were considered gods in the Shinto religion. The four so-called haiku masters and the haiku schools they influenced bought into the State spin jockey's belief that Basho displayed complete, unwavering devotion in his haiku to the gods, the Emperor, and Japan, unmatched by any other poet.

Japan became a land of mush melons

Writes Professor Haruo Shirane:

" . . . the haikai that preceded Basho was almost entirely imaginary or fictionally haikai. Much of it was so imaginary that it was absurd, and as a result it was criticized by some as 'nonsense' haikai. A typical example is the following hokku found in *Indoshu* (Teaching collection, 1684), a Danrin school haikai handbook:
mine no hana no nami ni ashika kujira o oyogase.

making sea lions and whales

swim in the cherry blossom waves

at the hill top

The hokku links cherry blossoms, which were closely associated with waves and hill tops in classical Japanese poetry, to sea lions and whales, two non-classical, vernacular words, thereby comically deconstructing the poetic cliché of "waves of cherry blossoms". Basho was one of the critics of this kind of "nonsense" haikai. He believed that haikai should describe the world "as it is".

Beyond the Haiku Moment:

Basho, Buson and Modern Haiku Myths

Modern Haiku, XXXI:1 (winter-spring 2000)

Superficial wit was the hallmark of men like Hozumi Eiko (1823-1904) who admired such verses as:

The nightingales ---

When I was young it was love

That kept me awake.

Hozumi Eiki

Transl. by Donald Keene

There are many examples like the above hokku penned by Eiki in many of today's on-line workshops, and in anthologies and self-published books that say little and follow this formula: The 1st line uses a kigo (called seasonal indicator). Line two and three include a juxtaposition having nothing to do with the seasons and *zoka*. The end result is a cute poem that leaves no mystery and the season it occurs in can be any season.

**Indian summer
mother dyes her graying hair
the color of straw**

Tom Painting

A winner of the 2011 HaikuNow! contest
sponsored by The Haiku Foundation

The point of Eiki's haiku, iterates Keene, *"is precisely the opposite of what a modern reader might suppose: the poet is congratulating himself on his present refined tastes that induce him to stay up late at night to hear the nightingales, contrasting this happy state with the folly of his youth, when love kept him from sleeping. Little emotion can be detected behind this or other poems by Eiki and his school. The cleverness of the conception intrigued rich gentlemen looking for some pastime to fill their idle hours, and the patronage of such men were earnestly sought by haiku masters, whose main source of income was the fees obtained for correcting haiku composed by their pupils. Soon after the Restoration, while conditions were still unsettled and unfavorable to leisurely pursuit, one haiku master hit on the idea of installing a large box outside his house into which busy pupils could deposit haiku along with a flat correction fee of eight mon each."*

Japanese poetry for a long time via kigo as defined by saijikis was codified by rival poetic schools, thus limiting what could and could not be called a kigo (season reference), having strayed far from what a kigo represents and embodies. The relationship between nature and poetry began to blur, and was slowly replaced with an over-emphasis on seasons controlled by saijikis and codification, taking the heart out of haiku. In essence, saijikis became political tools of the Emperor and his Court.

Writes Professor Peter Flueckiger in his newly published text (2011) *Imaging Harmony: Poetry, Empathy, and Community in Mid-Tokugawa Confucianism and Nativism*:

Toda Mosui (1629-1726) and Keichu (1640-1701), began to question the validity of secret transmissions [by rival poetic houses including the Reizei, Karasumaru, and Asukai], arguing that knowledge of poetry could be pursued by anyone who applied the proper techniques of philological analysis, and that there was no need to receive the esoteric teachings of any secretive poetic cult. At the same time there was a growth of interest in the eight-century Man'yōshū, which fell outside

the purview of the court poets' secret teachings."

The introduction of printing in the early 1700s created "a new reading public that was free to make their own claims to interpretive authority."

Codification by secret societies meant nothing to many of them then just as they mean nothing to the average Japanese poet today. Such codifications, however, after Issa's death, began to intensify, aiding in the dilution of credible haiku poetry.

Counters former Haiku Society of America's president, Michael Dylan Welch, on the Haiku Society of America's public webpage:

"A kigo, in the Japanese tradition, is a codified season word assigned to a particular season (or part of a season, such as early, middle, or late) by a master or through tradition. Kigo, in this fashion, are often tied to a particular location, and also often related to a particular master's perception (different haiku groups in Japan sometimes have their own saijiki, or season word almanac). In English-language haiku, we are only beginning to develop formalized or codified season-word lists."

Why? The climates in North America are varied to the point that if a North American Saijiki were to be published, it would have to contain chapter long sub-sections for each state, including chapters for regions within states. Arizona's and Alaska's climates and seasons are as different as Ogden Nash is to Matsuo Basho. Florida's and California's climates and seasons are as different as e.e. cummings is to Hans Christian Anderson. Guam and Puerto Rico are American soil. So is Hawaii, where one part is tropical, yet in the same state there's a snow capped mountain.

With a true understanding of kigo, regardless of geographical location, saijikis are not necessary. If they were, most Anglo-Westerners would not follow them anyway, insisting instead on utilizing styles that conform to their own ego-centric conceptualizations that have no basis in serious poetic academic scholarship. We, as haiku poets, need a revival to return haiku to its former level of credibility. However, the opposite is occurring like a fast acting virus without a cure, brought about via the efforts of Masaoka Shiki and others with similar ideas; a revival ironically influenced by the Anglo-West, that would in time pull Japan farther away from its roots that mimesis can't alter.

In the early 1950's, many Americans were introduced to haiku via the writings of Kerouac, Gary Snyder, Harold Henderson, Kenneth Yasuda, and R.H. Blyth, none of which were academically qualified to interpret pre-modern Japanese poetry nor understand their usage hermeneutically. Kerouac was a transient drunk with no knowledge of the Japanese language, and based his understanding on what he quickly read through during a short stay at Gary Snyder's home in Berkeley, California, via teachings by Snyder and reading Snyder's collection of books written by Blyth, Yasuda, and Henderson. Snyder, though influenced by drugs, was a serious university student of Japanese culture and Buddhism, and was soon to embark on a journey to Japan where he would eventually be ordained as a

Buddhist Priest.

As his knowledge in modern Japanese grew, he never studied pre-modern Japanese, the pure Yamato language, or the mimesis of Chinese writing and language (the Japanization of the Chinese language). Later on, even Snyder's interest in haiku waned, preferring to write the marketable free verse poetry that made him famous. Blyth knew little about the history of haiku or the religious influences that impacted the genre, insisting that animism was superstitious (Anglo-Western bias) and proclaiming haiku was a Zen Buddhist genre. He was not qualified academically to interpret pre-modern Japanese, the pure Yamato language, or the mimesis of Chinese writing and language (the Japanization of the Chinese language); neither was Kenneth Yasuda, who translated Japanese haiku using rhyme, and introduced the West to the misinformed concept of the "aha" moment. He also believed in using the 5/7/5, 17 syllable metric schemata in English haiku and put on top of each page of his books:

5/7/5/5/7/5/5/7/5/7/5. Most of us know today the tonal difference between what Anglo-Westerners call Japanese syllable and the English syllable. Anglo-Western syllables have a longer sound, making haiku that utilize a strict adherence to the 5/7/5 metric schemata sound awkward. This, of course, is why most Anglo-English language haiku poets adhere to a simple short/long/short metric formula. Unfortunately, in most American schools, the 5/7/5 metric formula is still taught.

Thus said, what the Japanese were infusing into haiku during its revival via Shiki and lesser known reformers was similar in some ways to what those newly introduced to haiku in Anglo-North America were taught regarding haiku: an Anglo-Westernization mindset unequipped to fully interpret pre-modern Japanese, the pure Yamato language, or the mimesis of Chinese writing and language. The dominance of Anglo-Western thought, which often views life, philosophy, religion, and art based upon the heritage and teachings of the German-based university system adopted by Japan and almost all Anglo-West and Anglo-Oceanic regions, brought about a commonality from its poetic roots and conceptualization of nature's *zoka*.

Anglo-Westerners today read books on haiku and translated haiku wanting to become good haiku poets, yet the haiku and scholarly papers many have written today in the American school system and by poets under the umbrella of the Haiku Society of America are a far cry from the haiku written centuries ago in Japan when haiku was a metaphysical path instead of a journey into the Gobi desert without a compass or map.

Today in North America, there are primarily three groups of haiku poets, each with a different understanding or misunderstanding of haiku.

Form can be expressed in any way one wants (see Francine Barnworth's haiku-like poem below). Kigo is for many in the Haiku Society of America, and in Modernist and Gendai groups in Japan, passé, preferring in turn, hollow seasonal words with little to no connection to *zoka* and "key" words without universally agreeable definitions.

Without universal rules, a working understanding of aesthetics (styles/tools), and

a lack of scholarly direction, the end result is a mulligan stew.

Here are some haiku I picked out randomly from English-language journals and on-line publications that illustrate my point that much of the haiku written today in Japan and in the Anglo-West has sunken to the level of post-Issa and pre-Shiki haiku:

**tweedle-dee, tweedle-dee ---
next to the robin, feeling
like tweedle dum**

Jack Griesel
Virtue Haiku
May 13, 2010

forgiving her
between mouthfuls
of warm beer

John McManus – UK
Notes From the Gean

**Cherry blossoms are falling ---
you also must become
a hippopotamus**

Toshinori Tsubouchi
<http://www.worldhaiku.net/archive/natsuishi1.html>

**winter –
night –
faking –
it**

Francine Banwarth, Iowa
Frogpond
2010-issue33-1

**god of the toilet
with a round face
autumn persimmon**

Shizuo Miyasaka
Japanese Modern Haiku
with respect for nature
by Keiko Higuchi

cold day a bicycle leans against the pet shop

Marlene Mountain
<http://www.marlenemountain.org>

we turn turn our clocks ahead

Christopher Patchel

Named the best haiku for 2011
by The Haiku Foundation

**While flying
the Pope reads aloud
haiku without season words**

Ban'ya Natsuishi

The Flying Pope

English translation by Jim Kacian

Dean Summers presented in August 12, 2010 to the Haiku Society of America Northwest Chapter in Seattle, Washington, and published the same year by Holly House Publications the following paper, **Haiku Phrasing: Sound Bites from Basho, Buson & Issa** that makes an interesting point:

"In print, a Japanese haiku is ordinarily written in a single line. But when it is read aloud, it is heard in three metrical lines: a line of five beats, a line of seven beats, and a line of five beats. When Japanese haiku are translated into English, there is no way to preserve the Japanese meter."

English-language haiku poets (there are innate exceptions) are kidding themselves in thinking they can compose a one-line Anglo-English-language haiku that possess meter, allows for *ma* (dreaming room), and can be legibly read as three sections, let alone utilize other Japanese styles (now called aesthetic tools).

Writes Allan Burns in the May 31, 2009 issue of The Haiku Foundation's Montage:

"English-language haiku tend to be written in three lines, corresponding to the metrical division of Japanese haiku, but Japanese haiku are actually usually printed in a single vertical column. By way of analogy with this form, poets such as Matsuo Allard and Marlene Mountain began writing English haiku in a single horizontal line—and thanks to their efforts that form has become established in English as the major alternative to the typical three-liner."

This alternative is not academically supported via hermeneutics and a sound understanding of Japanese haiku poetics. The Japanese write one-line haiku, but in each of them are cutting words which let their readers know when to pause. Meter is an important part of haiku. Without meter, a poem isn't a poem. It becomes, instead, a prose piece: either as an incomplete sentence or as a sentence. Most one-line haiku in English have no cutting words to give them meter, provide *ma*, or make use of the unsaid.

old pond a frog rises belly up

Marlene Mountain

The Haiku Anthology, 3rd edition,
ed. Cor van den Heuvel
(W.W. Norton & Company).

This is an object- (mono, subjective) biased haiku-like poem lacking mystery that rhythmically reads like a two lined poem:

old pond

a frog rises belly up

If this haiku-like poem were divided up into two lines, what would it be saying? **A frog died from living in a stagnant, polluted pond?** A haiku is not a matter of positioning. There's much more. There needs to be a metrical schemata, the unsaid, a tie-in with *zoka*, and enough suggestion to allow for the reader to add his or her own interpretation.

This critique alludes to other forms masquerading as haiku borrowed from modern free verse poets.

Continues Allan Burns in the May 31, 2009 issue of The Haiku Foundation's Montage:

**under-
shirt
thrown on
sun
flower
some
scarecrow**

John Martone

john martone poetry projects <http://ux1.eiu.edu/~jpmartone/dhpdf/dhpdf.html>

In this poem, there is no sense of metrical rhythm visually. It sounds robotic. If one reads each line and includes a rest as Michael McClure does in his free verse poetry, the tonal quality would be different.

From Michael McClure's poem Maybe Mama Lion from his book *Rebel Lions*:

**and
ODD
patterns
the leaves.
HURT IN
MY SELF ES**

What makes McClure's poem work and possess meter is what comes after the lines and before the lines. His poetry is not entirely a list of words. The words written with capital letters are to be read loudly and with emphasis. Each line, using one word or more, is to be read with a short rest at the end before proceeding to the next sentence. A play-write, poet, and song writer, McClure is conscious of the importance of meter in poetry.

Letters alone mean little unless they form a word. Words are like musical notes. Unless they are assembled into a well-composed song, they are just notes placed side by side without context. Songs, incidentally, are poems accompanied by

music.

What is the purpose of writing horizontal haiku? Again, without rests or pauses as indicated by punctuation, or the use of “. . .” or “---” , there is no place where one can know where *ma* exists; and no place to interpret the poet's poem before the poet reads his or her next horizontal poem.

under-shirt thrown on a sunflower some scarecrow

**under-shirt
thrown on a scarecrow
some scare crow**

This poem too is an object- (mono, subjective) biased poem. There is no allusion to *zoka*, it reads like a senryu, has no depth or mystery (*yugen*) and leaves little room for a reader to interpret. It is subjective by its use of:

some (used sarcastically, thus subjective.)

scarecrow

Fortunately, Martone's poem has three nature sounding breaks, which few Anglo-English haiku poems have.

Before experimentation with haiku form, it's imperative to study and analyze it as a poetic genre. What is haiku? How is it different? What rules or styles are indigenous to the genre? Haiku is a complicated verse form with a well-established tradition. Trying to change haiku before mastering the genre is jumping the gun and premature. Perhaps this is why there is no American haiku master: a lack of rules, form, depth, and academic study.

When it comes to studying Japanese haiku from the past, effective translations from one language to another are always accomplished by translating idea for idea, or image for image, never word for word. **For those reasons, when translating Japanese haiku into English, translators do not always bother to accurately represent the phrasing of the originals.** Not a problem for a casual reader interested mainly in a taste of Japanese haiku, but for English-language poets on the haiku path, the available English translations of Japanese haiku can be seriously misleading.

Writes Allan Burns in the May 31, 2009 issue of The Haiku Foundation's Montage:

"The available translations can suggest phrasing options that don't really belong to the haiku spirit, and they can obscure phrasing options that do belong. The solution is seek out English translations that accurately reflect the phrasing of the Japanese originals."

One well-know haiku poet who wrote what has been heralded as a complete translation of Basho's haiku confessed to me via an e-mail that she didn't know how to read, write, or speak in the Japanese language. She assured, however, that she'd worn out the pages to her Japanese/English-language dictionary. How can this book of translations of Basho's haiku be accurate, since it was not penned in modern Japanese or studied hermeneutically?

There is the availability of scholarly books and translations that, if read and studied, could correct past mistakes, misconceptions, chastise laziness, and hopefully return haiku and related genres to the greatness and respectability they enjoyed before Issa passed on: texts by Steven D. Carter, Donald Keene, David Barnes, Peipei Qui, Michael F. Marra, Haruo Shirane, Makoto Ueda, and other academic experts in the fields of Japanese Aesthetics, Linguistics, History, Religion, Cultural Anthropology, and Hermeneutics; authors who know what they are talking about.

Unfortunately, the texts written by these academics are hard to read, most often used as university textbooks for those working on post-graduate degrees, and are costly to purchase (some books priced from \$75 to \$100 or more. The postage and handling to send these books to English-speaking poets overseas is astronomical and, for many, unaffordable).

As such, most Anglo-Western poets are limited to the more affordable books, which include used books, self-published paperbacks, and those offered on-line for free by Denis Garrison, myself and a few others. Most of my collection of Blyth was purchased "used" on-line. If one wants to study texts written by the leading experts in the field, I suggest ordering used copies. In addition, *Simply Haiku* offers articles and interviews penned by the world's leading academics and extensive reviews on their texts. I also recommend purchasing a copy of Professor Richard Gilbert's text *Poems of Consciousness*. He too is a serious student of Japanese poetry and up-to-date on gendai and other forms of modern Japanese haiku. *Modern Haiku* has several excellent articles and interviews in their publication as well.

What Basho, Chiyo-ni, Buson, Issa, and other dedicated pre-Shiki poets composed was Japanese haiku pollinated with time-tested styles and techniques that unearthed the unsaid, and were in tune with a conceptualization of nature unfathomed by most Anglo-Western scholars, and university-educated Japanese.

As mentioned previously, during the time colony hungry America's forced opening of Japan's borders, many of its intellectuals, merchants, and students were hungry for more than tradition, controlled thought, neo-Confucian morality, the restrictions placed on them by religions imported from China, and other Chinese imports and Japanese mitates of said imports. They wanted to grow intellectually and break away from the feudal rule of a subtle and complex reorganization of local epistemological systems. At the same time, Japanese intellectuals were challenged with the creation of a technical vocabulary that was sensitive to the newly imported ideas. Co-alien concepts, such as the Western distinction between mechanical and liberal arts, had to be assimilated during what Yamamoto Masao has called "*the enlightenment period*" of Japanese aesthetics.

Other terms that were nonexistent altogether in Japan's *kotodama*, however, exert a great influence in the field of poetry, which, before this accessibility to Anglo-Western thought and writings, had been used and infused with secret transmissions passed down from master to disciple, by schools, and study.

1. Students taught by the American public and private school system

textbooks adopted by school districts.

2. The Haiku Society of America and their allies.

3. Independent haiku poets belonging to no haiku school or haiku association.

When Japan adopted the German-based university system used by the Anglo-West, many Japanese words and terms had no equals, definition-wise, comprehensible to the Anglo-Western mindset, and vice versa. This included the word aesthetics, **subjectivity, objectivity, sensitivity, and imagination**. According to Anita Virgil, there wasn't a definition for the term hokku.

Writes Marra in his book *Modern Japanese Aesthetics*:

"The importation of aesthetics required Japanese scholars to explain and justify the new 'science' in the light of Western epistemology. In the last three decades of the nineteenth century, Japan was faced with the introduction, study, and digestion --- or indigestion --- of more than 2,000 years of Western thoughts."

Adds Marra:

"This interest in haiku has been driven by the English haiku movement, and as a consequence much of the material, both translations and scholarship, has been published by non-specialists, English haiku poets, whose work is not always very reliable. Nevertheless, it remains a lively area of interest, with direct links to the English-language world. Robert Hass, for example, who was the Poet Laureate of the U.S., wrote and edited a book on Basho, Buson, and Issa for public consumption though he was not a specialist."

Much of what is currently called haiku in the English language and in Japan is at the level hokku sunk to after Issa's death? Why is this?

Some deny the importance of a substitute for cutting words, others, like Marlene Mountain, support the Japanese one-line style of composing haiku, without a substitute for cutting words (punctuation or spaces) that gives haiku its meter and a place for *ma*, what Denis Garrison calls "**dreaming room**."

As the field of aesthetics was unknown in pre-modern Japanese society, there were no words to describe **aesthetics**, which to the Japanese was a set of styles, acquired intuitively, deeply inset into their cultural memory. The introduction to the field of aesthetics, considered vital for the interpretation and discussion of the arts, philosophy, religion, and poetics in the 1870's, between the Anglo-West and Japan, was not easy. To converse with the Anglo-West was considered vital by Japan's intellectuals, merchants interested in expanding commerce internationally, and by students in the social sciences, creative writing, theologians tired of the dictates emanating from Chinese-imported religions, and all fields of the arts of which science was considered a part.

In the 1870's, Japanese society was ripe for change, and sought alternatives to tradition and conservative uniformity-biased rules by the Emperor and past Emperors and their Courts that poisoned individuality, supported racism, discrimination against women, endorsed censorship, and even sunk to the level of hiring so-called "haiku masters" to rewrite saijikis, and deceive the Japanese into

thinking that Matsuo Basho was committed to the dictates and isms of the Confucian belief system.

Before Admiral Perry's opening up Japan to Anglo-Western influence, the only foreigners allowed in Japan were the Chinese, Koreans, and a small post of Dutch traders. Others, who stepped on Japanese shores, including Americans, were executed. A strict separation from Western influence was enforced. The Emperor and his Court wanted to maintain their Confucian rule, which had been thought of by the intelligencia, but not questioned, for risk of death, imprisonment, and public ostracism, which to those who questioned the Emperor (a Shinto God) meant poverty, unemployment, and worse.

When the United States Navy forced the Emperor (a Japanese Shinto God) to lose face, by opening up its shores to a non-deified Anglo-Western influence, it unleashed a floodgate that has yet to recede. The Japanese people were free to study, think, speak, read Anglo-Western thought, and to attend schools in the U.S. and Europe. Tradition and culture rapidly became colonized overtly and the Japanese were forced to make drastic changes in their language to accommodate the study and assimilation of Anglo-Western aesthetics. Historically, Americans held little respect at this time for people who were not white-skinned and arrogantly thought their way of thought was superior to those of color and/or ethnic difference. This was true of the Emperor and his Court as well.

Enter **Masaoka Shiki**, the father of Modern Japanese poetry who renamed hokku, haiku; and later also waka, tanka. Shiki was disgusted with the low level of haiku written during his day and was unafraid to say so publicly. He was a university drop-out, influenced by European painting and thought, and fatally ill with tuberculosis. He was also an agnostic, moody, temperamental, outspoken, and highly intelligent.

Shiki was a brilliant strategist and writer who knew, if armed with the right tools (alternatives), how to gain the ears of Japan's poets and those who viewed poetry as a spiritual practice. Attacking Matsuo Basho's poetry (Basho was a Shinto deity) was an extremely risky but brilliant move. If poorly executed, Shiki could have been imprisoned, exiled, and/or looked upon as a madman, especially after he was bedridden and taking several doses of opium (a mind-altering sedative, the plant that heroin is made from) on a daily basis to curve the hideous pain he felt due to acute tuberculosis. Shiki secretly admired Basho and believed his "frog jumping into the sound of water" haiku was possibly the greatest haiku ever written. Basho was not a God, and like all poets, masters or not, he penned his share of less than great haiku. By bringing to light Basho's lesser haiku, Shiki was mocking and unsettling what was weakening Japanese poetry. Such a controversy was guaranteed to draw an audience.

Observes Carmen Sterba:

"Author Janine Beichman, in her book Masaoka Shiki, writes: 'While it is true that Shiki deserves credit for the rediscovery of Buson's greatness as a haiku poet, a careful reading of his works shows that it is not true that he dismissed Basho's poetry. . . Shiki valued Basho because he believed that Basho had been the first

realistic poet in haiku and second, because many of his poems had possessed 'sublimity and grandeur.' The crux of the reason why Shiki was critical towards the idealism towards Basho was simply because after his death, master Basho had been literally worshiped by his fans for two hundred years, whereas other masters like Buson, in particular, had been ignored. By the end of the Tokugawa Era, haiku had become more of an amusement instead of a serious genre, so Shiki wanted to elevate haiku."

[Masaoka Shiki: the Misunderstood Reformer, Critic and Poet | Suite101.com](http://carmen-sterba.suite101.com/masaoka-shiki-the-misunderstood-reformer-critic-and-poet-a380393#ixzz1d2nNx33t)
<http://carmen-sterba.suite101.com/masaoka-shiki-the-misunderstood-reformer-critic-and-poet-a380393#ixzz1d2nNx33t>

Shiki then elevated and praised Buson's poetry, a revered, though non-deified poet/painter, which lent credence to Shiki as someone studied in the art and history of Japanese poetry. The finale to his call for reformation necessitated a viable, sound alternative.

Side Note:

Buson was a great admirer of Basho and insisted upon being buried at what was called The Temple of Basho's Hut.

Shiki's alternative was *shasei*, modeled ironically after the European Pleine-Air painting style he imitated into his style of painting and, later, into the reformation of hokku; a style that emphasized a realistic, plain, concise, objective sketch of life that traveled back and forth through Anglo-Western and Japanese mindsets.

Shiki defined *shasei* as the "depiction of objects as they are" or "the faithful representation of an actual scene" as opposed to ideals or imaginings. He saw haiku as a poetry of a single object.

Writes Koji Kawamoto in his book *The Poetics of Japanese Verse*, translated by Professor Makoto Ueda:

"... [the problem with shasei is] Shiki's readiness to equate the ability of a verbal description of a concrete object to move men's hearts with the ability of the real object to do the same. Even a 'real' medium like a photograph leaves a large gap between the scene presented before our eyes and that actually experienced in person."

Wrote Michael F. Marra in his *Essays on Japan*:

"Language reconstructs experience by putting in grammatical form the results of introspective analysis. Therefore, by reducing experience to conceptual categories, language fails to represent reality, whose portrayal falls prey to distortion and error, since language cannot catch the immediacy of the experience."

Wrote Nietzsche, "... the chemical analysis of the process of knowledge reveals that this is nothing but a series of metaphors."

Friedrich Nietzsche

Transl. by Michael F. Marra

A famous photographer in America, a friend of mine, the late Meryl Simmons, told me, when I asked him how he took photographs that resembled paintings, the secret is in cropping, patience, and waiting for the light to hit the right spot, paint the right shadow, and envision at the same time. What he said next, took me by surprise. He told me that photographs are one-dimensional illusions, not the real thing, thus concurring with Koji Kawamoto's assessment regarding the ineffectiveness of *shasei* (life sketches) haiku. What portrays the real thing and the real thing are different entities. True *shasei* is unattainable. Its source is the fragile, subjective human mind. Non-subjectivity is nearly impossible if the focus is an object or objects. The combination of object bias and subjectivity bias aren't the ingredients one uses to compose a haiku. They are, however, ingredients that work well in Imagist or Modernist poetry. A true haiku is activity- (koto, process) biased orchestrated by .

In many ways it was characteristic of Anglo-Western Imagist poetry popularized by Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, William Carlos Williams, etc. The Imagists wrote succinct verse of dry clarity and hard outline in which an exact visual image made a total poetic statement.

From the Imagist Manifesto:

1. To use the language of common speech, but to employ the exact word, not the nearly-exact, nor the merely decorative word.
2. We believe that the individuality of a poet may often be better expressed in free verse than in conventional forms. In poetry, a new cadence means a new idea.
3. Absolute freedom in the choice of subject.
4. To present an image. We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous. It is for this reason that we oppose the cosmic poet, who seems to us to shirk the real difficulties of his art.
5. To produce a poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.
6. Finally, most of us believe that concentration is the very essence of poetry.

Are many of these tenets in present day haiku?

Writes Professor Haruo Shirane in his book *Traces of Dreams*:

"The Imagists stressed concentration, directness, precision, and freedom from metrical laws, and gravitated toward a single, usually visual, dominant image or a succession of related images. The Imagists wished to communicate emotion without articulating it directly."

The Imagists were influenced by haiku due to its shortness of form, its alleged "now-ness," and a misunderstanding of the form via the few available English-language texts and books on haiku.

This Imagist poem by Ezra Pound is considered by many American haiku poets, including Professor Haruo Shirane, as a haiku:

In a Station of the Metro

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

Ezra Pound

The following poem, *The Red Wheelbarrow*, by Imagist poet, William Carlos Williams, a man Allen Ginsberg told me in a personal letter in the mid 1980's, had been a major influence on his poetry. This poem reads like some of the modern Anglo-English haiku written today:

*so much depends
upon
a red wheel
-barrow
glazed with rain-
water
beside the white
chickens.*

William Carlos Williams

*whatever
needs
to
be
said
can
be
said
in
haiku
or
what's
a
haiku
for*

'anti-war haiku wall'

Marlene Mountain

http://www.marlenemountain.org/1lhaiku/00s/1lh_haiku02_03.html

Haruo Shirane said much of the haiku in *The Haiku Anthology* edited by Cor van den Heuvel in 1974 were primarily poetry written in the Imagist style:

"The majority of these haiku in English as well as haiku translations from Japanese are done in the style of the Imagists and Modernists such as Stevens, Eliot, and Williams."

Recently, to his discredit, in an interview I conducted for *Simply Haiku* recently;

Shirane said his statement written about the Imagist leaning of the haiku in van der Heuval's *The Haiku Anthology* was an exaggeration. You figure.

What I read today in leading Anglo-Western haiku publications follows the same format mixed in with other derivatives of Anglo-American, Anglo-Oceanic, and Anglo-European free verse genres.

Through this mitate, the Anglo-Western mindset became the conductor, and the Japanese mindset, the conductor's orchestra, thus the interpretation was dominated by the conductor's internalization and conceptualization of a musical score, and played via cultural adaptation by the orchestra.

Sounds of snoring ---
a plate and a sake bottle
set outside the mosquito net

Sudden downpour ---
and all these maids
hauling out storm shutters

Sawing chunks of charcoal
my little sister's hands
are all black!

Sketching from life
eggplants are harder to do
than pumpkins

Plunging into
a ripe persimmon ---
getting my bed all messy with it

Transl. by Burton Watson
Masaoka Shiki: Selected Poems

Shiki's conceptualization of *shasei* didn't catch on during his short lifetime. His disciples kept the concept alive and helped to popularize it. Some, such as Saito Mokichi, even made changes to the form, thinking Shiki hadn't gone far enough.

One of his tanka students, Saito Mokichi, developed a theory of *shasei* that differed from Shiki's.

Wrote Mokichi:

"To penetrate into the true aspect [of the subject] and sketch life that is a union of nature and the self---that is what shasei means."

Transl. by Makoto Ueda
Modern Japanese Tanka

Shiki wasn't consistent with his theory of *shasei* and saw it as a good method for new haiku poets to use.

Writes Professor Makoto Ueda regarding Shiki and his theory of *shasei* haiku in his *Modern Japanese Poets and the Nature of Literature*:

"Generalizations about Shiki's theory of poetry are difficult to make because it not only changed considerably in the course of his career, but also contained contradictions.

Shiki seems to have thought that a student who had mastered the art of selective realism could increase the amount of subjectivity in his poetry if he saw fit. 'At times,' wrote Shiki, 'the poet may even change the relative positions of things in an actual scene or subjectively replace part of the scene by something that is not there. An actual scene is like a beautiful woman without make-up. She will not be free from imperfections, so that the artist must correct her eyebrows, put on rouge and powder, and dress her up in beautiful clothes.' Shiki, who discouraged amateur versifiers from 'putting make-up' on nature, here encouraged more advanced poets to do just that. He claims to have believed that an artist, a master artist, does not merely imitate nature but corrects her imperfections [A Western ideal that originated with the Judeo-Christian book of Genesis. Buddhist Daoists, Confucians, Shintoists, and shamanic animists did not share this belief, thus by exposing this belief, Shiki was allying himself with the Anglo-Western belief system that had no basis with the religious beliefs from Japan, China, and India (where Buddhism originated)]. Here an element of idealism modifies Shiki's basic commitment to realism: once he has established a basic truthfulness to his own wishes and ideals."

Continues Ueda:

"In order to correct nature's imperfections, the artist must continue his own vision of how nature should be. Shiki was not blind to the pitfalls into which realistic poets fall. 'To realistic a poem,' he once said, 'is prone to be commonplace and lacking surprise. . . poet too bent on realism tends to imprison his mind within the confines of the tiny world his eyes see. Forgetting about rare and fresh motifs that lie distant from time and space.' It was from this single angle that Shiki praised Buson's poetry. While recognizing objective beauty in Buson's works, Shiki was also fascinated by the poet/painter's fertile imagination. In his opinion, Buson was the only premodern haiku poet whose mind roamed freely between heaven and earth: he could 'soar to the sky without wings and sink into the ocean without . . . '"

Shiki's praise of Buson had nothing to do with *shasei*, as Buson was an avowed follower of Basho's teachings. Shiki idealized Buson for his ability to transcend realism: to be gifted with a poetic mind that could "roam freely between heaven and earth."

This reminds me of the words spoken by Kuki Shuzo in his book *A Philosopher's Poetry and Politics*, edited and translated by Professor Michael F. Marra:

"Today, everything has sunk into the past. Moreover, I have come to like smelling from the window of my library the garden's sweet osmanthus on quiet autumn days. I sniff the fragrance fully, all alone. Then I am carried to a far, far place, that is even further away from my birthplace --- to a place where possibility remains a possibility."

As previously stated, Shiki was highly influenced by the German-based university system. In the essay series 'Six Foot Bed,' published less than three months before his death, Shiki stated that Western artists had valued shasei from early times, whereas the Japanese had neglected the principle. In advocating shasei, he emphasized the basic of realistic presentation; close and correct observation. A poet should, he felt, discipline himself to observe, not obtruding his thoughts or feelings, and subordinating fanciful impulses to the simplest, most direct, and most common expressions of the things around him; he should express his observations in equally direct and simple language.

Professor Makoto Ueda:

Beyond the Haiku Moment:

Basho, Buson and Modern Haiku Myths

written for *Modern Haiku*, XXXI:1 (winter-spring 2000)

Haruo Shirane stated:

*"One of the chief reasons for the emphasis in modern Japan on direct personal observations was Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902), the late nineteenth century pioneer of modern haiku, who stressed the sketch (shasei) based on direct observation of the subject as the key to the composition of the modern haiku. This led to the ginko, the trips to places to compose haiku. Shiki denounced linked verse as an intellectual game and saw the haiku as an expression of the individual. In this regard **Shiki was deeply influenced by Western notions of literature and poetry**; first, that literature should be realistic, and second, that literature should be an expression of the individual. By contrast, haikai as Basho had known it, had been largely imaginary, and had been a communal activity, the product of group composition or exchange. Shiki condemned traditional haikai on both counts.*

Even if Shiki had not existed, the effect would have been similar since Western influence on Japan from the late 19th century has been massive. Early American and British pioneers of English-language haiku - such as Basil Chamberlain, Harold Henderson, R.H. Blyth - had limited interest in modern Japanese haiku, but shared many of Shiki's assumptions. The influence of Ezra Pound and the (Anglo-American) Modernist poetry movement was also significant in shaping modern notions of haiku. In short, what many North American haiku poets have thought to be uniquely Japanese had in fact its roots in Western literary thought."

Haiku composed by members of the Haiku Society of America and those influenced by the society worldwide, and much of the haiku composed in modern-day Japan are becoming too much alike to go unnoticed. Is this a coincidence? Is it the result of a covert form of Anglo-Western colonization of Japan thought? Is Anglo-Western and Japanese thought today the antithesis of each other as many claimed during the twentieth century? Are the majority of haiku composed by many in the Anglo-West actually haiku, or are they a weakly defined poetic conglomeration of Anglo-Western German-based university thought, culturally inbred racial prejudice (via the U.S. and their allies war with Japan during World

War II), misinformation and faulty research, the influence of Imagism, introduced by R.H. Blyth, Kenneth Yasuda, Harold Henderson, poor translations using the modern Japanese language instead of the pre-modern Japanese with its infusion of Japanese *mitates* of Chinese words and script, the pure Japanese Yamato language the originators of *hokku* composed their *hokku* in? Are they also influenced, beginning in the mid 1950's, via a pop/drug, free flowing, oh wow, "righteous shit, man," Jesus is riding on a tandem bicycle with the Buddha, reiteration of Blyth and Yasuda introduced to North America through books and poetry by Gary Snyder, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Michael McClure, and a few other Beat poets, who later returned to composing more marketable long free verse poetry influenced by Walt Whitman, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, William Blake. H.D., French modernists, European surrealism, Mr. Natural, Mickey Mouse, Dr. Timothy Leary, and precursors to the character portrayed by comedian Bobcat Goldwaithe? Is the Haiku Society of America, formed in 1968, the principle propagator of modern English-language haiku in North America and the world today, save for Japan? Is it in league with several Japanese poets who wield great influence among Japanese Modernist haiku poet today's?

Like in the Anglo-West, there is more than one school of haiku thought, though the traditionalists are the minority.

Not all haiku composed in Japan are off-kilter with the colonized thinking imposed upon those who were schooled in the German-based university system. There are some poets, like Ikumi Yoshimura, who is grounded in her cultural roots, even though she studied at German-based university in Gifu, Japan:

**white fish
hold a spirit of the heaven
like indigo blue**

Ikumi Yoshimura
WhiteFish ©2009

Another example is a haiku, penned by Yagi Mikajo, who wrote her poetry in what she considers to be *"the greatest turning point of [her] generation, the gap between the pre-war and postwar eras (WW II), when Japan was ruled by a colony hungry Emperor without a conscience, who sought control over China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Korea, and other South East Asian countries using some of the most vicious means possible; to when the war was lost to the Anglo-Western allied military, and occupied by the American Armed Forces, who forced the Emperor to renounce his title as a Shinto God, and Japan to become a westernized democratic nation ruled by Anglo-Western values. Mikajo is an original thinker who values her Japanese heritage, yet doesn't live in the past."*

**between thighs
the birth cry stretches into
budding tree darkness**

Yagi Mikajo
Transl. by Shiwa Kyotaro

Poems of Consciousness

Compiled and penned by Richard Gilbert

Two selections from another major modern Japanese poet, Hoshinaga Fumio, stand out:

toward the mirage of water

the postwar fathers

chasing after . . .

the spring tree ---

I climb until I can see

the war

Hoshinaga Fumio

Transl. by Richard Gilbert

Poems of Consciousness

States Fumio to Gilbert in one of two interviews with him:

"I think contemporary American Indians may also act in a similar regard. They have been able to preserve and revive their ruined world in the American continent through the propagation of language --- through kotodama [the imagery or miraculous power behind the word – language, says Gilbert. "I don't just describe just the tree," responds Fumio, "but rather the tree infused with kotodama. I do not want to use the word just for describing 'as it is,' but want to touch behind the word, further, deeper."]

Wrote Shotetsu (1381-1459) in his book *Conversations with Shotetsu* (Shotetsu Monogatari), translated by Richard Brower with an introduction and notes by Steven D. Carter:

"The best poems are those that leave something unsaid."

". . . just where the mystery is to be found depends upon the inner feelings of each individual. No doubt it is something that cannot possibly be explained by words or distinguished clearly in the mind."

Wrote Shotetsu and translated by Professor Esperanza Rameriz-Christensen in her book *Emptiness and Temporality*:

"In truth, the ineffably profound and moving resides precisely in what is left unsaid, in what is empty of meaning."

Shotetsu believed if someone was serious about poetry, he should study the works of the masters:

"When studying the poems of the masters one should carefully ponder each poem, and then if there are any places one does not understand, one should ask questions."

This should not be construed as learning how to be the mush melon Matsuo

Basho warned his follower not to become. If I want to be a good architect, I need to study architecture and the different styles used in architecture. The same goes for any other kind of art. A clone copies to the letter the voice or style of another. Basho didn't want clones. Who does, except for the insecure? Like any artist, we need to have an original voice. A voice and changing a genre into something it isn't are two different subjects. Basho practiced what he preached by developing an original hokku voice that used the language of the common people outside the walls of the Imperial Court. Too much of what I read today in journals, blogs, and on-line e-zines feature poetry that is mush melonized. Many use similar formulas, copy others' styles, lacking originality. Recently, composing one-line haiku as modeled and popularized by Marlene Mountain is gaining in popularity, with most lacking a fresh un-mush melon voice. Marlene is an original voice and certainly not a mush melon. But is what she's writing, haiku?

the tom-tom of peter paul and mary's drag on

Marlene Mountain

http://www.marlenemountain.org/1lhaiku/00s/1lhaj_julaug01.html

How this incomplete sentence can be classified as haiku is beyond me: no mystery, no room for viable interpretation, no use of *ma*, pauses, metrics, or kigo.

When I first started composing haiku seriously, I studied haiku by Basho, Buson, and Issa. I also subscribed to on-line haiku forums and purchased every book I could get my hands on, new or used, studying theory, and reading haiku written by poets on-line and in books. Even though I liked some of the poets, Michael McClintock, Anita Virgil, Hortensia Anderson, to name a few, most I found to be unmemorable, boring, sometimes cutesie, and lacking the depth of the haiku penned by the aforementioned masters.

In the on-line forums, I've encountered mean-spirited egotists who never contribute a haiku unless it's received an award. Their critiques include adherence to rules I can't find in anything written by the masters. I've noticed, however, that many of them contradicted the poetic styles of the masters. I asked myself again and again, "Are they blind? Do these people know what they're talking about? How come they don't workshop their haiku?"

After being mentored by Anita Virgil for two years, and upon studying several scholarly books she and others recommended, I came to the conclusion that the present Haiku movement, apart from that taught in schools, was headed up by what is called the "Good Old Boy's Club:" poets who'd founded the Haiku Society of America, published journals, sold themselves as experts in the field, and were used to being thought of as the kings and queens of haiku. As with every group, there were reputation hungry vultures who valued reputation over expertise in the composition of haiku.

I, therefore, limited my study of haiku to the writings by and about Basho, Issa, Buson, Chiyo-ni, and other pre-Shiki poets. Something both Basho and Shiki advised their disciples to do.

I learned much by exposing myself to a variety of poets. There were mush melons, during Basho's lifetime, after his death, and before his birth. I concentrated my study of Japanese poetry on those whose names were legendary. Almost all has the following in common:

1. A love of nature
2. An understanding of *zoka*
3. Excellent when vocally read
4. Didn't tell all
5. Periodically spent time alone in nature
6. Didn't try to change the physical form of poetry
7. Had a fresh, clearly identifiable voice (style)
8. Did their homework and practiced daily
9. Were teachable

I would read many books of old haiku masters, analogize their poetry, and emulate their styles to better understand the form. After a while, I'd pick up something useful from one master, another thing of use by another, and so forth, all the while developing my own original voice.

I never cared for Shiki's poetry. Most lacked depth and said little. I admired, however, the guts it took for a sick young agnostic without time to waste, university drop-out in a spiritually-entwined culture to seek to reform haiku. Thank God he did, as the poetry called haikai at the time was trite, corny, poorly written, and crude. It was as if the efforts of Matsuo Basho accomplished to turn haikai into hokku, and to get it accepted nationally as a serious art genre, were tossed into a waste can. When Issa died, good haiku went down the drain.

The more I read from the masters, the better my haiku became.

I laugh now at some of my earliest haiku; haiku I thought at the time were good. Realize it or not, as a part of nature we are always in a state of becoming.

The following two examples of my first attempts of writing haiku apart from school are worst than horrible:

**the pelican---
scooping up sardines
in Neptune's smorgy**

**crow paints
white spots on a
mercedes benz**

Before one dives deeply into haiku, they should follow Shotetsu's admonition:

"A novice should simply sit down with his fellows and compose verse that is straightforward and easy to understand."

In time, through, study, practice, exposure, one must take on the role of the student, if he or she desires to compose serious haiku. If it's only an occasional hobby and nothing else, study isn't important. Just write and have fun.

Traditionally, haiku for many in Japan was once thought of as a path, the Dao, the Way, a journey that is both short and long, where getting published or making a name for one's self is unimportant, where becomingness is a continuum without an end, without a nationality, a pathway into the breath of nature, the house of *zoka*, where stars are sculpted in daylight and rivers become words smoothing stones raked in a garden regardless of the season.

To write haiku one must be in the state of becomingness. At the time I wrote the above, I was in a state of confusion. I knew nothing about Daoist, Zen, and other ancient isms. I barely understood what I'd been taught while studying Christianity at California Baptist University (one of my degrees is in Bible).

Becomingness? Dying to one's self? Impermanence? Eternity? The said? The unsaid? Karma? Reaping what one sows? To understand terms like these requires years of meditation and thought. Most poets don't have the time for such pursuits nor do they want to make the time.

I learned from Shotetsu that:

"A poet should not be overly concerned about learning and knowledge. It is better that he has a clear understanding and grasp of the nature of poetry. To have such a clear understanding means that one's mind is enlightened. A man who has a clear understanding of poetry can become a skilled poet if he wants to."

I learned a valuable lesson in 1981 as a new member of the Wordsmiths, a group of poets from Northern California (USA) who met together to workshop their poetry regardless of the genre. We'd sit in a circle. One would start off by reading a newly written poem. Others in the group would offer suggestions on improving said poem. We were not a critical group with people posing as experts. We each sincerely wanted every poet in our group to succeed. Arguments at these workshops were almost non-existent. Theories weren't debated. This system worked well. Many of us went on to perform poetry publicly at a variety of venues, we published a national journal called the *Mindprint Review*, sponsored monthly open Mic readings, and went to every reading we could possibly attend by a major poet performing in Northern California, including Michael McClure, Alan Ginsberg, Mary Tall Mountain, and Gary Snyder.

Ryoshun, according to Shotetsu, said when poets gather together it should be for the work-shopping of their poetry. He said this was more important than the quantity of poems one composed.

"Given the fact that people are [constructively] critiquing each other's poems and expressing their opinions about them," said Shotetsu, "it does sometimes happen that the other person may understand a poem in one sense while that is not the way one interprets it oneself."

Such workshops, whether on-line or in a meeting room, like the Wordsmiths held, are worthless to those who cannot handle constructive criticism of any kind.

Those who think they've arrived as poets stop growing, and their work stagnates. A good poet is never satisfied with his or her own work. They are in a state of becoming and don't try to stop what they can't stop. Instead, they become miserable to the point where they make those around them miserable, believing that all who critique their poetry are their enemies. In other words, they have an inferiority complex like the witch in the Walt Disney's cartoon classic *Snow White*. I know I haven't arrived and will never arrive. For me, writing haiku is a lifelong path, a spiritual path that teaches me the wisdom I once harbored as a baby and a toddler.

To grow, we need to be teachable and not think we have arrived just because we have written poetry for a long time, have won awards, and have a reputation. We need to realize, when writing poetry, that we too are an empty goblet. We need to step outside of ourselves and enter into the subject in nature we are viewing, and into the *zoka* that is continually changing, the permanently impermanent, into the state of becomingness that is and isn't; as we are no more important than a cockroach or a locust. We are part of nature and have no authority to rule over something we don't understand or know how to take care of.

When I interviewed Professor Haruo Shirane for *Simply Haiku* recently, he stated:

"The main weakness of North American haiku today is the lack of depth in some of the poetry. Poetry should have some complexity to it so that when you reread it, you see something new or there is something that lingers in your brain or heart."

Anglo-Westerners and the Japanese need to gain a better understanding of haiku that will only come about by reading and studying haiku written by the great haiku masters of long ago that are still remembered. Most haiku penned today go unremembered, have little depth, and display little understanding of the styles used by the masters to turn their haiku into literary classics the world over. This, coupled with Japan and the Anglo-American West's quick jettisoning of true kigo, metric schemata, and turning their haiku-like poems into circus mirrors the Red Queen of Hearts would be proud of, tells me and many others that unless things change quickly, haiku will dissipate into a non-entity, like Shiki feared hokku would in his day.

I am reminded of a note Hansha Teki wrote on Facebook's Something Is Happening Here page, regarding a movie on autism that he and Svetlana Marisova had discussed:

"Why do Beethoven's last string quartets have such power in the silence they almost create? Why do Michelangelo's imprisoned sculptures move us so profoundly? Perhaps if we can understand this, we have the beginnings of an understanding of how haiku can speak of the ineffable, offer glimpses of the unseen, recreate the childlike wonder and participation in all that is."

A child is born with a tabula rasa (blank slate, genetically encoded with cultural memory, and in the Christian viewpoint, with the sins of their forefathers). A normal baby is open to learning, harbors no preconceptions or subjectivity,

believing what he or she sees and hears. Like a computer: what goes in, comes out. Babies are sensitive to things we as adults are not aware of, or have lost sight of after entering the school system. A baby can sense evil in a person, and will cry tears if that person nears him or tries to touch him.

Wrote Shinkei echoing the belief of himself, and the lords Shunzei, Michitomo, and Teika regarding the Style of Meditation [*ushintei*], which they believed to be the consummate style (aesthetic principle) in the way of poetry:

"It is poetry in which the mind has dissolved *and is profoundly at one with the numinosity [aware] of things; poetry that issues from the very depths of the poet's being . . .* "

Transl. by Esperanza Rameriz-Christensen

Murmured Conversations

An annotated translation of Sasamegotu (1463-1464)

by Shinkei (1406-1475)

Yone Noguchi, who was a major influence on Imagists like Ezra Pound and the first Japanese person to introduce haiku to America, stated in his *A Proposal to American Poets* on February 1904:

"Hokku (seventeen-syllable poem) is like a tiny star, mind you, carrying the whole sky at its back. It is like a slightly-open door, where you may steal into the realm of poesy. It is simply a guiding lamp. Its value depends on how much it suggests. The Hokku poet's chief aim is to impress the reader with the high atmosphere in which he is living. I always compare an English poem with a mansion with windows widely open, even the pictures of its drawing-room being visible from outside. I dare say it does not tempt me much to see the within.

....

"A cloud of flowers! Is the bell from Uyeno or Asakusa?" (Basho)

Yes, cloud of flowers, of course, in Mukojima, the odorous profusion shutting out every prospect! Listen to the bell sounding from the distance! Does it come from the temple of Uyeno or Asakusa? Doesn't the poem suggest a Spring picture of the river Sumida?"

"On a Withered branch, Lo! the crows are sitting there, Oh, this Autumn eve!" (Basho)

What a suggestion for the solitariness of a Japanese Autumn evening! The crows--what a monotonous "Kah! Kah, Kah!"--are the image of melancholy for Japanese.

Basho was a master of Hokku, a great suggester. He made long excursions to the remotest spots frequently, leaving behind him traces which remain to this day in the shapes of stones with his inscription. His monuments are said to number more than one thousand.

Pray, you try Japanese Hokku, my American poets! *You say far too much*, I should say. Here are some of my own attempts in the seventeen-syllable verse:

'My girl's lengthy hair
Swung o'er me from Heaven's gate:
Lo, Evening's shadow!'

'Lo, light and shadow
Journey to the home of night:
Thou and I--to Love!'

'Where the flowers sleep,
Thank God! I shall sleep, to-night.
Oh, come, butterfly!'"

Lawrence Ferlinghetti is the owner of City Lights Bookstore that sponsored the controversial reading of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*, which initiated a court case where the prosecutor accused *Howl* of being an OBSCENE book. The State of California lost their case due to the first amendment of the Constitution of the United States. Ferlinghetti is considered to be one of America's finest free verse poets and was San Francisco's Poet Laureate.

He was also a close friend of Snyder, Ginsberg, McClure, and Kerouac, and therefore, helped to popularize haiku in the United States before the HSA came into being.

In an interview, Laurence Ferlinghetti was asked if he had written a book of haiku. The following is an excerpt from this interview. I suggest you pay close attention to what he says:

Lawrence Ferlinghetti (1919-) on Haiku - Interview by Carl Freire

<http://www.kyotojournal.org/kjselections/ferlinghetti.html>

Carl Freire: "Did you publish any haiku collections?"

Lawrence Ferlinghetti: "Haiku? No. That term has been picked up by American poets and they call any three-line poem or any short poem a haiku -- which isn't the case. Allen Ginsberg had a very simple definition of a haiku, which none of these poets follow. He said, first you have the perception of an unrecognized, amorphous natural phenomenon, and then the second step is recognition of what it is... You know what an American haiku is?"

Carl Freire: "No, what is an American haiku?"

Lawrence Ferlinghetti: "It's a bird, it's a man, it's ...Superman!"

But that doesn't fulfill Allen's definition either, strictly. First, there is an amorphous mass, second, a recognition of what it is, and third, an emotional response to that recognition. So it would be like:

A small distant cloud. It's a bird, it's a man -- (Laughter...)

To be more serious, we should take one of the classic Japanese haiku that really made it --

Carl Freire: "For me that would be Basho's 'The ancient pond / a frog jumps in / the sound of water..'"

Lawrence Ferlinghetti: "Well, Allen would add 'Aha!' -- that would be the emotion, the third part of the haiku, the reaction to the observation."

Carl Freire: "And American poets just don't get it?"

Lawrence Ferlinghetti: "They should invent some other word for these poems. It's not the correct transmission of the Dharma (laughter). There was a very early American haiku magazine, and I can't remember who was the editor, the first one in this country who got onto the haiku horse. This was in the 60s, probably. He asked me for a haiku -- I sent him this:

Ancient frog In ancient outhouse Plop!

And he rejected it, he said that won't do, it's too vulgar, it's obscene..."

Anglo-American, Oceanic, and European haiku poets are not writing anything near what the Japanese wrote between the time of Basho and Issa, with few exceptions. Some say we have the public schools to blame, which is partially right, but many modern poets, many under the influence of the Haiku Society of America, who, according to Michael Dylan Welch, is the major voice in the Anglo-English haiku world community, is even more to blame because they are a major Internet influence of modern Anglo-English haiku. Coupled with the Japanese modernists groomed by the German-based university system, haiku is not even close to being taken seriously by the mainstream English-language literary world. They have no consistent definition, they think kigo is not necessary, don't understand its essence (which is becomingness, koto, process, impermanence, non-static, sculpted by *zoka*, a term Basho didn't make up) and believe it's okay to substitute it with a key word that does or doesn't have to do with nature, of which you, as a human being, are a part of. Most of what is placed on-line in forums, journals, blogs, and e-zines regarding haiku are primarily anything goes, with the good old boys slapping each other on the back like the haiku poets did prior to Shiki's shake-up and renaming hokku to haiku.

Simply Haiku is making enemies with the good old guys and women who have done their thing for too long, not in tune, as Ferlinghetti claims, with what a true haiku is. (Ferlinghetti has a PhD in Literature from the Sorbonne in France). It's time to be silent no longer. Either haiku regains its identity or it will sink into the oblivion. People are fooling themselves into thinking the opposite. There are few books on haiku in the major bookstores. Why? Most of the books are older books (how-to books, and anthologies of poetry by the Japanese masters. None contain a single Anglo-English speaking poet's body of works. Thanks to the Modern Japanese, Anglo-Western, and Oceanic school systems, the world haiku community's identity crisis, the German-based university system, and the misrepresentations of haiku by Blyth whose books are elevated to a cult status, the offerings in Barnes and Noble Bookstore, Amazon Bookstore, and other major bookstores are a joke for a genre who claim to be a major poetic genre (or should I say two poetic genres with the same name and different rules, if any?).

Wrote Yone Noguchi:

"The heart of Nature is sad. Beyond the sounds of the wind and the waves you

will be impressed by the loneliness and beauty of silence, which is the dignity of Nature."

Shiki didn't have a college degree, but no one called him a wannabe scholar. It's considered heresy to criticize Shiki by the modern haiku community (he was influenced by the Japanese and American adopted German-based university system and praised by Blyth), yet it was okay for Shiki to criticize Basho and praise Buson, who in turn said he was taught by a disciple of one of Basho's closest disciples; and who said Basho had the greatest influence on his poetry. And the praise heaped upon Buson by Shiki wasn't predicated on his ability to adhere to the *shasei* doctrine. It was predicated upon Buson's depth of imagination.

Shiki himself encouraged his followers to read the books of the old masters including Basho, even though he claimed publicly that Basho was a horrible poet.

Haiku is haiku. There are not two genres of haiku, just as there are not two genres called cubism. The time has come for a revival of the haiku that once became a respected literary genre, whose poets and haiku are remembered today, and not because they are dead. They are remembered because their poetry had meaning, depth, mystery, meter, and allowed room for a reader's subjective analysis.

A poet's job is to write a haiku and the reader's job is to interpret it. Since we are not the poet himself, there is no way possible to think as he or she thinks. All of us have different backgrounds, levels of experience, cultural memories, parental upbringings, etc.

Writes Jane Hirschfield in her new book *The Heart of Haiku*:

"The reader who enters Basho's perceptions fully can't help but find in them a kind of liberation. They unshackle the mind from any single or absolute story, unshackle us from the clumsy dividing world into subjective and objective, self and other, illness and blossom, freedom and capture. Some haiku seem reports of internal awareness, some seem to point at the external, but Basho's work as a whole awakens us to the necessary permeability of all to all. Awareness of the mind's movements makes clear that it is the mind's nature to move. Feeling within ourselves the lives of others (people, creatures, plants, and things) who share this world is what allows us to feel as we do at all."

By interpreting another's haiku and doing in a less than complimentary manner a sin, and is this my right as a reader of haiku to interpret what the poet has written?

In closing, it would be ridiculous to think that Japan and the Anglo-Western and Anglo- Oceanic countries can't learn from one another. When we think we have arrived, we begin to stagnate. We no longer strive to improve our craft. Perhaps this is why so many on-line haiku teachers and well-known poets refuse to have their haiku critiqued publicly. They'll critique others, even newbies, but if you critique them, they'll attack you and get their friends to support them in their malicious. I'm thankful for the secure poets who don't live in class house.

Activity- (koto, process) biased haiku is neither Japanese or Anglo-English. It's the essence of haiku, apart from the influences of Imagism, Japanese Modernism, the errors of Blyth and Yasuda, and the colonialism brought about by the German-based university system.

Below are examples of some of the finest non-Japanese-language haiku written during the past two centuries; poetry that is remembered, talked about, studied, and worthy of being called serious literature. We don't need to portray the roll of the three blind mice playing chess. Below is proof that haiku can be defined and written properly.

The following haiku are by the poet laureate of Catalan, Agusti Barta, from his book *The Last Poems* (1977-1982, translated by Sam Abrams), published in 500 copies. They were written in his deathbed in Mexico City where his daughter, Eli, teaches Women's Studies at the University of Mexico City. Barta translated *The Complete Works of William Blake* into the Catalan language and was his native land's finest free verse poet. He was exiled to Mexico City by the Spanish dictator, Generalissimo Ferdinand, during World War II. My copy was gifted to me by the poet's daughter, Eli, when I met her at a friend's house on the campus of U.C. Santa Cruz, California.

On their pilgrimage
the eyes of the passing night:
searching for the lark
The light is teaching
the air that ever travels
how roses are born
With words you begin,
worlds of obscure syllables,
close to the earth's crust
With footsteps of air
I draw near the steeple bells
that are dreaming me
I open to things
that come unto me, pilgrims,
with no certainty
The heavy branches
of the trees bend toward the earth,
though now free from doubt
Untouchable youth,

drawing knowledge from the stones
and morning glories
as if distracted
on my way, I touched the tree,
now it answers me

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Japanese Haiku Aesthetics: Pt. V

The Colonization of Japanese Haiku

by Robert D. Wilson

*After weeks of watching the roof leak
I fixed it tonight
by moving a single board*

Gary Snyder
"Hitch Haiku" in *The Back Country* (1967)

*For a while
the Flying Pope
follows Cinderella*

Ban'ya Natsuishi
The Flying Pope

Haiku as practiced by and introduced to the world by Matsuo Basho, Kobayashi Issa, Yosa Buson, Chiyo-ni, and their contemporaries prior to Masaoka Shiki, with few exceptions, has disappeared from our planet. What is currently called haiku is a product of the German-based university system, and thus, an Anglo-Western poetic genre. It is also a cicada shell of its former incarnation, verging on extinction in the area of world credibility as a serious literary genre.

This is the final paper of a total of five on haiku aesthetics that have appeared in *Simply Haiku*. I wrote this series, having a tremendous love for hokku and haiku poetry. Most publications and poets I've come into contact with are confused as to what is and isn't a haiku. Most adhere to a line of thinking popularized by the inadequate research and bias of three writers: R.H. Blyth, Kenneth Yasuda, and Harold Henderson. They believed that haiku was a Zen Buddhist genre, and defined Japanese aesthetic tools and genre specific rules with a language not suited for an exegetical analysis of Japanese poetry. These teachings were, in turn, influenced by Masaoka Shiki, the Anglo-Western Imagist poets, and the homogenization of Western and Japanese linguistic perceptions.

NOTE: *In citing poems by living poets, no malice is intended. It is necessary, however, to cite examples of poetry in this paper to make a valid academic point regarding the authenticity and non-authenticity of what is and isn't haiku, and the homogenization of haiku in and outside of Japan.*

Wrote my friend and mentor, the late UCLA Professor of Japanese literature, aesthetics, and hermeneutics, Michael F. Marra, in his book, *Japan's Frames of Meaning*, published in 2011 by the University of Hawaii Press:

"So much of modern Japan - including the university system and modern

organizations of knowledge - was built on German models. Western hermeneutics had a profound impact on how philology, history, and the humanities came to be articulated in Japan. In other words, whatever goes under the umbrella of Japanese literature, art, religion, history, philosophy and so on would not exist in its modern form without the paradigms that hermeneutics provided in forcing Japanese authors to talk about Japan with a language that was originally devised for interpreting the Bible."

Are Japanese aesthetics an Anglo-Western invent? If so, is much of the haiku composed today in Japan the product of Anglo-Western thought as perceived by the German-based university system? Is there a disparity between the hokku composed prior to Masaoka Shiki's renaming and restructuring the genre, and the haiku composed in Japan since Shiki? These are questions that merit answers and the implications of said answers can affect the future of haiku throughout the world.

Wrote Professor Haruo Shirane of Columbia University in his paper "Constructing 'Japanese Literature' Global and Ethnic Nationalism" in 1998:

"Japanese literature, especially classical Japanese literature, is thought by those both in and outside Japan to be the unique product of a nation called Japan, while the texts of Japanese literature are thought to embody the cultural characteristics of the 'people' of Japan. Japanese literature as we know it today, however, has been deeply influenced by non-Japanese cultures, particularly that of China up until the late nineteenth century, and by Europe from the late nineteenth onward. Furthermore, the two key notions of 'nation' (kokka) and ' literature' (bungaku) that lie behind today's notion of kokubungaku, or what is now more frequently referred to as 'Japanese literature' (Nihon bungaku), are in significant part a product of modern, nineteenth century European notions of literature and nationhood."

Is haiku as we know it today, composed in and outside of Japan, a Japanese literary genre free from Western influence? Was haiku unaffected by the societal revolution brought about after Commodore Perry forced Japan to open its borders to the West?

How important is language in the defining of a culture? Is the English language capable of defining and dissecting the Japanese mindset from the Meiji Construction Era to the present? Why did the Japanese adopt the German-based university system and feel a need to adapt its language to accommodate the Anglo-West in its understanding of Japan?

"Our language is the reflection of ourselves."
-- Cesar Chavez

Wrote Sasaki Ken'ichi, professor of aesthetics at the University of Tokyo, in a paper presented during an international conference held from December 13-15, 1998 at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA): "Japanese Hermeneutics: Current Debates on Aesthetics and Interpretation":

"The structural features in various phases of a language determine the ways of

thinking and the world vision of the users of that language, and, conversely, the world vision of a people dominates the structures of their language."

The language most dominant in the world controls how its inhabitants perceive the world.

Wrote Benjamin Lee Whorf:

"We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language."

At the same conference, Ōhashi Ryōsuke, professor of philosophy at the Institute of Technology in Kyoto, stated:

"Europeanness and Japaneseness no longer stand in dichotomous contrast. A hermeneutics of Japaneseness requires first the perception of Europeanness as the other in itself for the Japanese self."

I was taught all my life that the West and Japan were polar opposites, philosophically. If there is no dichotomous contrast, as Professor Ryōsuke asserted, between European and Japanese thought, why would educational institutions in the United States from elementary schools to universities, public and private, teach otherwise? Have educators, authors, and students been fed homogenous half-truths due to insufficient research and linguistic confusion?

Stated University of Tokyo aesthetics Professor, Hiroshi Yoshioka, in his lecture "Samurai and Self-colonization in Japan" included in the book *De-colonization of Imagination: Culture, Knowledge and Power*, edited by Jan Nederveen Pieterse and Bhikhu Parekh, Zed Publishers, 1995:

"The phenomenon of colonization on this level involves our ways of seeing, thinking and talking about other people and cultures. In other words, this issue of colonization can be discussed in the realm of cultural representation and discourse. This doesn't mean we are always forced by some noticeable power to represent or talk of others in a certain way. On the contrary, forces to distort our images of others function most effectively when we are not aware of them, that is, when we feel ourselves free to see or think about the world. The domain of those forces is in the unconscious, and they reach very deep into our everyday life through the process of communication in families, school and social education as well as daily exposure to every field of mass media."

Yoshioka went on to posit: *"Japan has colonized itself. And in the course of modernization, the drastic transformation of culture, Japanese have played the role of the colonist and of the colonized at the same time."*

In 1853, American Commodore Perry entered Japanese waters leading an armada of heavily armed motorized ships. The Japanese Emperor and his political handlers, the Tokugawa Shogunate, were opposed to Western influence and refused to meet with Perry to entertain his request for an open border and a treaty of mutual cooperation.

Edward Robie, the Admiral's Chief Engineer, in 1910, recounted:

"At Shui we found a walled city and Commodore Perry signified to the Japanese

officials, through interpreters, that he wished to visit it. They were appalled and told him that under no circumstances would that be permitted. The Commodore, however, whom we affectionately dubbed the 'Ursa Major', in his quiet, forceful way, informed them that on the following day he would land and visit the city and would expect its gates to be opened to him. The Japanese were courteous and polite, but we were evidently not to their liking. They would, I think, have crushed us had they dared, but were wise enough to recognize our superior strength, and so, when, on the morrow, the Commodore, accompanied by about 300 sailors and marines, to whom fifty rounds of ammunition had been furnished for guns and our dozen howitzers, appeared at the gates of the walled city, he found them open and we entered and marched all around the city, in which no white man had ever set foot before."

Recounts Robie:

"The Japanese came down to meet us in force, in hundreds of boats laden with men armed with swords and spears, bows and arrows, escorted by their best battleship, an old one sail junk. Just think of it, and this only 55 years ago. Well, as our cutters moved ahead in their work of sounding and charting the waters, the Japanese would steer their boats in front of ours and endeavor to obstruct our way. A show of muskets by our men and a determined attitude, however, soon induced them to get out of our way, and in this way the Bay of Yeddo was sounded and charted by us."

The Japanese called Commodore Perry's armada the "*black ships of evil mien* [appearance]."The Tokugawa Shogunate, who ruled Japan, and its puppet emperor, vehemently opposed the American presence, seeing them as a threat to their mode of governance. They also knew what cooperation with the West had cost China. They did not want to follow in China's footsteps and become a subjugated country.

An excerpt from the letter addressed to the Japanese Emperor penned by Commodore Perry:

The undersigned holds out all these arguments in the hope that the Japanese government will see the necessity of averting unfriendly collision between the two nations, by responding favorably to thepropositions of amity, which are now made in all sincerity.

Many of the large ships-of-war destined to visit Japan have not yet arrived in these seas, though they are hourly expected; and the undersigned, as an evidence of his friendly intentions, has brought but four of the smaller ones, designing, should it become necessary, to return to Edo in the ensuing spring with a much larger force.

But it is expected that the government of your imperial majesty will render such return unnecessary, by acceding at once to the very reasonable and pacific overtures contained in the President's letter, and which will be further explained by the undersigned on the first fitting occasion.

With the most profound respect for your imperial majesty, and entertaining a

sincere hope that you may long live to enjoy health and happiness, the undersigned subscribes himself,

M. C. Perry,

Commander-in-chief of the United States Naval Forces in the East India, China, and Japan sea.

Although the Tokugawa Shogunate wanted the foreigners expelled, they were powerless against the military might of the United States, and thus, had no other choice but to cede to America's demands for a treaty of cooperation, effected in 1854, facilitating trade at two ports. In 1858, a second treaty was signed opening up additional ports and cities to the West.

NOTE: Although Commodore Perry forced the Tokugawa Shogunate and Japan's puppet emperor to open up its borders to Western commerce and travel, he did not force Japan to adopt American thinking, educational models, or its aesthetic models. Perry's checkmate with the Shogunate set into motion a chain of events that would topple the Tokugawa regime, set up a new regime, reformat the Japanese language, their educational system, and transform every aspect of art via mimeses, new words, philosophical adaptation, linguistic metamorphosis, and the ramifications that accompany radical change. A fire was lit in Japan. It is still burning today.

Compared with America and its European allies, the effectiveness and alleged superiority of the Shogunate came into question. The failure of the Shogunate in the xenophobic eyes of key samurai leaders to control and repel the American invaders and the changes their treaty-brokered presence brought about, was a sign of weakness, and would, in time, lead to the downfall of the Shogunate and the Tokugawa regime, and the sculpting of a new, modern centralized government with the emperor as its symbolic head.

In 1868, the repressive Tokugawa Shogunate was toppled and replaced by a regime theoretically led by Japan's newly empowered Emperor Meiji. In reality, the real decision makers were a small group of nobles and former samurai. The Emperor was sixteen years old when he ascended the throne, and as such, unsuited to lead Japan into the metamorphosis it had been thrust into.

The regime change did not solve the predicament Japan found itself in. Japan was forced to sign unequal treaties benefiting the United States. In order to compete equally with the Anglo-West, and to eventually rise above the West's hegemony, the nation would have to, to put it crudely, eat dirt, until it could catch up economically, militarily, and technologically.

The Japanese colonized themselves, wanting to become a major player in the world of technology and trade. They assumed an ambiguous presence, absorbing everything they could to catch up. The country's intellectual elite and politicians didn't know how this temporary self-colonization would affect their language, religious outlook, and cultural integrity.

For the next twenty years, in the 1870s and 1880s, the top priority remained domestic reform aimed at changing Japan's social and economic institutions along

the lines of the model provided by the powerful Western nations. Essential to these changes was the transformation of its educational system from a feudal citadel to one reflecting the hegemony of Anglo-Western models.

Japan's educational system was reformed after the French and, later, after the German-based university system. Among those reforms was the introduction of compulsory education. Education, to be competitive with Europe and America and the hegemony the Anglo-West exerted internationally, had to find a common ground in which to communicate, that being an educational system foreign to the Japanese, but deemed superior when viewing the progress the Anglo-West had made technologically compared to Japan, whose isolationism kept them from progressing beyond the cultural landscape of their geographical locale, and their mimesis of Chinese religion, laws, language, government, literature, etc.

Education became the cornerstone of Japan's quest for modernization.

This adoption of the German-based university system drastically affected the Japanese mindset, its language, and its perception of philosophy, social science, political science, art, and religion. Many of the texts previously deemed integral to the aforementioned disciplines were jettisoned to accommodate Japan's self-colonization and desire to be "*Westernized*" and considered an equal partner in the rapidly changing technological arena the industrialized world had become. The Japanese found it expedient to table their xenophobia towards the West, knowing that samurai swords were no match for Anglo-Western canons. A proud people, in their mind, payback would come later, after Japan had caught up with Western hegemony, but on terms that were far from subjugating.

Many Japanese scholars were sent abroad to study Western science and languages, and, likewise, foreign experts were recruited to teach and lecture in Japan including Ernest F. Fenollosa (1853-1908), at the invitation of the Japanese government. His lectures covered Anglo-Western theories on aesthetics, philosophy, literature, and art. Since his theories covered territory previously uncharted in the Japanese mindset, translators had to find words that correlated with the terms, concepts, and words he used in his lectures at the Tokyo Imperial University, then called the Higher Normal School in Tokyo. New words were added to the Japanese vocabulary indigenous to the German-based university system, as well as the application of new meanings to many old ones.

The Japanese word, *geijutsuka*, originally referred to scientists and mathematicians. The same word today, less the "*ka*", means artist.

By 1889, Japanese schools had assimilated the Western meaning of terms such as aesthetics, a word hitherto unknown in Japan, who saw *yugen*, *ma*, *makoto*, and other terms as styles, not as an integrated system of *beauty*, another term Japan found hard to define.

Wrote Grazia Marchiano in his essay, "What to Learn from Western Aesthetics"?

"Martin Heidegger's view that philosophy was the invention of the Greek mind has deep roots in European consciousness, and has, to all effects, been universally endorsed. When Japan, at the beginning of the Meiji era (1868), took the historic

decision to set under way the process of modernization after 150 years of proud isolation, expanding its horizons to embrace the 'newness' of the West and its cultural models, it was obliged to adapt its traditional lexis to Western concepts or even to coin new words."

(http://www.uqtr.quebec.ca/AE/vol_2/marchiano.html)

Hokku, the poetic genre made famous by Matsuo Basho, like all forms of literary expression in Japan during the Meiji Era, was affected by Western influence and the cultural colonization of the Japanese language.

The verse form Matsuo Basho is credited with establishing as a serious literary genre and making it accessible outside the Japanese Imperial Court during the Tokugawa Era was part of renga, a social multiple-participant verse form whose content, subject to rules and codification, was, more often than not, fictional and entertaining in a politically expedient manner. Its primary purpose was for the entertainment of the elite.

A few examples:

*Hawks take flight,
horses whinny --- on a moor,
in a storm*

Inawashiro Kensai
Tr. by Steven D. Carter
Haiku Before Haiku

*Green, so green ---
new greens sprouting
in a snowy field*

Konishi Raizan
Tr. Steven D. Carter
Haiku Before Haiku

*Curse the luck!
Rushing gets you wetter
in a passing shower.*

Takayama Sōzei
Tr. Steven D. Carter
Haiku Before Haiku

Most, with few exceptions, worked as part of a renga but were not substantial enough to stand on their own as a serious poem, nor were they written to. It was Basho, a renga practitioner, who saw in the hokku something more. Basho spent his life refining and exploring hokku, the opening three lines of a renga. He saw a connection with *zoka* (nature's creative force) and made this connection the cornerstone for stand-alone hokku. This cornerstone, the essence of hokku, is overlooked today, accounting for the similarity between haiku written in and outside Japan and that composed during renga tournaments during Basho's time.

Most contemporary haiku lack an understanding of and connection with *zoka*.

An e-mail from a well-known international haiku poet, upon her poetry's rejection by one of *Simply Haiku*'s editors due to the poet's lack of a kigo connection, said contemporary Western haiku no longer sees the need for such inclusion.

Complaints like these have no scholarly basis or academic reference. I remember my father's admonishment to me as a child when I challenged his authority and griped, *"But dad, everyone is doing it!"* His reply was terse and simple, *"If everyone jumps off a cliff, would you follow?"*

The use of kigo is being challenged today in Japan by gendai and modernist poets who advocate key words in its stead. They call their haiku, *muki* (seasonless) haiku. The reasoning for the substitution of key words for the traditional kigo at first seems sound. Kigo words as dictated by the Japanese *saijiki* (approved season word list) are not relevant to those outside Japan experiencing different seasons such as the Philippines, whose climate is a tropical rainforest climate. Some of the terms in the Japanese *saijiki* are geographical centric like holidays (*tanabata*, etc.), food dishes, and religious references like *kami*. Advocates of *muki* haiku see everything as belonging to nature, thus reasoning that to encapsulate nature into what they call the limitations of seasonal words stifles creativity and the spirit that nature is supposed to infuse into a haiku.

States Kaneko Tohta in his speech before the Gendaihaiku kyoki (The Modern Haiku Association) audience attending the 46th Annual Conference in October 2000:

"This living being (ikimono) --- in seeing this, it is absurd to draw distinctions between human beings and nature. A human being is the same as a cockroach, or a weasel. Those animals don't live out life in human society, but some animals, those more closely resembling human beings, are said to have something in common with human societies. Yet, their sensitivities are in no way corrupted; the raw perception of living beings (ikimono kankaku) is itself alive. There are many such worlds. We should not hold these worlds dear, even if we as humans are the most twisted of living beings [dokusareru]."

In a statement made on September 12, 1999, called the Matsuyama Declaration, the following was posited regarding the use of kigo in modern day haiku:

"The fact that haiku is, in essence, symbolic poetry that has stopped being long-winded and talkative is recognized worldwide. Kigo is an accumulation of a long tradition of poetic sensibility that has continued to grow since the birth of waka. Globally speaking, it is a 'keyword' that possesses a symbolic meaning unique to that particular culture. 'Surely all cultures are certain to possess symbolic keywords that are unique to them, and which have been nurtured throughout their history. In this context, haiku can be described as being a universal poem whose essential part is expressed by 'symbolism.' We can also point out that the recent trend of modern Japanese haiku that attempts to refine itself as a symbolic poem, are in line with this global direction."

Signed by: Arima Akito, Minister of Education of Japan Haga Toru, President of

Kyoto University of Art and Design, Ueda Makato, Professor Emeritus of Stanford University, Soh Sakon, Poet Kaneko Tohta, President of the Modern Haiku Society, Jean Jacques Origas, French Oriental Language Research Institute.

Bruce Ross in his essay, "Haiku Mainstream, in the current issue of Modern Haiku", says the opposite in reference to symbolist haiku:

*"The essence of a haiku is in its natural imagery, not in a metaphoric presentation of **symbolic** poetic language."*

Are modern day haiku symbolist expressions lacking a vital connection to *zoka*?

Posits Ban'ya Natsuichi in his online essay, "Technique Used in Modern Japanese Haiku: Vocabulary and Structure":

". . . There are muki haiku, non-seasonal poem, whose keywords are not connected to seasonal aspects. It is a new style of expression in contemporary haiku. Freed from seasonal limitations, contemporary muki haiku have been enriched and expanded with keywords that indicate all living things (animals, plants, and any natural phenomenon), human beings themselves and the culture created by human beings (the body, human relations, family, culture)."

With the concept of keywords in lieu of kigo in mind, consider the words of Torataro Shimomura in the discussion of "The Conquest of Modernity" as recorded by Hisao Furikawa in "Japan's Encounter with Modernization, Southeast Asian Studies", Vol.33, no. 3, December 1995, stated:

"The epistemology of modern science is not the intuitive perception of the essence or form of things as in ancient times . . . it is a technical, formative epistemology . . . that views things and that tortures so-called nature to force nature itself to answer . . . To be connected with the spirit of experimental methodology is not to simply observe nature as it is in a purely objective manner; it is to make things that do not exist in nature real through human intervention."

Kigo usage in Japan was a given before Japan adopted the Gregorian calendar, which affected the delineation of the seasons and the kigo words used to represent the four seasons. Again, a restructuring of the Japanese vocabulary and its poetic perception/interpretation of nature; a side effect of the self-imposed colonization of cultural memory.

The scholar, Masako Hiraga, in her paper, "'Eternal Stillness: A Linguistic Journey to Basho's Haiku about the Cicada", unwillingly to jettison the importance and vitality of *zoka* in haiku, wrote:

"By saying, 'Learn about pines from pines and about bamboos from bamboos' (Hattori: 547), Basho meant that if a haiku does not arise naturally from the object, the object and its observer will become two and the observer will not be able to realize the feeling of the object, since the self will intervene. This teaches that what a poet must be is one with nature, or 'zôka.' "

Konishi Jin'ichi in 1960 brought to light the fact that the conceptualization of

nature in the meaning of the external world did not exist in Japan until the Meiji period. Again, the interpretation many in Japan and in the Anglo-West have of nature today is a post Fenollosa-ian invent created to accommodate the Anglo-West in their assimilation and understanding of Japanese thought.

Said Kai Hasegawa to me in an interview for *Simply Haiku*:

"Kigo (words that express the seasons), which carry out important functions in haiku, were born from the soil of the idea that humans are a part of nature. The seasons are born from the revolution of the earth around the sun, and the first function of kigo is related to this. By including kigo in haiku, the rhythm of the earth's revolution is incorporated within the haiku."

To understand haiku, one needs to understand its heartbeat. The heartbeat of haiku, as conceptualized by Matsuo Basho, is nature as it was understood before the colonization of the Japanese language. Without *zoka*, haiku is not haiku. It becomes instead, an Imagist burp; a short poem saying whatever it wants to say, the antithesis of Basho's and Buson's teachings.

Points out Vassar College Professor Peipei Qui in her book, *Bashō and the Daō*:

"The word used to mean 'nature,' shizen, in modern Japanese also appears in Bashō's writings, but it means 'natural' and 'spontaneous' rather than 'nature' as the external world. Bashō's use of this word relates in many important ways to his concept of zōka, and both 'shizen' and 'zoka' in his writings show deep relations with the terms in Daoist texts."

Hokku, due to its economy of words, is a difficult medium to write, let alone understand. To paraphrase liberally a statement by Andre Segovia, the late great classical guitarist, who was referring to the guitar in his comment, haiku is the easiest poem to compose and the hardest to write well.

After Issa's death, and spurred by the deification of Basho as a Shinto god, hokku slipped back into irrelevancy under the guidance of competing schools of poetry, each claiming to be descendants of Basho. Scores of monuments memorialized him. No one, it seemed, wanted to study his work in depth, nor were they willing to practice and subject themselves to the discipline needed to write with the evocative power and potential hokku offered to those who understood its partnership with *zoka*, nature's unpredictable, never static creative power.

Wrote Professor Donald Keene in his book, *Dawn to the West*, regarding the quality of haiku during the Meiji Restoration:

"Not a single poet of distinction was writing; indeed, it had been almost one hundred years since anyone had composed haiku of unmistakable literary worth."

The following was composed, during the revolt that toppled the Tokugawa Shogunate, by a poet seemingly unconcerned with the realities indigenous to the political fire Japan had been cast into:

*I will shut my ears
And, thinking only of blossoms,
Enjoy my nap.*

Torigoe Tosai (1803-1890)

Tr. by Donald Keene

States Keene:

"The haiku poets of the day, occupied with petty matters, were not aware that their art had become stagnant and even meaningless . . . their good opinion of themselves was confirmed in 1873 when the Minister of Religious Instruction appointed four haiku masters as special instructors, charged with identifying haiku poetry with the policies of the Meiji government. Basho was established as a legitimate object of divine worship in 1879, and elaborate. Commentaries on his haiku demonstrated that he preached filial piety and the other Confucian virtues. The government obviously wished to assert traditional Japanese values at a time when a flood of Western ideas had swept the country, threatening the old morality."

Writes Peter Flueckiger, Associate Professor of Japanese at Pomona College, California (USA), in his new book, *Imagining Harmony: Poetry, Empathy, and Community in Mid-Tokugawa Confucianism and Nativism*, published by the University of Stanford Press, about the role of Confucian thought as perceived by the Confucian scholar Sorai Ogyu (1666-1728):

"Sorai . . . Argued that Confucianism should be understood as a philosophy of rulership rather than a means for personal moral cultivation."

The Neo-Confucian mindset of the Tokugawa Shogunate was also the mindset used by the Meiji Era Imperial Court to water down haiku and use it as a tool of subjugation.

Haiku was used by the Imperial Court as a means of strengthening their power base during a tumultuous time not far removed from the Meiji overthrow of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

Continues Keene: *"The haiku [hokku] by this time had become a kind of national pastime, and even persons devoid of poetic talent felt little hesitation about dashing off seventeen syllables as a greeting or as a momentous of a pleasant gathering."*

Added Keene: *"Superficial wit was the hallmark of men like Hozumi Eiko (1823-1904) who was admired for such verses as:*

*The nightingales ---
When I was young it was love
That kept me awake.*

Hozumi Eiki

Tr. by Donald Keene"

Compare these examples of Meiji Era hokku with the following contemporary

haiku poems. Are they relevant, memorable, deserving to be considered as serious literature, and if so, why?

A sampling of award winning Anglo-Western English-language haiku:

2011 Harold G. Henderson Haiku Contest

First Prize

Garry Gay, Santa Rosa, California

*Navajo moon
the coyote call
not a coyote*

Editor's Choice

Heron's Nest March 2012

John McManus

*crayon map
my son shows me the way
to Neverland*

The winner of a Touchstone Award from The Haiku Foundation (US) for one of the best haiku published in English in 2011: Ernest J. Berry:

*clouded moon
the sound of her slip
hitting the floor*

The following haiku-like poem by Cor van den Heuvel, reminds me of Gary Snyder's haiku-esque poem cited at the beginning of this paper. It says the obvious, leaves little room for interpretation, and is far from memorable.

*by the lawn's edge,
the dog barks at the darkness
then looks back at me*

Frogpond 14:1(spring 1991)

Writes Bruce Ross in the current issue of Modern Haiku, referring to current state of Anglo-Western haiku poets:

[They]" have yet to relieve themselves of treating an object as only a mental image and to master 'transpersonal' phenomenologies of subjectivity and objectivity to subvert the tendency in their haiku toward consciously 'poetic' exercises in the Western figurative tradition of poetry, dramatically ironic moments, bald nature portraits, or experiments with surrealism, concrete poetry techniques, and stylistically self-conscious underscoring of Zen-like experiences."

Continues Ross:

"This generation has downplayed the form and substance of traditional Japanese haiku: a consistent lack of seasonal references, surrealist techniques and figurative expression are introduced, regular prosody is eliminated, human, rather than nature, subjects, and the erotic are more increasingly emphasized,

and psychological and political and social commentary are introduced. One sees a continuous grading of haiku into senryu, a Japanese poetic form identical in structure to haiku but emphasizing, usually in a humorous manner, human nature rather than nature itself. It thus moves away from what Anita Virgil notes as 'moments of special awareness that give one pause in the everyday world, make one feel the wonder of the ordinary seen anew'."

A sampling of heralded Contemporary Japanese-language haiku:

*After a heated argument
I go out to the street
and become a motorcycle*

Kaneko Tohta

(tr. by Makoto Ueda, from *Modern Japanese Haiku: An Anthology*, University of Toronto Press, 1976)

*hana nagaku iesu egakare samui kabe
with a long nose
a painting of Jesus--
the cold wall*

Akito Arima

*For a while
the Flying Pope
follows Cinderella*

Ban'ya Natsuishi
The Flying Pope

The irony of Ban'ya Natsuishi's pontification:

"Today's contemporary Japanese haiku unfurls into boundless and deep development. Development that neither Matsuo Basho (1644-1694), who advocated free spirit for haiku during the late 17th century, nor Masaoka Shiki (1862-1902), who tried to modernize haiku during the late 19th century, would have ever imagined."

A recent posting by Natsuishi on Facebook:

"One of my haiku will appear in 2 textbooks published by Sanseido (三省堂) for high school students. These textbooks will be used for education, next year. The haiku in Japanese: 未来より滝を吹き割る風来たる. The haiku in English: From the future / a wind arrives / that blows the waterfall apart".

Natsuishi's haiku-like poems are anything but boundless and deep development. His *Flying Pope* haiku-esque versification are poems a six-grade student could write at any given moment if given the pattern.

As I stated earlier in this paper, much of the haiku penned today in the Anglo-West and in Japan have more similarities than differences, as they are both products of German-based university system. How, for instance, is Natsuishi's

haiku excerpted from his book, *The Flying Pope*, different in scope, breath, and quality from the pattern poem penned by Michael Dylan Welch as part of his *Neon Buddha* series below?

*class reunion
the neon buddha
has a crooked tie*

Michael Dylan Welch.

September 15, 2010

www.dailyhaiku.org/special.../special-feature-7-neon-buddha-poems

The poet credited with saving hokku from oblivion 200 years after Basho's death is Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902), a poet and painter from a samurai background, with a gifted intellect and the skills of a great promoter, who was an avid student of Western art. Shiki didn't have a university degree, choosing instead to be a full-time poet and critic. He suffered from acute tuberculosis, whose pain he managed daily by taking excessive doses of morphine.

Shiki's short life centered around his love for Japanese waka and hokku. He wrote a haiku column for the newspaper, *Nippon*, and later became the newspaper's haiku editor. This gave Shiki a vast audience. His articles, essays, and poetry were widely read. Via the media, he became one of the Japanese literary world's most influential leaders.

He firmly believed the hokku taught and penned by the four major schools of haiku during the Meiji Era were substandard, and as such, hokku as a literary genre was in its death throes if nothing was done to revitalize it, and return to it the depth it entertained during Basho's lifetime. He blamed the substandard haiku on a mindset encouraged by the Meiji leadership, one that venerated Matsuo Basho as a Shinto god, and by doing so, kept the influence of haiku under their thumb. Creativity waned. Study and haiku theory were pre-determined, Basho's deification turning Japan's haiku world into a bastion for the mush-melon mentality he taught his disciples to avoid. Masaoka Shiki knew that changing haiku for the good would necessitate a wake-up call of major proportions. What greater way to command the haiku world's attention and that of the Imperial Court and the four schools it sanctioned, then to denigrate their poetic base, the Shinto cult of Basho.

The samurai warrior in his bloodline rose up from his weakly body and battled the Shinto religious establishment, the leadership of Japan's sanctioned haiku schools, and the Neo-Confucian Imperial Court leaders. Shiki's attacks on the haiku status quo were devastating, causing poets to rethink their outlooks towards haiku. It took a brave man to do this as to denigrate Basho (as a Shinto god) was a capital offense.

In essence, a non-degreed, sickly poet, schooled in Anglo-Western thought, took on his nation's poetry establishment and the Shinto religion, saying Basho wrote a lot of poor hokku. He was brash, quick-witted, arrogant, and impatient. He was also a brilliant strategist. His criticism got him the forum he desired. He sent his

country's literary world into an uproar. Shiki's criticism of Basho was shallow, and his intent misinterpreted. It was not a lack of respect on Shiki's part, per se. He covertly admired Basho and saw Basho's sound of water haiku as the finest haiku ever written. Knowing his life was limited, Shiki had to act fast and was effective in an expeditious manner, thus his attack on the status quo: Basho battering.

Writes Carmen Sterba in her essay, "Masaoka Shiki: the Misunderstood Reformer, Critic and Poet" (2010):

"The crux of the reason why Shiki was critical towards the idealism towards Basho was simply because after his death, master Basho had been literally worshiped by his fans for two hundred years, whereas other masters like Buson, in particular, had been ignored. By the end of the Tokugawa Era, haiku had become more of an amusement instead of a serious genre, so Shiki wanted to elevate haiku."

Stated Eiko Yachimoto in *Sketchbook* (February 2009):

"What annoyed him a great deal and made him furious at the end was the attitude of quite a few tsukinami renku masters who were busy securing their businesses and social positions by building a Basho's pavilion, a Basho's haiku stone or the likes for his 200th death anniversary. Shiki deplored to see Basho turned into a religion that defied any criticism. He had to fight. His method was so practical that he dared to say: Basho wrote so many bad haiku, so few great haiku. He wanted to shock those who blindly followed the religion of Basho."

Shiki claimed that hokku was all but dead, and that 90% of Basho's hokku were substandard. To denigrate Basho's poetry and teachings necessitated Shiki's formation of a better way, and by inference, covertly establishing his mindset as superior to Basho's. Only a strong personality and a brilliant strategist could pull such a thing off. His words, showmanship, and quick mind joined together to become a powerful samurai sword that would, in a short time, topple his enemies, by renaming hokku, haiku, and giving the genre back the depth it once entertained.

We owe a debt to Masaoka Shiki for saving haiku from the literary obscurity and death it was fated to become. His cries and denunciations were a wake-up call and a revival. Few people during any age are willing to become Don Quixotes and fight the windmills and mirrors the "Stepford" knights of norm cast before those rare individuals willing to dream and achieve the impossible. For someone fatally ill to take upon himself this role and to do it not for political expediency, wealth, or a socially popular cause, but to elevate and rescue a genre of poetry not fully appreciated, was an exemplary act as a human being and as an artist.

This being so, doesn't exempt Masaoka Shiki from criticism or, for that matter, the degree of criticism he cast upon Matsuo Basho.

Shiki was not a better poet than Basho. Compare the haiku by Basho below with a similarly styled haiku by Shiki.

Basho's hokku was in tune with *zoka*, nature's unpredictable creative force. Basho

lived most of his adult life in nature's bosom. Depth, playfulness, and cultural texture were incorporated in Basho's famous poem. The poem is activity-biased, as is the whole of nature, which is ever changing.

Shiki's, on the other hand, is obscure, a far cry from the shasei style he promulgated to his beginning students and the general public of Japan. Perhaps the morphine dreams and altered reality the narcotic induces influenced this poem. Shiki during the later part of his life was confined to his bed and unable to step outside without aide. Nature for him was the world he saw outside his bedroom window and memories lassoed from a healthier youth.

*old pond --- old garden
a frog jumps in emptying a hot-water bottle
the sound of water into the moon*

Matsuo Basho Masaoka Shiki
Tr. by Makoto Ueda Tr. by Stephen Addiss
Bashō and His Interpreters The Art of Haiku

It was late at night, and very dark by inference. Basho describes an audio moment free of visual acuities. Its emphasis is a multi-faceted activity: the sound of a frog jumping into an old pond he knew was nearby. In the poet's mind, the mental picture combined with an intuitive relationship with nature honed by Daoist teachings, was far deeper. The sound was more than a mere sound, the concrete auditory image of a frog jumping in the water. Basho intuited the frog jumping into the metaphysical sound of water. Why the sound of water? Here, readers cannot just read and say, "aha" after reading Basho' haiku. They must think, dive into its essence, and seek answers from their own subjective minds. How many haiku composed in Japan or in the Anglo-West today have this kind of affect on its readers?

According to Fujita Masakatsu (b. 1947), writes Michael Marra in *Japan's Frames of Meaning*:

"The empty shell of the poem is made of a series of 'things' (mono): the old pond, the frog, the water, and the sound. However, the poem's meaning is elsewhere. Poetic language alerts us to the presence of a deep tranquility that is conveyed by the 'voice of the soundless' --- the silence broken by the splash of the frog jumping into the old pond. Moreover, aside from pointing at real things, language also has a body of its own, a sound that can be either pleasant or unpleasant to the reader's ear."

Wrote Basho's disciple Doho regarding his master's famous haiku:

"It is the sound made by the frog leaping into a pond from wild grasses that we hear the voice of haiku. Haikai exists in what one sees and what one hears. The sincerity of haiku is to put what a poet feels directly into the verse."Sanzōshi, in ibid., pp. 157-158.

Look at the haiku heralded as the best of the best in online Japanese and English-language journals and e-zines. Do they come close to the excellence of this poem

or any poem penned by Matsuo Basho, Yosa Buson, Chiyo-ni, or Kobayashi Issa? Are they strong enough as poetry to merit serious consideration for haiku to be taken seriously by the mainstream literary world?

In Masaoka Shiki's haiku, the poet is looking out of his bedroom window at his small garden after darkness set in. He or someone else had just emptied a hot water bottle used to comfort Shiki who was in continual, deep seeded pain. He was obviously lying in bed, and subjectively, being the painter he was, painted with words what he saw, with a metaphorical tinge. It appeared to him as if the hot water bottle was being emptied into the moon. Shasei is a simple as-is sketch of life. It does not allow for subjective "*as ifs*." Deep? Yes! Objective? No. Simple? No. It's a poem accessible to those familiar with Shiki and his deathbed existence, whereas Basho's haiku has a universal quality to it, without subjective bias.

Masaoka Shiki developed shasei as an alternative to the Basho influenced hokku of the Meiji Era. Shasei (copying life) was adopted from a style of realistic painting popular in Europe. A fellow painter schooled in Anglo-Western painting styles, Nakamura Fusetsu (1866-1943), introduced him to the style. During a trip with Fusetsu and the haiku poet, Naito Meisetsu (1847-1926), Shiki wrote, as was his habit, several haiku. Upon reading some of Shiki's haiku, Fusetsu proffered that such poetry would be easy to convert into shasei style paintings.

One of Shiki's first attempts at shasei haiku:

hatsuaki no
ishidan takashi
sugi kodachi

*The stone flight of steps
Looms high in early autumn
Amidst the cedars*

Masaoka Shiki

Wrote Donald Keene in *Dawn in the West*:

"Shiki believed that haiku poetry was closest of all literary forms to paintings. In other forms of poetry the emphasis is on time, rather than on space, but the haiku is too brief to go beyond the present moment, and must therefore evoke space instead."

A painter knows that a painting is an illusion painted on a flat surface. A realist painting is conveying an illusion, nothing else. The realist, in essence, is a craftsman, meticulously reproducing a selected scene in as exact detail as possible. It is the painter's choice of the time of day or night, the position of light and shadow, the subject itself, minute variations of color and non-color, and more, that allow for a connection between artist and art lover.

His conceptualization of shasei haiku changed with time, especially after a study of the *pleine aire* style of French painter, Raphael Collin (1850-1916), emphasizing a plainness and blandness closely related to the Chinese ideal of beauty called *heitan*. The plainness and blandness Shiki conceptualized and

adapted to his haiku was surface-centric. The real meaning of such a poem would be found below the surface, via the unsaid, to be savored and tasted; a poetry with undertones that included emotions.

Makoto Ueda cites the following from Shiki in his book, *Modern Japanese Poets and the Nature of Literature*, in the chapter: Three Ways of Sketching from Life (Stanford University Press):

"Too realistic a poem is prone to be commonplace and lacking in surprise . . . a poet too bent on realism tends to imprison his mind within the confines of the tiny world his eyes can see, forgetting about rare and fresh motifs that lie distant in time or space."

Opines Ueda further in his chapter on Shiki:

"Shiki's view of the relationship between poetry and external reality was, then, a flexible one. Although it may look self-contradictory, from a pedagogic viewpoint it is coherent. He stressed the value of realistic representation for beginners but, for more advanced students recommended selective realism and allowed expert poets considerable freedom to choose between extremes of direct observation and imaginative creation. If he often appeared the champion of Shasei, that was because he frequently addressed amateurs and beginning students, or established poets who relied overmuch on too meager an imagination."

For many in the Anglo-West, especially those in America, their conceptualization of Shiki's shasei is based upon a surface understanding they have gleaned from articles and e-zines lacking academic depth and thorough coverage. Shiki was an intelligent theorist and critic, whose teachings merit more than a surface perusal.

The trouble with such a style is inherent in the manner the shasei poet presents a surface. Can he compose a shasei poem that can draw the reader into the depth of understanding he envisions below the surface? Shiki's haiku from an Anglo-Western sensibility was considered successful and was sufficient to catapult him to a place in history where he was considered to be after Basho, Buson, and Issa, Japan's fourth greatest haiku master.

Shiki named the new hokku, haiku, wanting to separate it from the mediocrity that were composed during the Meiji Era. During his short lifetime, via perseverance, albeit a justified fanaticism, impatience (he knew his time on earth was numbered), salesmanship, and a profound love for Japanese short form poetry, Masaoka Shiki made a lasting mark on the haiku genre.

Did Shiki change haiku for the good? Was his haiku good enough to merit the fame and level of influence he achieved? Would his conceptualization of haiku as a serious literary genre, on the long run, be enough to permanently revitalize haiku and thrust it into the modern world as a Japanese poetic form worthy of emulation by the Anglo-West?

On the short run, Shiki revitalized interest in hokku (now called haiku), and for that he is to be applauded. Unfortunately, the revival embers he relit didn't take into account the affects and depth of the colonization of the Japanese language

and cultural memory via its adoption of the German-based university system; a colonization that would, in time, water down the depth and aesthetic integrity of hokku as it was sculpted by Basho, his contemporaries, and those he influenced including Buson and Issa. Much of the haiku composed today are similar in quality to the unmemorable verse written during the Meiji Era that Shiki attacked as frivolous and shallow.

NOTE: Shiki was a complex individual and, as such, a man of contradictions. This is so of all geniuses, Basho included. Shiki had a limited lifespan and was debilitated by disease, pain, and the fog of morphine. Perhaps if he had lived longer like Basho, and was not limited to a small bedroom, we could have viewed his mind in a deeper way. Shiki would also have had a greater influence on modern haiku instead of just lighting the fire that marked its onset, his torch carried on by followers, some who later disagreed with Shiki.

The hokku composed after the death of Basho had its ups and down, and were it not for Yosa Buson, Kobayashi Issa, and others who took their art seriously, hokku could have easily sunk into the mire Shiki encountered during his lifetime. Yosa Buson encountered mediocrity during his lifetime, the result of self-impressed poets who saw themselves in mirrors they held up to one another. Wrote Yosa Buson:

"Leaders of the haikai circles today each advocate their own poetic styles and speak ill of all the other styles. extending their elbows and puffing up their cheeks, they declare themselves to be master poets. Some try to appeal to the wealthy, others to the eccentric, but most of the verses selected in their anthologies are unrefined works, the kind of verses that would make knowledgeable experts cover their eyes at the first glance and throw them away."

Translated by Makoto Ueda, *The Path of Flowering Thorn; The Life and Poetry of Yosa Buson*, Stanford University Press (1998).

NOTE: Then, during Shiki's lifetime, and now, haiku, due to its brevity, has sunk into an abyss of laziness, inadequate study, and cartoonish self-importance, teetering close to oblivion, the Lords of Haiku unable to agree on what is and isn't a haiku, in Japan and in the Anglo-West.

During the Meiji Era, Japanese aesthetic styles were replaced by Anglo-Western aesthetic concepts, as were the meanings of many words and terms. New words and terms were added as well. The concept of kigo was reinvented to accommodate an Anglophile mindset far removed from Daoist thought, Shamanic animism, true Buddhist doctrine, Confucian group ideals, and Shinto's adaptation of animism. Without an understanding of these influences, the aesthetic tools used prior to Shiki became passé, thought to be artifacts of an ancient past out of touch with the now of modernism. Modernism, however, is modern only for the moment. What is modern today and considered fashionable will be antiquated tomorrow. History is not something to jettison. It is a social science to learn from. We must learn from our mistakes, build from what works, and value cultural memory.

Anglo-Western poets learned from Japanese poets and Japanese poets learned from their Anglophile counterparts, both unaware of the concatenate haiku was becoming, fused together into a semi-faceted genre, that in time would suffer from an identity crisis people have yet to cure. As I've previously explained in prior articles in this series on Japanese aesthetic, the two trains were destined to meet in the middle: Japan riding on the wings of self-colonization and Anglo-Westernized thought, and the United States caught up in the flawed scholarship of R.H. Blyth, Kenneth Yasuda, and to a lesser degree, Harold Henderson, the Imagist Manifesto, and ironically, Jack Kerouac, who in turn was influenced by the poet, Gary Snyder. Japan was enamored with the Anglo-West and the Anglo-West was enamored with their conceptualization of Japan.

Today's haiku output is proof of this homogenization of cultures; an homogenization that continues to be watered down, and heralded by online publications, most of them influenced by the tenets and flawed teachings propagated by groups still buying into the erred, perhaps naive scholarship of the aforementioned men.

Haiku as practiced by and introduced to the world by Matsuo Basho, Kobayashi Issa, Yosa Buson, Chiyo-ni, and their contemporaries prior to Masaoka Shiki, with few exceptions, has disappeared from our planet. What you see now is an anything goes mindset negating the need for kigo, meter, and aesthetic styles honed by poets living under the Tokugawa regime. Most of the haiku leave little for a reader's imagination. Some are senryu masquerading as haiku, and most resemble miniaturized Imagist free verse poems. There is no East or West. Haiku has become an Anglo-Western poetic genre. Definitions for haiku are obscure, with most publications admitting that haiku is in limbo, definition-wise.

If haiku is to rise above its deathbed, let alone gain acceptance as a serious poetic genre in the mainstream international literary world, it's imperative that poets rediscover haiku's hokku roots. Poetry that is forgettable written by the same old same people who pat each other on the back is a cancer. Haiku is an art form. As such, it needs to be studied, respected, and practiced. It is not a genre one can master overnight, or in a year or two. The day one thinks they have arrived as a haiku poet is the day they begin to stagnate. Most of the haiku published today does not reflect serious scholarly study, the depth of study, college professors expect from their students in mainstream literature classes.

Too many today self-publish books and author online blogs of their poetry having little experience or understanding of the genre save for what they have learned from haiku clubs, workshops, online journals, blogs, and e-zines. My late father, a haiku poet (circa 1959-1990), had a saying: *"A little bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing."*

Recently I read criticism in an online haiku workshop by a few self-important poets who were criticizing the translation skills of Makoto Ueda of Stanford University, one of the world's foremost translators. Those complaining are Japanese-language illiterate, write substandard haiku, and use their criticism to justify their straying from certain elements of haiku. More than likely, they read

something somewhere in an online publication and adapted it to support their other than scholarly opinions.

Kodansha International in Japan a few years ago published a book by a quasi translator that was heralded as the complete poetic output of Basho. The translator admitted to me that she did not read or write Japanese but had worn out the pages of her Japanese/English language dictionary. Some of the translations are almost word for word identical to some of Basho's hokku published in the Peter Pauper series. I am reminded of a line in the song by Buffalo Springfield, *Something Happening Here*, that says: "*Stop, hey, what's that sound, everyone look what's happening here.*"

Haiku needs to return to its roots. Before one can change or alter a genre, they need to study and practice it in depth first. This cannot be done overnight by reading publications, attending meetings, and inhabiting Jefferson Airplane's *Plastic Fantastic*. Poets need to question what they read and hear. The writings of Blyth, Yasuda, Henderson, and as well as the definitions posted by the Haiku Society of America, the World Haiku Association, and other organizations and publications contain many flaws. Some have posited honestly that they cannot accurately pinpoint a specific definition of haiku, though they propagate rules for the writing of haiku. Many assert that English-language and Japanese-language haiku are two different genres, yet each label what they write, haiku. Haiku is haiku. There is little difference between haiku penned in Japan and the Anglo-West, save for syllable count, and even that is fading. Current day haiku is a colonized poetic genre defined and taught via the linguistic mindset of the German-based university system in place in Japan and the Anglo-West. As I wrote early in this paper, the language that dominates education dominates the world.

Matsuo Basho is considered by most scholars to be the father of haiku. His haiku today are included in textbooks, translated into various foreign languages, and memorized by students in Japanese elementary schools. Masaoka Shiki is not as well known, especially his poetry. It is imperative, therefore, that serious haiku poets study the haiku of Basho, if they want their art to rise above the mediocrity prevalent in today's haiku circles.

Note: It would be foolish, of course, to claim that every hokku Basho composed was perfect. Even a master pens his or her share of less than stellar verses, regardless of the genre. To think otherwise is to sink into the theocratic abyss those who worshipped Basho during the Meiji Era sank into.

Let us examine a sampling of Basho's haiku. As we do, let's not focus on the teaching by the master many have bastardized to justify their departure from traditional haiku:

*Do not resemble me ---
Never be like a musk melon
cut in two halves*

Tr. by Makoto Ueda
The Haiku Master Poet Matsuo Basho

Basho never intended his teaching to inspire his followers to jettison the schemata of hokku metrics, the inclusion of nature, etc., in order to rise above the norm, and wax individualistic. It amazes me that poets new to the medium and older poets who are far from mastering the genre, so quickly jettison the rules indigenous to haiku composition, claiming Basho's poem as their justification for doing so. I am reminded of the games: *Follow the Leader* and *Simon Says*. To be an individual is good. To seek an original voice is to be encouraged.

Basho didn't want clones writing clone-like poetry; yet those who are jettisoning the rules and plowing the fields of anything goes today are, in essence, the very clones Basho admonished his followers not to be. They follow Simon, parrot his teachings, not knowing the why or what, Simon being the embodiment of the good old boys and girls who, like the four teachers during the Meiji Era, have ran the show too long, unaware of the flaws in their teachings, influenced by inadequate and outdated scholarship. In North America, for example, knowledge of haiku seems to be in a Blythian-Yasudaic-Hendersonian limbo, the same old-same old.

Wrote Basho:

"Follow the narrow thread of the way of poetry. Do not seek to follow in the footsteps of the men of old; seek what they sought."

KBZ, 6:512; translation is from *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, ed. Ryūsaku Tsunoda, Wm. Theodore de Bary, and Donald Keene (New York: Columbia University Press). *KBZ: Kōhon Bashō zenshū (The Complete Works of Basho)

Matsuo Basho was deeply influenced by nature. Following the tradition of the wanderer poets, Sogi and Saigyō, he became a wanderer, hiking across Japan, a student of *zoka*, nature's unpredictable, never static, creative force.

Stated Professor Peipei Qui in my interview with her for *Simply Haiku*:

"Zōka came from a Chinese word written in two characters zaohua, whose literal meaning is 'create and transform.' The word is widely used in classical Chinese texts, but evidences indicate that Bashō and many haikai poets of his time most likely learned the word from their reading of the Daoist classic Zhuangzi. encompasses several important notions of Daoist thought. To summarize briefly, it first refers to the natural way in which all phenomena come into being and transform. In other words, it is the working of the Way or Dao. Second, it suggests that the existence of all things and beings is the direct result of the workings of the Dao, therefore every thing/being spontaneously embodies the Dao. Third, to follow the natural way of each thing/being is at the same time to follow the Dao. Bashō considered following zōka essential to all arts in this philosophical context."

Basho, in a stern message to his followers, wrote:

"In the waka of Saigyō, the renga of Sogi, the paintings of Sesshū and the tea ceremony of Rikyū, one fundamental principle runs through all arts: those who

pursue art follow zôka, and have the four seasons as their companion. Everything they see is like a flower and everything they imagine is like the moon. If one sees no flower, he is the same as a barbarian; if one has no moon in mind, he is no different from the birds and the beasts. Go beyond the barbarians and depart from the animals; follow zôka and return to zôka."

Said Professor Peipei Qui deeper into the interview:

"The concept of nature and the frame of reference by which Bashô and his fellow poets constructed their verses and poetics were not exactly the same as those today. Although in Bashô's writings the term zôka often is found in his depiction of scenic beauty, he seems to distinguish it from the physical world. 'I saw the masterwork of zôka in the beautiful scenes of mountains, fields and the coast, and following the footprints of devoted travelers who are free of worldly concerns, I came to know the way of a true artist.' (Kôhon Bashô zenshû, 6:85) In this passage zôka is not the landscape per se but what has brought it into being; this concept finds its philosophical roots in Daoist thought."

Wrote Basho: *"The way of life and the way of haikai can also be made equal; in fact, they are inseparable."*

Shiyu Kyosui ate (To Shiyû and Kyosui), in KBZ, 8: 146, translated by Peipei Qui, *Bashô and the Dao*.

*the winter garden ---
thinning to a thread, the moon
and an insect's singing*

fuyuniwa | ya | Tsukuba | mo | ito | naru | mushi | no | gin

Tr. Makoto Ueda

Bashô and His Interpreters

Basho writes of being alone in a winter garden. Winters in Japan are cold, sometimes harsh. A poet/wanderer, he didn't reside in a comfortable home with a woodstove. There was snow on the ground. Basho was outside, unaccompanied, acutely aware of his surroundings, audibly and visually. It was nighttime, when winter weather is the coldest. The poet's mind was free from human distraction: indifferent, objective, and observant, his mind like a child's. Children, by nature, are naturally observant, filling in the blank tablet (tabula rasa) that is their mind.

Basho contrasted being alone, outside, during a frigid winter night with the fruits of his observation: he saw a thread-thin moon, a scene that can be cold, stark, or beautiful, depending on a person's frame of mind. He saw nothing else. The only sound that freezing night was an insect singing. Sections two and three serve as a contrast between the high and the low. Basho was not just viewing nature, he was watching nature sculpt and shape his surroundings and thoughts. He was watching *zoka* with his five senses. Somewhere an insect was singing a song, calling to my mind the winter song of a coyote howling at the moon on a frigid night. The picture painted by the poet is one of loneliness, solitude, and coldness. Nothing else seemed to exist, just himself, the thread-thin moon, and a singing

insect. The emotion of the poet was unearthed without the use of the word, I. He doesn't act as an observer who thought of himself as above the whole of nature. Matsuo Basho, the moon, and an insect are symbiotic reflections of one another: the finite and infinite on an equal table. Basho was able to find beauty in every aspect of nature, which his haiku here conveys. Nature is not mono, a physical entity. It is koto, the act of becoming; a creative force in a continuum of change. His poetry is activity- (process, objective) biased.

Wrote Michael F. Marra in his book, *Japan's Frames of Meaning*, regarding the difference between koto and mono:

"Japanese languages have two words that are translated as thing: koto and mono. . . expertness or absorption in thoughts cannot exist aside from their being (to be an expert or to be absorbed in thoughts) and that such a being is nothing but the koto that makes the movement and the condition of action possible. Whereas mono indicates the content of movement or the content of quietness, koto indicates their being. The specific being of the content (mono) always presupposes its existence or Being (koto). The fact (koto) of seeing presupposes that something (mono) must be seen."

The question: What is being(?) must be considered when entertaining the notion of what is and isn't a haiku. It is also imperative that we as poets and/or students of haiku understand what was the conceptualization of nature and being in the minds of those who originated hokku (haiku), if we are to comprehend the true breath of the genre as it was sculpted. Haiku is not simply a definition consisting of words. For those who originated the genre it was much more. It was a path, a direction, and a teacher.

Matsuo Basho said so much in his haiku using few words. He was able to accomplish this via his utilization of aesthetics tools that convey a mood, unearth a surplus of words with poetic suggestion, and invites the reader to examine that which lies below the surface.

Nature to Basho was something different then that conveyed by the modern day Japanese language. Writes Peipei Qui:

"When speaking of 'the traditional view of nature during Matsuo Bashô's time' we need to be aware that during Bashô's time the word used to mean 'nature' in modern Japanese, shizen, meant 'naturalness and spontaneity' rather than the physical world. A term frequently used by the major poets to discuss the relationship between nature and poem writing at the time was."

Upon visiting Mount Kazuraki, one of the highest mountains in Japan, said to be the abode of the Shinito kami (spirit), Hitokotonushi, who is reputed to be nocturnal and grotesque, Basho drew a picture of a Zen mountain priest sleeping under a tree, with the notation: *"This is what the priest said in his sleep."* The following hokku accompanied the drawing:

*all the more I wish to see
in those blossoms at dawn
the face of god*

nao | mitashi | hana | ni | ake | yuku | kami | no | kao

Tr. by Makoto Ueda

Bashō and His Interpreters

Basho in his hokku contrasts the high and the low, seeing beauty in every aspect of nature. Basho was not the Zen novice priest some have reputed him to be. His mindset while writing this poem was not, as Blyth and Yasuda purport, calling hokku a Zen poetic genre. Only a person with limited research tools or a poor grasp of Japanese history would make such an assertion . . . an assertion that has tainted the perceptions of many 20th and 21st century haiku poets.

Basho lived in nature's bosom. Nature to him was much more than physicality and weather. Everything in nature was alive, vital, non-static, in a continuum of becoming (koto). He was an equal player, not the caretaker or shepherd of the realm. The poet was influenced by Shamanic animism and Shinto animism. He was also a student of the *Zhuangzi*, the Daoist Bible, for lack of a better term. He viewed life as animate, and saw nature from the Daoist perspective, which he called *zoka*, the non-static, always changing, creative spirit of nature. *Zoka* is not to be viewed from a Judeo-Christian perspective as a deity. *Zoka* is non-personable, a non-entity, defying human comprehension, a force that cannot be controlled or harnessed by science.

Compare the following teaching of Basho recorded by his disciple, Hattori Doho, with a section from the *Zhuangzi* underneath:

"The Master said: 'The changes of Heaven and earth are the seeds of poetry.'"

"So it is said, With the sage, his life is the working of Heaven, his death the transformation of things. In stillness, he and the yin share a single Virtue, he and the yin share a single flow."

Tr. by Burton Watson

The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu (Zhuangzi)

<http://www.coldbacon.com/chuang/chuang.html>

Pivotal to Matsuo Basho's teachings on the composition of hokku is his belief in the essentialness of following *zoka* versus the adoption of finite teachings determined as truth by science. The Daoist concept of *zoka* was the foundation upon which Basho based his haiku teachings.

"Those who pursue art follow zôka and have the four seasons as their companions. Nothing they see is not a flower and nothing they imagine is not the moon. If one sees no flower, he is the same as a barbarian; if one had no moon in mind, he is no different than the birds and the beasts. Go beyond the barbarians and depart from the animals; follow zôka and return to zôka."

Tr. by Peipei Qui from *KBZ*, 6: 75

This teaching by Basho needs to be understood via the context it was written in.

I first read this hokku, not knowing about its historical and religious background, and was touched deeply by its beauty. It's not important that I get into the mind frame of Basho. A good haiku is open for interpretation. *"Tell all"* haiku are a

dime a dozen, in other words, boring and non-memorable. Basho's hokku are deep due to his expertise in the use of aesthetic styles. He wove the said and the unsaid into a single tapestry. I interpreted Basho's hokku from my own subjective, experiential database. I wanted to see the face of God in the blossoms at dawn. Incredible, evocative imagery spoken in the language of poetry; the high and the low conjoining below the surface, waiting to be harvested no. "*The face of god*" is not visible, regardless of one's spiritual orientation. To Basho, god was ephemeral, ethereal, a force that could not be explained concretely or fully fathomed. His hokku is activity- (process, koto) biased. It is not about an object in nature. It is about the becomingness birthed by *zoka*, the creative expression of nature. A dream, a desire, an awakening and longing on a mountain in the wilderness. This is haiku; a journey that has no end.

*all the more I wish to seek
in those blossoms at dawn
the face of god*

Matsuo Basho's final hokku, penned as he was dying, was an eloquent goodbye from a poet who welcomed death, and saw no finiteness in the act:

*Sick on a journey,
my dream goes on wandering
in withered fields*

tabu ni yande/ hume aw kareno o/ kakemeguru

Tr. by Peipei Qui from *KBZ**, 2: 109

*KBZ: Kōhon Bashō zenshū (The Complete Works of Basho)

It would be ignorant to claim that haiku is completely dead. Some of the haiku composed during the 21st century inside and outside Japan are exquisite, embodying the essence of what the originators of the genre had in mind long ago, yet infused with fresh non-musk melon voices that refuse to play *Simon Says*.

The first poet that comes to mind is the Russian haiku master, Svetlana Marisova, who passed away last year after a long bout with cancer. It is this author's opinion that Marisova was this century's first haiku master, her haiku far exceeding the depth, breath, and relevancy of those penned by Shiki, Akito Arima, Gary Snyder, and other post Tokagawa Era poets touted as modern haiku masters.

silent bird bird: object
i carry your song i: person (noun, object) song: (object)
through shadows shadows: non-tangible phenomenon created by zoka

Marisova's haiku is an activity- (objective, koto) biased poem. The focus of the poem isn't an object or objects. What is a silent bird? Is it dead or just silent in the moment? How does one carry a silent bird's song through shadows? This is a far cry from shasei (sketch of life) poems. Her poem is about nature of which she was a participant, and still is, metaphysically. The key words to her haiku are "*carry through*." The poet was dying from cancer. She was a young woman

experiencing great pain. Haiku like this invites exploration and meditation. Her soul has written this haiku. It is unpretentious and cuts to the bone. The depth of this activity-biased haiku can be sounded for eons.

Don Baird, a world-renowned American martial arts teacher, knows the discipline and work it takes to earn a black belt. It is not something one earns in a few months or a year. Sensei Baird knows that getting a black belt is not the end-all of end-alls. There are higher degree black belts. Learning and ascending never ends. I've watched this man's poetry mature. His activity-biased haiku (is there any other?) and the breath behind them, illustrates the importance of koto over mono: not the object but becoming the object. It is a breakthrough he has grown into.

*tea cup moon . . .
on this hazy night,
a white owl*

How does line one relate to lines two and three? Baird makes effective use of juxtaposition to unveil a surplus of words previously hidden, contrasting the high and the low. Juxtaposition as practiced by the great haiku poets prior to the Meiji period is a powerful aesthetic style.

teacup: an adjective referring to the visible appearance moon: physical object
hazy: an active, descriptive modifier night: not an object
white owl: an organic living object

Baird is saying more than the obvious in this haiku. Haiku painted with only the obvious are worthless. Haiku that are mere word paintings are just that, nothing more: a Herman Melvillianian photograph that has no place in a poetic genre built around an economy of words. Without depth, a haiku is an amateurish expression indicative of laziness and a lack of study.

What does the white owl signify? Is it a metaphor? The reader of a haiku's job is to interpret a haiku via his or her own experiential reference and cultural memory. Reading Baird's haiku, I am reminded of the white owls I saw at night during the Vietnam War. I, of course, read and interpret this haiku differently than most.

Bruce Ross is a poet who does his homework. A university professor, he knows the value and essentiality of study and practice, which is evident in his voice (See the reprint of an article he wrote on haiku poetics in this issue).

*abandoned house-
the lilacs just as bright
this spring*

Ross, too, utilizes contrast, via juxtaposition, to say much using an economy of words.

abandoned: a state of being house: an organic object
lilacs: evolving, organic physical objects
spring: an ambiguous time that is manifest but not touched or fully fathomed

The key words are "*just as bright.*" By using the aforementioned key words, Ross is expanding the juxtaposition to plumb greater depths in his activity-biased haiku. A house is abandoned. The lilacs in bloom are as bright as they were in previous years. What is the poet's message? Are you, as readers, invited to covertly interpret Ross's haiku according to your own subjective references and illusionary perceptions?

Eastern Europe in recent years, which is uniquely not totally Anglo-Western nor Asian, has produced haiku that are more activity-biased versus object-biased. Due to the curtain of separation via communist rule, Eastern Europe was cut off from the Anglo-West for almost a century, her aesthetics and cultural memory subjugated by the Soviet Union, who itself allowed itself to be subjugated by a repressive political power within.

Vladimir Devidé of Croatia, who passed away two years ago, was one of Eastern Europe's finest haiku poets.

*The climber's shadow
hesitatingly climbing
the ladder's shadow*

climber's shadow: shadows are not objects. They are phenomena created by a juxtaposition of light, objects, and weather via zoka. Climber is an indicative/descriptive modifier.

hesitatingly: an act (adverb specific)

climbing: an action verb

ladders: descriptive modifier signifying ownership

shadow: non-tangible juxtaposition of light, object(s), and weather phenomena

Are we to take Devidé's activity-biased haiku literally? Is it a metaphor for something needing to be plumbed? Why the mention of hesitation? Why the juxtaposition of two different shadows? Why did Devidé contrast the high with the low? This poet's haiku is not a quickie online post. It is the poetic product of a highly skilled haiku poet who took the time to compose meaningful poetry that are more than aha, momentary burps. We are invited by the yugen to plumb this haiku's depth, to uproot what isn't seen, heard, felt, or said.

Ikumi Yoshimura of Japan knows the value of juxtaposition in a haiku, how it brings to the surface the unsaid. Contrasting the high and low, Yoshimura is able to say much with few words in this activity-biased haiku. It is the surplus of words that rises from depths of a poem that separates a haiku from the mimetic tripe passed off as haiku, that poet/teacher Kai Hasegawa so aptly labels "*junk haiku.*"

*wild roses --
the village of papermaking
quietness*

wild roses: animate, organic objects, untamed with by human hands

village: an abode (physical and metaphysical), a conglomerate object(s)

(of) papermaking: a vocation (noun), an act (verb)

quietness: a non-tangible state

Contrasting wild roses with lines two and three makes for a deep, powerful, evocative activity- biased haiku. Why did Yoshimura choose to contrast lines two and three with "*wild roses*?" The act of papermaking is a quiet activity compared with most activities related to earning a living. Quiet versus quiet? Do the "wild rose" symbolize something other than the obvious? How does *zoka* interact and sculpt wild roses? What can be learned from what is not obvious (yugen: depth and mystery)? A haiku to plumb!

Kaneko Tohta is one of Japan's most famous living haiku poets. Haiku is a major part of who he is. Like all great poets, not everything he composes is stellar. Most of his haiku are powerful, evocative, freshly voiced, and memorable, like the following:

竹林を出れば白雲曼珠沙華

chikurin o dereba haku-un manjushage

out of the bamboo grove

there are white clouds

there are spider lilies

bamboo grove: organic, an animate physical entity and metaphysical entity, depending upon the poet's theocratic mindset

white clouds: a non-tangible weather phenomenon

spider lilies: organic, animate entities (objects in a continuum of change)

Tohta's poem is an activity-biased haiku with great depth, waiting to surface. The key words in the poem are "*out of*." The poet, like Basho, contrasts the high and the low (clouds and lilies) to unearth the unsaid, unseen, and unheard, an aesthetic style wielded by highly skilled haiku poets. Why did Tohta select "*white clouds*?" Were the clouds when he composed his poem actually white? How would this haiku differ if the color was omitted or changed? How can white clouds come out of a bamboo grove? Why did Tohta choose spider lilies versus another more physically beautiful lily? This too is a haiku that invites interpretation. It is not the kind of mimetic haiku-like poetry we see all too often online. We all need to re-examine our poetic voices and output, and ask ourselves as we do, what we are writing, saying, and why? We need, as Tohta aptly demonstrates, to take our art seriously, if we want haiku to be taken seriously by the mainstream literary world.

Wrote Bruce Ross in his essay for *Modern Haiku*, "The Art of Haiku" (38:3, 2007):

". . . nature itself seems in a state of crisis. We all crave a connection with each other and the world, and seek some sort of wholeness. Now less and less relevant in everyday life are nature and beauty, the haiku moment, or attention to the particular. This is perhaps why at the Second European Haiku conference Shôkan Tadashi Kondô of Japan invoked Thoreau when discussing hissaiki-like project '72 Seasonal Spells' and called haiku 'ecological poetry.' The absolute metaphor of haiku might help save the particular, our feelings, nature and beauty. It could help preserve our sense of wholeness—even in this postmodern

age—and, just maybe, the world itself."

Posits Hisao Furukawa in paper: "Meiji Japan's Encounter with Modernization" (Southeast Asian Studies, Vol. 33, No. 3, December 1995):

"We should recognize the historical life not only of living creatures besides man but also of inanimate things, and we should not torture nature, which is brimming with life. I feel that in pre-modern Japanese society, the principle of life was being observed. That tradition still envelopes us. I believe that it is still possible to rectify Western learning that has gone too far. To advocate the restoration of the principle of life without seeking supremacy over life --- here lies Japan's potential for contributing to the creation of a new concept of development."

How can we as haiku poets claim to understand nature, let alone fathom the *"great clod's"* connection to our lives? We, as homo sapiens, are but a small part of the whole of nature. Our knowledge is limited to the archaic *"now"* which will be mocked tomorrow as *"so out of date!"*

Wrote Joel Achenbach in the *Washington Post* newspaper on May 18, 2012:

"Only in recent decades have scientists come to realize that life on the surface is but the flashy veneer of the biosphere."

To survive into the next century, haiku needs to quit being something it isn't. It cannot be all things to all people. It's not the label but the spirit beneath the label that must come to light; a spirit that's been dormant for too long. To compose an effective haiku, our poetry must transcend the banal limitations we place on our inner voices. We must rise above the ashes of *"as is"*, and drop from the wings of *"now"* into a rice field planted with our answers to the physicist Stephen Hawking's question:

"What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe?"

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An Essay on Haiku Aesthetics: Part VI

TO BE OR NOT TO BE An Experiment Gone Awry

by Robert D. Wilson

"Since becoming the sport of amateurs and ignoramuses, haiku have become more and more numerous, more and more banal."

Masaoka Shiki
Tr. by Janine Beichman
Masaoka Shiki
His Life and Works

My father, mouth
and anus wide open ---
a shining cloud

Ban'ya Natsuishi, Japan

Mending the holes
of my raincoat - that's the way
I became a Marxist

Dimitar Anakiev, Slovenia
Mending the Holes of My Raincoat

words clot-
repeated wounds
to stay awake

Linda L. Ashok, India

Chai Leaves MultiLingual Haiku
<http://multilingualhaiku.wordpress.com/>

silence
like it

Jack Galmitz, New York, U.S.A.
Y (ImPress)

new fish pond --the cat learns to swim

Lorin Ford, Australia
Terebess Asia Online

as the world fails saxophone in the lips of a walrus

Marlene Mountain, U.S.A.

Haiku 21
2011

frost-covered window
I add a rubber ducky
to the bubble bath

Roberta Beary, Washington D.C., U.S.A.

First Prize Winner of the 2012
Kiyoshi and Kiyoko Tokutomi Memorial Haiku Contest

botanic gardens
a plastic daisy dangles
from a woman's hat

Ernest Berry, New Zealand

Honorable Mention of the 2013
23rd Ito en Oi ocha New Haiku Contest

nevertheless fall colors

Christopher Patchel, U.S.A.

3rd Place in the 2013
First Annual Peggy Willis Lyles Haiku Awards

jampackedelevatoreverybuttonpushed

John Stevenson, New York, U.S.A.

Haiku in English 2013

Easter
a crown
of scones

LeRoy Gorman, Ontario, Canada

A Hundred Gourds, June 2013

O, somebody's wife!
carrying ice skates
with wet blades

Takaha Shugyo

Tr. by Hoshino Tsunehiko and Adrian J. Pinnington
Haiku International Association, Japan

Like a Tarzan
with Jane tucked under his arm
I'll escape

Yoshitomo Abe

Tr. by Ban'ya Natsuishi & David G. Lanoue
Niigata Prefecture, Japan
Ginyu No.21

whiskey I sip it until it loves me

Jim Kacian, Virginia, U.S.A.

Gendai Haiku webpage

bluebluebellswhitebluebellsbluebellsall

Helen Buckingham, Bristol, United Kingdom

Under the Basho Autumn 2013

origami
three folds ago . . .
is when I blew it!

Mike Rehling, Michigan, U.S.A.

Under the Basho Autumn 2013

To say something or not to say something, to cater to the crowd eating peanuts and juicy hot dogs loaded to the gills with fixings in the ballpark, anticipating home-runs that never quite happen, our bodies in sync, like oncoming waves, one after another, waiting their turn, the bark of seagulls, the breathy whisper of watery hands grasping at sand castles begging to be built in children's dreams, the night before next, an afterbirth of now dripping down Humpty Dumpty's heavily tattooed right arm, the King's Men around the corner, smoking cigarettes, quaffing beers, scratching their balls, staring into mirrors left over from the rice paddies they walked across when Wonderland played hopscotch with Alice and . . . sanity scurried.

Leave me alone, Basho-san! I don't want to be a David casting stones in a makeshift slingshot at Goliath, the all-star pitcher for the New York Yankees, my psyche tossed and turned on third base, waiting for ghosts scurrying into chalky clouds that hisssssssssssss like a badass rattlesnake!

What to do? I love hokku and waka, have a love affair with Japanese short form poetry, read and write verses on trellises of ah, immerse myself in research, empty my mind of preconception, follow zôka into what is and isn't, unable to stay still, feeling more than words, my senses on warp speed, racing the tide through Heaven's River, every star, an amusement ride, redesigning itself in the morning when egrets are dreaming.

I have watched in the shadows too long, waiting for the good faerie to rescue Japanese short form poetry from the abyss it's sunk into, an old man with Alzheimer's disease, wandering in circles without direction, a caricature of yesterday, now stooped under a willow tree that hasn't wept in years, Orphan Annie-eyed, neon lights flashing on and off, on and off, on and off, your mind, Basho-san, hanging from a clothesline with could-have-beens on loan from the Self Important Society of America plastered with labels shouting MADE IN JAPAN!

I pull a brass ring from the carousel at The Wonderland Amusement Park, oh shit, here goes, Don Quixote's inside me, nudging me to joust with windmills, telling me to march into hell, if need be, regardless of the cost, dodging mirrors, soldiers of the Inquisition aim at me, sure that I will falter, stumble, or acquiesce to the bliss seated in the empty chair Clint Eastwood spoke to when the audience died last year, a minute past midnight, the last syllable stuffed into a shoe Cinderella left next to the Prince's fuel-injected shadow . . . the drum-roll, please:

HAIKU ISN'T A GENRE. There, I said it. Too late to back down now: It's not a genre, a reformation of hokku, nothing that can be defined.

Merriam Webster Dictionary defines a genre as "a category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content."

To be a genre, haiku must be definable. In and outside of Japan, there is no agreed-upon definition. There is no East and West. Western and Japanese haiku are one and the same, a concatenate of this and that with more than this, a reflection laughing at its shadow.

Look at some of the definitions of haiku prancing through conference rooms, the overpriced decks of the Queen Mary, university causeways, yuppie cafes, North American public schools, dictionaries, online journals, printed anthologies, and books claiming to offer what other books on haiku haven't offered. See for yourself. What Matsuo Basho introduced to Japan during his lifetime, and what you read, see, and hear from the above, are not co-pilots of the same starship.

Compare the then with the now . . .

the sea darkens ---
a wild duck's call
faintly white

-Matsuo Bashō
Tr. by Makoto Ueda

The focus of this hokku is not the duck (object). It's a poem that evokes a surplus of meaning due to the use of the aesthetic style, yugen (depth and mystery) and contrast. Nature is a never-ending movie, a continuum of expression. Basho could not see the duck, only hear it. Faintly white, a wild duck's call? Noise is colorless. The sea, at twilight, however, is ghost-like, surreal, even mysterious if the weather is inclement. Comments Iwata Kuro in his book on Basho, Shochu Hyoshaku Basho Haiku Taisei:

"The whiteness was seen through the eye and the voice was heard through the ear, but he [Basho] felt as if his eyes saw what his ears heard, and he made that delicate feeling into a poem."

Tr. by Makoto Ueda

end of the world
I blow apart
a dandelion

Garry Gay, Santa Rosa, California

First Place Winner of the 2013
The Heron's Nest First Annual Peggy Willis Lyles Haiku Award

Gay's poem leaves little to be interpreted. Blowing on a dandelion reminds the poet of the world ending, a subjective thought.

hototogisu ---
through a vast bamboo forest
moonlight seeping

-Matsuo Basho
Tr. by Makoto Ueda

Basho's poem is an activity-biased hokku. The bamboo, the cuckoo bird, the moonlight are not the poem's focus. Its focus is the creative output of the said and unsaid, what is and what's implied. The cuckoo bird's singing is contrasted (juxtaposed) with the seeping of moonlight through a vast, dense bamboo forest. The song is sensed in that it cannot be translated. It resonates, and is flowing with the moonlight slowly, whose light is shaded and sculpted by shadows and the space between the thick bamboo in the forest. The sense of silence is intense. Nothing in nature is static; nothing is predictable. All is changing and impermanent. Basho was continually observant of nature's creative force, zoka. It was his sensei. There is much a poet can learn and express from such an awareness. Zoka is the thread that weaves our hokku. In today's world, too much is made of humankind's activities and egocentric comprehension. We are not above nature. We are a small part of nature.

Comments Kenkichi Yamamoto in his book, Basho: Appreciations and Criticism of His Work:

"The combination of the moonbeams slanting through the grove and the hototogisu calling as it flies straight for the horizon creates a world so mysterious that it is almost frightening."

Tr. by Makoto Ueda

back home on leave
he stalks the cereal aisle
on the balls of his feet

Harvey Jenkins

1st Place Co-winner of the 2013
Klostar Ivanic's 10th Annual Contest for Haiku in English

Jenkins' poem leaves little to be interpreted. An object stalks an object using objects. It is a senryu listed as a haiku. The poem is object-biased and, as such, has no connection with the creative force, zoka, Matsuo Basho said was essential to a hokku. It's a sentence, not a poem. A returning soldier is excited to once again be in a grocery store staring at cereal boxes. Giving credence to this sentence, classifying it as a poem, encourages others to write sentences and call them haiku.

The winter sun ---
Frozen on the horse,
My shadow

-Matsuo Basho
Tr. by Makoto Ueda

Can a person's shadow be frozen on a horse's back? Basho is utilizing the aesthetic tool, yugen, to evoke a surplus of meaning. It is a very cold day, unwarmed by the winter sun. The contrast (juxtaposition) between the winter sun and the seemingly frozen shadow on the horse gives voice to the unsaid; stimulating an exploration of the affects of winter on one's surroundings. The weather's unpredictable, creating, shading, painting, sculpting without a pattern to follow. The shadow is frozen, or is it? Nothing is still, all is changing, the naked eye limited to the scope of vision and subjective interpretation. Basho's hokku is an activity-biased poem that's koto-focused (the act of becoming). What appears to be and what is form a symbiotic alliance that is more than a word painting. "Frozen" and "the winter sun" juxtaposed together evoke a surplus of meaning.

silently hiding
a lifetime of memories
in her wrinkled face

Raj K. Bose, Hawaii, U.S.A.

Grand Prize Winner in Non-Japanese Division of the 2013
5th Yamadera Basho Memorial Museum English Haiku Contest

A woman is quietly hiding a lifetime of memories in her wrinkled face. This is a subjective (mono), human-centric haiku without a correlative or mimetic connection to nature and/or its seasons. There is little to interpret for the reader. It is a senryu focused on the effects and affects of aging on a woman.

They are very different maladies, now and then. Is now the fruit of progress, evolution, literary expanse, or, a complete departure from Japanese poetic expression and aesthetic exploration? Basho's hokku and the above haiku have different focuses. Are Basho's poems passé, irrelevant, and out of sync with today? Is the now an adaptation of the modern world, the then something to be jettisoned? Am I missing the mark doing a comparative analysis of modern haiku and Basho's hokku written centuries ago? Which are deeper? Which are memorable? Which are open to a reader's subjective interpretation? Which are symbiotically in tune with the becomingness of nature? Which will be remembered a hundred years from now and why?

How is haiku defined by the world? Why isn't there a consensual agreement? Is it a reformation of hokku? Is haiku a Japanese poetic voice? Is haiku more than an assemblage of words placed in one, two, three, or even four lines? Is there such a thing as a one-word haiku? A two-word haiku?

OR, has haiku become, as I will conjecture in this essay, an anything-goes medium without rules and definitive schemata; a masturbatory exercise of words?

The United Haiku and Tanka Society's definition of haiku:

"Haiku is a succinct write equal to 3 lines (it doesn't matter how that equal is arranged, 1 line, 2 lines, or in 3 lines), but what does matter are the rest of the requirements, which are: that it captures a sensory perceived moment, and contains either a kigo (season word) that directly indicates a season, or other words that indirectly evoke a feeling of the natural world we live in. It has a 2-punch juxtaposition that equals a kireji (cutting word) which creates a conscious pause. Haiku no longer must always conform to the 5,7,5 syllable count; rather it should be close to a short, long, short rhythm. The correctly written haiku contains a setting, subject, verb, plus an 'aha' moment, which can compare to the sound of the 'pop' of that very first 'kernel' when you make popcorn."

Some insist on the use of season words (kigo) and some do not.

Wrote Ogiwara Seisensui of Japan in 1913:

"The season is a fetter fastened on the living flesh."

Wrote George Swede in his essay, Towards a Definition of English Haiku in 2000:

"Without involving some aspect of nature, a poem cannot be a haiku. While human nature can be a part of a haiku, it must occur together with something from the outside world, otherwise the poem becomes a senryu."

Posits Ban'ya Natsuishi of Japan:

"I believe that haiku poem can be written well without season words, written well in free form and not only in 5-7-5 syllables."

Was Matsuo wrong when he taught his disciples:

Saigyō's waka, Sōgi's renga, Sesshū's painting, Rikyū's tea ceremony—one thread runs through the artistic Ways. And this aesthetic spirit is to follow the Creative, to be a companion to the turning of the four seasons. Nothing one sees is not a flower, nothing one imagines is not the moon. If what is seen is not a flower, one is like a barbarian; if what is imagined is not the moon, one is like a beast. Depart from the barbarian, break away from the beast, follow the Creative [zoka], return to the Creative [zoka].

-Matsuo Bashō, Knapsack Notebook
Tr. by David Landis Barnhill

Refer to my essay, To Kigo or Not to Kigo for a detailed look at the role nature should play in a hokku, a role that is sorely misunderstood due to a lack of scholarly articles on the subject: <http://haikureality.webs.com/esejeng102.htm>

The Haiku Society of America's definition of haiku:

"A haiku is a short poem that uses imagistic language to convey the essence of an experience of nature or the season intuitively linked to the human condition."

Notes: Most haiku in English consist of three unrhymed lines of seventeen or fewer syllables, with the middle line longest, though today's poets use a variety of line lengths and arrangements. In Japanese a typical haiku has seventeen 'sounds' (on) arranged five, seven, and five. (Some translators of Japanese poetry have noted that about twelve syllables in English approximate the duration of seventeen Japanese on.) Traditional Japanese haiku include a 'season word' (kigo), a word or phrase that helps identify the season of the experience recorded in the poem, and a 'cutting word' (kireji), a sort of spoken punctuation that marks a pause or gives emphasis to one part of the poem. In English season words are sometimes omitted, but the original focus on experience captured in clear images continues. The most common technique is juxtaposing two images or ideas (Japanese *rensō*). Punctuation, space, a line-break, or a grammatical break may substitute for a cutting word. Most haiku have no titles, and metaphors and similes are commonly avoided. (Haiku do sometimes have brief

prefatory notes, usually specifying the setting or similar facts; metaphors and similes in the simple sense of these terms do sometimes occur, but not frequently. A discussion of what might be called 'deep metaphor' or symbolism in haiku is beyond the range of a definition."

Merriam Webster Dictionary:

Haiku is "an unrhymed verse form of Japanese origin having three lines containing usually five, seven, and five syllables respectively; also: a poem in this form usually having a seasonal reference."

any'a, the editor of cattails wrote:

"My Editor's Choices are never based on the number of lines, since format to me has nothing to do with content, nor do I think a kigo is mandatory, although I do believe that at least some 'feeling' of the natural world is a must, as well as a setting, subject, verb, and an aha, no matter in what order they appear. Unfortunately, there are others out there today who are publishing 'short poems' of any type or kind under the guise of haiku. While this may be fine for mainstream poetry, imo, it's a whole different story when it comes to Japanese and eastern aesthetics."

Wrote R.H. Blyth in his book, *The History of Haiku*, Volume One:

"Haiku being the poetry of sensation, ideally speaking what happens is this. We receive, or create, a sensation, a mere sensation, almost entirely physical and mechanical. It then becomes humanized, and at this stage is called in Zen, dai-ichi nen. Haiku is dai-ichi nen, but is not mere description, just photography. One of the worst things in the world is mere sensation smeared all over with emotion and thought . . ."

Writes Hamish Ironside in her essay, *Against Petty Lies: Veracity in Haiku*, featured in the September 2013 issue of *A Hundred Gourds*:

"Haiku must be very short. Beyond a certain length, even if they fulfill every other criterion that you associate with haiku, they are no longer haiku; they may be tanka, or something else entirely."

Wrote Michael Dylan Welch in the *Haiku Canada Review* (October 2008):

"Each haiku poem is about a 'now,' but that's different from 'now' being the only way a haiku can be inspired. Quite simply, the 'now' in the poem need not be the 'now' of when the poem was written."

Note: Basho, Buson, Doho, and Issa did not teach their followers to compose hokku centric to an aha haiku moment. The aforementioned is the invent of R.H.

Blyth and Kenneth Yasuda based upon the false precept that haiku is a Zen Buddhist poetic genre. Scholars today know that Matsuo Basho was deeply influenced by animism, Daoism and the Zhuangzi; that his poetic mindset was a concatenate of the religious and cultural beliefs indigenous to his cultural memory and depth of experience, which included Zen Buddhism without its being an end-all.

Writes A.V. Koshy in Ichhamoti Review (Vol I Issue I 2013):

"How to Write a Haiku

It is easy to write a haiku nowadays. The rules that bound it earlier to season words, season or cutting words have all been slowly eroded and all that remains is the rule of the 5-7-5 and of image centred poetry that also involves contrast or juxtaposition that need not even be 'sharp.' In short haikus resembles senryus more and more, nowadays."

Writes Billy Collins in the Introduction to Modern English Haiku: The First Hundred Years, published by W.W. Norton, compiled by Jim Kacian, Allan Burns, and Philip Rowland:

"The best haiku contain a moment in time caught in the amber of the poet's attention and the poem's words. It is the only genre fully devoted to setting down a simple observation in the here-in-now so as to produce in the reader a little gasp."

Matsuo Basho never taught this dictum proffered by Wilson. Basho often reworked his hokku, adapting a specific poem to use in a haibun or travel diary written much later. He also drew on his memory to compose hokku. I am reminded of an adage I learned from my father:

"Don't believe everything you read or hear. Check things out for yourself."

Not everything written in a book that claims to be definitive is indeed accurate. Anyone can write a book and promulgate their theories, and do so convincingly.

According to Kacian, the book, Modern English Haiku: The First Hundred Years is to be a "new benchmark in the study and understanding of English-language haiku." The 400-page volume showcases the work of more than 230 poets, and a 74-page overview of the genre which isn't a genre. Kacian's concept of haiku differs greatly from the masters who gave the world hokku. Some of the haiku showcased were penned by Imagist poets who were influenced by haiku but never claimed to be haiku poets:

Thin air! My mind is gone.

Yvor Winters

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ness

e.e. cummings

Last night it rained.
Now, in the desolate dawn,
crying of blue jays

Amy Lowell

The apparition of these faces in the crowd:
Petals on a wet, black bough.

Ezra Pound

Note: Pound referred to this poem as "a hokku-like poem." He never labeled it a haiku as it's referred to quasi-authoritatively by Jim Kacian in the compendium book, *Modern English Haiku: The First Hundred Years*.

Some of the poems labeled haiku in the book were penned by Beat poets who hurriedly read through the writings of R.H. Blyth and Kenneth Yasuda at Gary Snyder's small Berkeley California house, most of them high on drugs and liquor:

This morning:
floating face down in the water bucket
a drowned mouse

Gary Snyder

A drowned mouse floating face down in a water bucket is hardly an epiphany nor does it reveal to us something we don't already know about nature. It is an observational statement, nothing more.

How is the following any different?

sleeping on the plush living room carpet
a tired toddler

The madman
emerges from the movies:
the street at lunchtime.

-Allen Ginsberg

A crazy man (reminiscent of Ginsberg's Howl) comes out of a movie theater at lunchtime to life as it is on the street. What does this tell us about zoka and its affect on nature? How is this not a senryu? It reads like a verse from one of Ginsberg's longer poems.

Missing a kick
at the icebox door
It closed anyway

-Jack Kerouac

Kerouac tried to kick a refrigerator door shut and missed. It closed on its own. How is this observation a poem? How can it be thought of as part of the reformation of hokku that haiku claims to be? What does it tell us about nature, about humankind? What is there to interpret? Where are the layers, aesthetic tools, and surplus of meaning that Basho and others used to create literature still loved centuries later?

Haiku, as I have stated in previous essays belonging to this series, is a German-based university-influenced poetic voice introduced to the world via Masaoka Shiki, who borrowed heavily from Western influences. Modern English Haiku showcases haiku heavily influenced by R.H. Blyth and those influenced by the writings and poetry of modern Japanese poets and critics whose mindsets are sculpted by definitions of terms indigenous to Western thought. The influence of the ancient masters is minimal, as evidenced by the poems it showcases. Noticeably missing in this compendium are hokku penned by some of the world's leading composers of hokku. The names are familiar, as are the editors and sources. In essence, the book's history of haiku and state of haiku and definition of haiku are a rehash of what has already been written.

It lacks scholarly authority, using as references, the same old, same old. Modern English Haiku fails to be a "new benchmark in the study and understanding of English-language haiku."

Writes Don Baird in his online journal, Under the Basho in the Autumn 2013 issue:

"Within zoka, transience and the sense of impermanence are additional aspects and clearly Basho haiku/hokku aesthetics. They are uniquely entwined in the guttural tide of zoka. In this, there is no link needed 'between' haiku and zoka; they are one and the same."

Basho haiku/hokku aesthetics? Hokku and haiku are not the same. To claim this is to ignore history and hermeneutics.

Look at a sampling of the poetry in this journal:

night train
my dead uncle punches
tickets to my dreams

-Pris Campbell

full moon too drunk to get out of bed to piss

-Gene Murtha

midnight cigar a car backfires

-Johannes S. H. Berg

Assembled—
school waste bins
roll ro'll stop. r'o'l'l
rol'l'ing with the wind.

-Anthony Rutledge

Haiku and hokku are one and the same? Basho, Buson, Doho, Issa, and Chiyo-ni composed hokku. Compare their poetry with the aforementioned samples from Under the Basho.

States Baird in the editorial for the Autumn 2013 issue of Under the Basho:

"It is a journal that values the poetics and aesthetics of Basho and yet embraces much dream-space for modern thinkers and their poetic efforts."

To value the poetics and aesthetics of Matsuo Basho, one has to understand them. Too many of the poems in the Autumn 2013 issue are the antithesis of what Basho taught and practiced.

Other conceptualizations of haiku:

Wrote Ferris Gilli in her essay, *Seasoning Your Haiku*, for the New Zealand Poetry Society:

"The definition that I support posits, among other things, that haiku are traditionally very short poems about nature and/or man's relationship with nature (often subtly revealing human nature), and typically contain a kigo. (Humans are a part of nature, no matter how unnatural and aberrant some appear. However, ideally, a haiku should not be overbalanced with human reference.)"

States Japanese poet Onishi Yasayo in an interview with Richard Gilberton August 5, 2007 (*Poems of Consciousness*):

"Today haiku grazes the realm of senryu, and senryu grazes the realm of haiku."

She also states:

"When these 'latitudes' of readers and creators meet and are in agreement, we then define, 'this is haiku' and, 'that is senryu.' However, when general ideas of these genres are used to define differences between haiku and senryu, the result is that there arises a divergence between poets as creators, and public understanding."

Senryu and haiku, more often than not, have blended into a single form, the definition of senryu and the definition of haiku a gray area few care to define with any academic authoritativeness. Some think senryu is comic verse much like a comedian's one-liner asides. Others say it is human-centric, whereas haiku is nature-centric. This becomes problematic when one considers that human beings are a part of nature. Most haiku sections in on-line and printed journals lump senryu and haiku together without specific demarcation. Some examples, none specified as one or the other:

more and more
less and less
hair

-Billie Dee, San Diego, CA

Frogpond 36.2 2013

a long flight
getting to forget

the person beside me

-LeRoy Gorman, Ontario, Canada

Heron's Nest
September 2013

june bride
the church filled
with second thoughts

Jörgen Johansson, Lidköping, Sweden

Heron's Nest
September 2013

longest night
the hound dog stuck
in the doghouse

Haiku Elvis (Carlos Colon), Louisiana, U.S.A.

divorce—
she
neuters her dog

Bill Pauly, Dubuque, Iowa

Modern Haiku 44.2

cowboyellonghornery

Emily Romano, USA

Modern Haiku 44.2 2013

Definitions aren't always in print or aired online. They are implied by acceptance, publication, reference, etc. Without an agreed-upon general classification and definition by academia and mainstream haiku poetry associations and publications, haiku has become an anomaly, a literary weed that grows where it wants to, without boundaries, a whatever-it-wants Cheshire Cat on steroids. Rules? They change with publications, bloggers, books, and whims. An aha, no need for an aha; metaphors are okay, metaphors should be avoided; kigo are passé, kigo are integral.

I have cited several prominent haiku in this essay, not to embarrass their authors, but to bring to light a problem no one is addressing. Haiku is not Japanese poetry. Haiku is not a reformation of hokku. Haiku is whatever people want to call and/or name it, history and hermeneutics be damned.

winter winds blow
the rocks sharpened
among the cedars

-Matsuo Basho, Basho's Haiku
Tr. by David Landis Barnhill

Wrote Harold Henderson in his book, *Haiku in English*:

"There is as yet no complete unanimity among American poets (or editors) as to what constitutes a haiku in English—how it differs from other poems which may be equally short. In other words, haiku in English are still in their infancy."

States Professor Gilbert in his paper *The Disjunctive Dragonfly: A Study of Disjunctive Method and Definitions in Contemporary English-Language Haiku*:

"Given that the Japanese haiku is reductively misinterpreted and the English haiku undefined, the HSA definition seems a figment of culturally projective desire."

Wrote Abigail Friedman in her book *The Haiku Apprentice*:

"Much of the challenge and excitement of writing haiku in the West comes from the fact that there are no commonly agreed-upon rules. This is not so far removed from the situation in Japan. There, contemporary poets are challenging the existing haiku rules; in the West we are struggling to create them."

Wrote Haruo Shirane in his essay, *Beyond the Haiku Moment for Modern Haiku* (Winter/Spring 2000):

"What many North American haiku poets have thought to be uniquely Japanese had in fact its roots in Western literary thought."

States the *New World Encyclopedia*:

"Due to the various views and practices today, it is impossible to single out any current style or format or subject matter as definitive 'haiku.'"

Undefined, a poetic form is formless, without perimeters, rules, and direction. Yet

haiku has become just that.

A haiku is a haiku is an imagist poem is a word is a senryu is a word painting is
a . . .

If haiku isn't a genre, what is it? A wet dream, a spilling of the West's bladder, the
colonization of hokku? Or, worse yet, an out-of-control weed mocking Masaoka
Shiki's contention during the late Meiji Era:

"I think haiku has already played itself out. Even assuming that the end is yet to
come, we can confidently expect it to arrive sometime during the Meiji period."

Talks on Haiku from the Otter's Den (1892)
Tr. by Janine Beichman
Masaoka Shiki: His Life and Works

Has haiku played itself out today? Has it become a parlor game, a caricature of
the hokku composed prior to the death of Kobayashi Issa?

What Shiki wrote in 1893 regarding the state of hokku during the Meiji Era in
Japan accurately describes the current state of haiku in and outside of Japan.
There is no East or West, no difference between Japanese and Western haiku, no
agreed-upon definition. The late Meiji Era in Japan and the world today, in and
outside of Japan, share a common denominator: an overabundance of
substandard, pat-yourself-on-the-back, garbage poetry posing as the descendent
of Basho's hokku.

Masaoka Shiki took the composition of hokku seriously. He did his homework,
studied hard, and wrote voluminously. Coming from a samurai family, he was
disciplined, putting his all into whatever he did. Needless to say, the hokku he'd
studied and immersed himself into was different from what was being taught and
heralded by Imperial - sanctioned haiku schools. For political reasons, Basho had
been deified by the Emperor as a Shinto God. His words had become scripture.

Writes Donald Keene in his book, *The Winter Sun Shines In*:

"In 1806, the court bestowed on him [Basho] the title of Hion Myojin, literally
'Jumping Frog Bright Deity,' alluding to Basho's haiku on the frog that jumped
into the old pond. In 1885 the government recognized the 'Old Pond Church'
(Furuike Kyokai) as a religious body affiliated with the Basho sect of Shinto."

Every major haiku school claimed to have a direct line to Basho's teaching and
heritage. Each school had a master poet who taught students for a fee and
corrected their poetry. Such men were esteemed by the public and held up as an

example by the Meiji Court, so much so, that three of them became official Court teachers. In essence, these official Imperial Court teachers were sock puppets of the Emperor, manipulated to keep the Japanese people at bay, obedient to the Emperor, and unaffected by the spreading influence of the Western world, a world formerly cut off from outsiders until Admiral Byrd forced Japan to open up its borders to the West.

Wrote Donald Keene in his epic book, *Dawn to the West*:

"By the time of the Meiji Restoration, not a single poet of distinction was writing; indeed, it had been almost one hundred years since anyone had composed haiku of unmistakable literary worth . . . "

Non-distinction was the hallmark of men like Hozumi Eiko (1823-1904) who was admired for such verses as:

The nightingales ---
When I was young it was love
That kept me awake

-Hozumi Eiki
Tr. by Donald Keene

Hokku, once vibrant, in tune with the people, a verse form Basho and his contemporaries introduced to the Imperial Court in a day when renga had become a caricature of the past, a pastime for the rich and affluent, became, like its predecessor, another hobby guided by politics, tradition, and stagnation due to the same-old, same-old mentality that infects a society's need for as is. No longer taken seriously, it faced oblivion; irrelevancy, its sensei.

Hokku, in Shiki's estimation, could not, in its current condition, be taken seriously by Western mainstream literary circles. How could it be, he reasoned. The poetry said nothing, meant nothing, and lacked memorability. It became superficial and mundane, an in-one-ear, out-the-other-ear versification.

Wrote Shiki:

"The history of the old haikai is dry as dust; it is like chewing on wax. It can serve only to make me yawn."

The Winter Sun Shines In
Tr. by Donald Keene

Writes Donald Keene:

"He [Shiki] asserted that few of Basho's haiku were of merit and searched for examples at which to sneer." In yet what appears to be a contradiction in his essay on Basho in *Shora Gyokueki*, however, Shiki lauded Basho as the first serious poet since the days of the *Man'yōshū*. What gave? Did he admire Matsuo Basho or not?

Shiki detested the deterioration of *hokku* by the cult of Basho. A progressive visionary, he wanted *hokku* to once again be meaningful. He also wanted it to be acceptable by the Western world. He lashed out against Basho's poetry, not because he didn't like Basho as a poet, but because Matsuo Basho's deification became more important than the genre. Decrying Basho's poetry was a brilliant tactic. It immediately drew the attention of the Imperial Court and Japan's academic community. It is no secret that Shiki esteemed Basho and Buson as poets and primary influences on his haiku.

An impatient genius, fated to live a short life due to tuberculosis, Masaoka Shiki set out to reform *hokku* and return it to a meaningfulness in tune with his generation and a global worldview of poetics. He wasted no time and did the impossible, changing from his sickbed the genre's name to haiku, and setting into motion a movement that, in time, did the opposite of what it was intended to do. He introduced a new style, *shasei*, and immersed haiku into a Western Mulligan stew that viewed life and poetry through Occidental eyes.

The self-colonization of *hokku*, for a while, appeared revolutionary and brought *hokku* out of the abyss it had sunk down to. This would be short-lived.

Conforming to Western principles and influences, haiku evolved into a Western poetic voice that increasingly distanced itself from the *hokku* Basho, Yosa Buson, and Kobayashi Issa had penned. *Hokku* is not a Western voice, nor was it ever defined by one. The Japanese language used by Basho, Buson, and Issa is not the same Japanese language in use today. Today's Japanese is a product of the German-based university system that Japan adopted during the late Meiji Era.

Wrote Michael F. Marra in his text, *Modern Japanese Aesthetics*:

"When we consider the impact that Western philosophy has had on Japanese scholars since the late 19th century --- and the impact that Japanese scholarship still has to this day on the ways in which Westerners represent Japan to themselves --- attention to the work of Japanese aestheticians clarifies the complex web of paradoxes in which all scholars of Japan, East and West, are inevitably trapped when talking about their subject matter. The realization that moments of cultural specificities are often couched in the language of Western realities is one of the major concerns of present-day aestheticians."

Masaoka Shiki's *shasei* haiku, a concept he borrowed from Western painters, still

has a strong influence on modern haiku.

"The sketch from life [shasei] is a vital element in both painting and descriptive writing: one might say that without it, the creation of either would be impossible. The sketch from life has been used in Western painting from early times; in olden times it was imperfect, but recently, it has progressed and become more precise. In Japan, however, the sketch from life has always been looked down on, so that the development of painting was hampered, and neither prose, poetry, nor anything else progressed . . . This has become a habit, and even today nine people out of ten do not appreciate the sketch from life . . . and reject it as extremely shallow. The truth is that it is imagination which is shallow and has nowhere near the variety of the sketch from life."

Masaoka Shiki
Sixfoot Sickbed, 1902

A sampling of Masaoka Shiki's shasei haiku:

the bushwarbler
sings, its
mouth opening

Shiki's poem is a shasei sketch of life (a quick sketch without detail or effort): a bird sings with its mouth open. There is no mystery, nothing to evoke a surplus of meaning. It is more of an observation than a poem.

struck by a
raindrop, snail
closes up

This too is a shasei word sketch. There is nothing to interpret: a snail struck by a raindrop, retreats into its shell. It is object-biased, centered around an object. Becomingness and unpredictability are absent.

I sink my teeth
into a ripe persimmon ---
it dribbles down my beard

Masaoka Shiki
Tr. by Janine Beichman

This is a description of what happened to Shiki while eating a ripe persimmon: the juice drips down his beard. There is nothing to interpret or remember. It is an object-biased poem centered around an object and the affect from an object (human being) eating said object, the result all too predictable.

When I try to stand
The hinges of my back
Are bitterly cold

This is a sentence, not a poem. It is descriptive. There is no juxtaposition. The haiku is human-centric in a cause and affect arena. It is a sentence almost anyone can compose, akin to: "After I took a long walk, my lower back is sweaty and sore."

spring rain:
browsing under an umbrella
at the picture-book store

It is raining on a spring day. The poet is looking at books under an umbrella at a picture-book store. What is there to interpret? Shiki's poem is object-biased. It is predictable and allows no room for interpretation. It tells the reader nothing about the creativity of nature.

One moonlit night
I released every last bug
From its cage

On a moonlit night, the poet released every bug from its cage. He doesn't say why. Shiki's poem is a sentence, not a poem. It's the equivalent of writing: one moonless night I set free every fish from the fish farm. What is memorable about this poem? Ironically, Masaoka Shiki wanted haiku to be accepted by the Occidental world as a legitimate genre of poetry. Granted, the hokku written during his day were substandard. Many of Shiki's haiku, though better than the garbage hokku written during his day, ironically too, lacked depth, memorability, and literary substance.

Spring breezes ---
How I'd love to throw a ball
Over grassy fields

Line one coupled with lines two and three is hardly an epiphany. Shiki was an American baseball fan. Confined to his bed with TB, enduring continual, unbearable pain, and opiated with heavy doses of morphine, he espied a breeze, while staring out the bedroom window into his garden. There is little to interpret, the paintbrush of zoka, not evident.

Talking to myself,
hugging a hot water bottle
gone tepid

Shiki is talking to himself, hugging a tepid hot water bottle. The poem is an

incomplete sentence, a human-centric poem. Why he is talking to himself is unimportant. Readers interpret haiku referencing their own individual cultural memories, education, experiential levels, etc. One is not privy to the poet's reasoning.

Masaoka Shiki
The Winter Sun Shines In
Tr. by Donald Keene

Shiki was a mediocre poet, and, therefore, not in the position to critique Basho's poetic output. He was a brilliant strategist, however, who exuded a powerful voice, and wielded that power masterfully, managing in a short time to bring to light the plight of hokku and to set into motion what no other in Japan was willing to do. This took courage, vision and genius. His criticism of the Shinto god, Matsuo Basho, garnered him an instant audience and controversy.

Masaoka Shiki was not rich, not a professor, nor a politician. His life was short (35 years), his view of nature restricted primarily to memory, imagination, and the view of the garden adjacent to his room.

He went to battle as a literary samurai, regardless of cost or losses. Compare him to Don Quixote, a non-sanctioned knight marching into hell for an impossible cause, to beat what some deemed an unbeatable foe. He rose up at a time when hokku was doomed to slide into oblivion. He is to be commended for saving it from oblivion, infusing relevance into what had become irrelevant. Saving it, however, is one thing. Setting it on a permanent course that will withstand the test of time, is another matter. Haiku's salvation has been short-lived. Shiki in his zest for Western ideas, his impatience, and a lack of time due to his illness, could only do so much.

Change occurred. The wheel was set into motion. Hokku, now named haiku, would never be the same. What was set into motion, however, was not a renewal of hokku, a redirection of its lifeblood. What Masaoka Shiki, as stated earlier in this essay, unleashed and sculpted, was Western in thought, word, and aesthetic conceptualization. This is where the experiment failed. A Westerner cannot wear a samurai mask and impersonate a true samurai. A fox cannot pretend to be a chicken and appear credible for too long, regardless of its intent or craftiness. Western-infused haiku cannot pretend to be Japanese hokku or its relative. Ancient Japan and the German-based university system mindset it adopted during the Meiji restoration are polar opposites.

Wrote Haruo Shirane in Basho, Buson, and Modern Haiku Myths
Modern Haiku, XXX:1 (Winter/Spring 2000)

"One of the widespread beliefs in North America is that haiku should be based upon one's own direct experience, that it must derive from one's own

observations, particularly of nature. But it is important to remember that this is basically a modern view of haiku, the result, in part, of nineteenth century European realism, which had an impact on modern Japanese haiku and then was re-imported back to the West as something very Japanese. Basho, who wrote in the seventeenth century, would have not made such a distinction between direct personal experience and the imaginary, nor would he have placed higher value on fact over fiction."

Writes Richard Gilbert in his seminal book on haiku, *Poems of Consciousness*:

"There are no generalized labels in Japanese literature for a variety of poetry that is 'garbage.' Shiki Masaoka famously used 'tsukinami haiku' to mean formulaic, or hackneyed; and Hasegawa Kai recently introduced the term 'garakuta (junk) haiku' to describe a formulaic haiku sensibility possessing objective realism as a fundamental (sadly, a majority of published haiku in English may fit into this category)."

Kai Hasekawa of Japan told me in an interview for the Autumn 2008 issue of *Simply Haiku*, translated by Patricia Lyons:

"Since the 19th century, Japan has learned much from the West. One thing learned is the realism (shajitsu-shugi) found in Western literature and art. Haiku is no exception; realism has had an enormous influence on haiku. In that sense, modern haiku are nothing but 'realism haiku.' The realism in this haiku is called shasei by haiku poets. To put it briefly, this is the idea that haiku are written about 'things' (that actually exist). It is certainly true that modern haiku has gained much from this realism. However, these 'realism haiku' contain a number of pitfalls. The greatest of these is that the haiku have lost kokoro (feeling, heart, spirit). From the time of the *Man'yoshu*, Japan's earliest poetry anthology, the Japanese literary arts have invested mono (things) with kokoro. Haiku are no exception. Even if they appear to be written only about things, there is definitely kokoro beneath the surface. However, because of the extremes of modern realism, kokoro is neglected, and only 'things' have come to be written about in haiku. These are what I referred to as 'junk' (garakuta) haiku. Sooner or later this tendency will have to be corrected. For one thing, it is a serious departure from the main principle of Japanese literary art. And more to the point, 'junk haiku' just aren't interesting.

There are also various problems related to the current state of Western haiku. They are not, however, the same problems facing Japanese haiku.

Rather, the problems are even more complicated. While the biggest problem facing Japanese haiku is that of how to reconcile haiku, a traditional form of literature indigenous to Japan, with the realism learned from the West. Haiku in the West have, in addition, the even greater problem of how to root this traditional form of literature indigenous to Japan in the cultural soil of the West. It

seems to me that the current state in which 'a lot of haiku written today in the English language by Western practitioners fall short of memorability and depth, and appear to be formula based' has occurred just because they have become the 'victim of realism.' I think that there are deeper underlying problems even before that, for example, the problem of the fundamental understanding of what a haiku is."

Thomas Lynch, in *Intersecting Influences in American Haiku*, sees "haiku as a current manifestation of a trend in American poetics that begins in earnest in the writings of the transcendentalists, in particular, Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman and that has continued under various guises in the work of, among others, Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Richard Wright, Jack Kerouac, and Gary Snyder, and in fact a sizable number of other contemporary poets.

In short, I would contend that haiku is a genre that fulfills the poetic aspirations of important trends in American literature that have endured throughout the past century and a half. Assuredly such a slight genre could not otherwise have so greatly influenced such an imposing cast of poets did it not fulfill some deep-seated necessity in their poetic practice."

Published in *Modernity in East-West Literary Criticism: New Readings*, edited by Yoshinobu Hakutani. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001.

Haiku today is primarily free-based. It is whatever a poet wants it to be. There is little resemblance to the fixed, defined form Basho and others taught and composed. To claim otherwise is to ignore hermeneutics, linguistics, and the history of Japanese short form poetry prior to the death of Kobayashi Issa.

Read the following sampling of contemporary haiku. No malice is intended. They are shared to make a point, to bring to light the direction and lack of continuity the haiku path has taken since Masaoka Shiki's reformation of hokku.

suddenly single—
the carpenter bee gives
me the wrong kind of buzz

Roberta Beary, USA
Modern Haiku, Summer 2013

Beary's poem is a senryu. It is human-centric, reminiscent of a comedian's gag line. It's subjective (the wrong kind of buzz) having little to do with the artistry dripping from zoka's brush. This poem offers no connection to the flow of seasons and the creative expression of zoka, which Basho said was essential to hokku composition. Is the connection to nature in hokku passé, the old master's teachings a fossil relic, and, therefore, no longer relevant to the reformation that is haiku?

it is
what it is
mole hill

Alice Frampton, Seabeck, Washington
September 2012 Heron's Nest Award Winning Haiku

This poem that isn't a poem is a "tell all" statement. The statement is subjective (it is what it is), and definitive, leaving no room for interpretation. Nothing is revelatory; nothing is connected with the becomingness (koto) indigenous to nature.

Is haiku an old person afflicted with dementia, its cultural memory tossed and turned, bumping into walls made of circus mirrors, zoka, an elixir well past its expiration date? Is haiku, in its current incarnation, literature to be taken seriously, a poetic voice superior to or equal to that sung by Matsuo Basho, Yosa Buson, Doho, Chiyo-ni, and Kobayashi Issa?

crooked teeth driving my frozen grave to work

Lee Gurga, U.S.A.
Modern Haiku, Summer 2013

How is this incomplete sentence a cousin to hokku, a descendent of the poetry Basho and Buson championed? A person with crooked teeth (oddly, Gurga is a dentist) is driving to work, his body freezing, the car apparently without heating. This incomplete sentence, labeled a haiku, is human-centric and leaves little to be interpreted by the reader. What does it tell us about the workings of nature?

neon Buddha
can't get no satisfaction
but he know his grammar

Michael Dylan Welch
forty neon buddhas
Graceguts

Note: This is a fictional invent, part of a series, patterned after Ban'ya Natsuishi's Flying Pope anti-haiku poems. It's not serious literature. The poem is formulaic, utilizing zero aesthetic styles, a senryu posing as a haiku.

It's inigmatic to think that faux haiku like this is taken seriously. I wonder what Shiki would think of this poem and others of the same ilk? Would he laud them or chide them in a tirade? This is a question that needs to be seriously considered. What would Basho or Buson think? Or do their opinions matter?

Wrote Yosa Buson:

"What I demonstrate to my disciples is not to imitate Soa's casual way but to long for the sabi [elegant simplicity] and shiori [sensitivity] of Basho, with the intention of getting back to the internal. It is the zen of haikai and the heart-to-heart way."

Excerpted from the preface of Mukashi O Ima in 1774
Tr. by Yuki Sawa and Edith M. Shiffert
Haiku Master Buson

dust remains the perfume of books

Susan Shand, England
Notes From the Gean Haiku Journal
September 2012

This isn't a poem. It's a statement, an ism suited for a classroom motivational poster.

stormy weather an ipad kind of day

Johnny Baranski, USA
A Hundred Gourds
September 2013

It's stormy day, a time, in the poet's estimation, to play with his Macintosh i-Pad. There is nothing to interpret. Baranski's poem is not memorable. It tells the reader nothing about nature's creative force. Although it mentions an aspect of nature, the poem's focus is human-centric, the poet's subjective response to increment weather.

grocery shopping
pushing my cart faster
through feminine protection

Michael Dylan Welch, USA
Cor van den Heuvel's The Haiku Anthology

Included in an anthology of haiku, Welch's poem is, in actuality, a senryu, and not a good one at that. It reads like a comedian's aside. There is no mystery, nothing to interpret, zoka is nowhere to be found, the poem expressing what many of my male friends and I felt as junior high school students: the Kotex aisle was to be avoided at all costs.

tundra

Cor van den Heuvel's (USA) one word haiku

Posits Michael Dylan Welch about van der Heuvel's one word "alleged" haiku poem:

"It's important that it be seen in the middle of an otherwise blank page, where the space around the poem is part of the poem. I see it as a spring haiku, where a rock might first be appearing through melting snow. We also see the great expanse of the seemingly barren tundra, yet also know that the tundra isn't barren at all -- the scale is just different, encompassing both the large and the small at the same time. It's not every word that can work as a poem like this, but this one does. I'm pleased that the poem is included in the new haiku anthology, 'Haiku in English,' just published by Norton."

One word cannot be defined as a poem, let alone a haiku. There is no meter, no juxtaposition, just a single word, something someone stoned on marijuana might call a poem in a stupefied epiphany. Using Welch's rationale infused with unsupported justification, and lots of imagination, one could call a dictionary a haiku anthology. This alleged poem would not survive serious critique in a mainstream university world literature classroom. With the aforementioned rationale in mind, here is a two-word combination by Welch, the antithesis of poetry, let alone haiku:

baby
car
i
age

Michael Dylan Welch
Nisqually Delta Review

Poetry to be taken seriously?

From the future
a wind arrives
that blows the waterfall apart

Ban'ya Natsuishi
WHA, Japan

This is a surreal, obscure poem. The future is just that, the future. It hasn't occurred and may not. In nature, chaos is a constant. Nothing is fixed, all is moving. Readers have no way of knowing what Natsuishi is referring to or what the focus of the poem is. Matsuo Basho wanted hokku to be accessible to the masses. Accessibility to this poem is limited to those privy to the poet's mindset.

Interestingly, in the section on Amazon.com selling his new book, *Black Card*, Natsuishi has the audacity to allow the following advertisement: "Natsuishi is the greatest haiku master after classic haiku Matsuo Basho." In his dreams, perhaps.

The pregnant cat,
more careful than ever,
crossing the road

Gilles Fabre, Ireland
WHA

A pregnant cat is careful as it crosses the road. No epiphany, nothing to interpret, nothing to remember. It is pure observation, suitable as a caption for a photograph of a pregnant cat.

cherry blossom rain
tears wash over
her prom makeup

Randy Brooks, Illinois, U.S.A.

cherry blossom rain: line one is used to illustrate lines two and three. A teenage girl is crying. The reader is not told why. The focus of this poem is the girl crying. It tells us nothing about nature's creative force. It is human-centric, in the Imagist tradition.

pothole—I promise I'll visit

Paul Miller, Bristol Rhode, Island
Frogpond Winter 2012

The relationship between lines one and two is not clear. Does the poet promise to visit the pothole? Is the pothole a metaphor representing something problematic in the poet's life? This two-line assemblage of words tells us nothing about nature, nor is it memorable. The focus is a promise to visit.

Wabi, sabi, makoto, yugen, ma? Where are the aesthetic styles (tools) utilized by the masters when composing hokku? Have these tools been replaced by Western aesthetic styles in sync with the German-based university system, thus giving credence to the contention that haiku is not a reformation of hokku, that it is, instead, an Occidental import with no synchronicity weaving it into a similitude of what it is alleged to have reformed?

one thread
of the old, frayed shoelace
pulls through

Herold Stevenson, California, U.S.A.

Stevenson's verse isn't a haiku or a poem. It's an incomplete sentence:

one thread of the old, frayed shoelace pulls through

It offers nothing revelatory and "tells all." Regardless of the mood it conveys (Cor van der Heuvel cites this example as an exemplary haiku in his essay for *Modern Haiku: American Haiku's Future*; Autumn 2003), there is nothing via structure, meter, or focus that merits it being labeled a haiku. To label it as such suggests that writing any kind of incomplete sentence using a three-line format can be labeled a haiku. An example I made up to illustrate my point:

the tail at
the end of the makeshift kite
is ragged

A poem? Absolutely not.

At the summit tree
my exhausted dog lifts his leg;
a dry formality

James W. Hackett
The Haiku and Zen World of James W. Hackett

There is nothing to interpret in the poem. The haiku is a cute aside, nothing more. An old dog lifts his leg out of habit on a tree. No urine comes out. Is this literature to be remembered, emulated, held up as an example in classrooms?

A crew man
has his straw hat
attacked by swallows

Tateo Fukutomi
WHA, Japan

Telling readers that a worker's straw hat was attacked by swallows is a "tell all" statement. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that the swallows were not attacking the worker but amassing straw to build their nest which is made of mud, saliva, and natural fibers. This is a sentence, not a poem. It doesn't evoke a surplus of meaning. It is a shasei word sketch. In art, a sketch and a painting are different entities. Oftentimes, a sketch is a preliminary to painting a painting.

What do the above haiku have in common with hokku and the art shared with the

world via the poetry of Matsuo Basho, Yosa Buson, Doho, and Kobayashi Issa? Are they to be taken seriously as legitimate literature? Are they memorable? Do they exhibit the depth and breath of pre-Shiki hokku before the deification of Basho? Do they share a common thread? Can they be defined as indigenous to a specific genre?

Do they embody the teaching centric to Matsuo Basho:

"Saigyō's waka, Sōgi's renga, Sesshū's painting, Rikyū's tea ceremony---one thread runs through the artistic Ways. And this artistic spirit is to follow zōka, to be a companion to the turning of the four seasons. Nothing one sees is not a flower, nothing one imagines is not the moon. If what is seen is not a flower, one is like a barbarian; if what is imagined is not the moon, one is like a beast. Depart from the barbarian, break away from the beast, follow zōka, return to zōka."

and/or:

"Go to the pine if you want to learn about the pine, or to the bamboo if you want to learn about the bamboo. And in doing so, you must leave your subjective preoccupation with yourself. Otherwise you impose yourself on the object and do not learn. Your poetry issues of its own accord when you and the object have become one - when you have plunged deep enough into the object to see something like a hidden glimmering there. However well-phrased your poetry may be, if your feeling is not natural - if the object and yourself are separate - then your poetry is not true poetry but merely your subjective counterfeit."

Is zōka essential to hokku as Matsuo Basho claims? Is it essential then to haiku which claims to be a reformation of hokku?

In an interview I conducted for Simply Haiku with author and translator, Professor David Landis Barnhill on April 4, 2011, Professor Barnhill elucidated on what zōka is and isn't. He pointed out that zōka in the Japanese language prior to the Meiji adoption of the German-based university system cannot be defined as nature, that translating zōka as nature can be misleading and, as such, doesn't address the term's true meaning, that the notion of nature is a cultural construction.

"What exactly is zōka?" I asked Professor Barnhill. "How is it different from the Western definition of nature?"

Barnhill's reply:

"In the West we normally think of nature as a collection of things: trees, toads, rocks, etc. Or we may think of it as a place, such as a wilderness area. Zōka, which I translate as—the Creative, does not refer to either of those. It is the vitality and creativity of nature, its tendency and ability to undergo beautiful and

marvelous transformations. It is not a place or collection of things, nor is it something outside nature that is directing it or bringing things into being—thus the translation of—the Creator is misleading. Zōka is the ongoing, continuous self-transforming creativity of the natural world."

Hokku is activity-biased, centered around becomingness (koto), impermanence, zoka (nature's creative force), and objectivity. Hokku is Japanese. Basho centered his hokku around zoka, nature's creative force. To him, all poetry began with zoka and ended with zoka. Zoka translated is not nature as many today interpret it with the modern Japanese language.

It is koto-centric, about something in nature becoming versus already formed (mono). A poet composing hokku follows the example of zoka, creating, sculpting with words something that is always becoming, never static, never permanent, flowing in a continuum of time that is unpredictable. His composition and subject matter were interconnected.

Hokku utilize Japanese aesthetical styles that are not easy to define or comprehend with the German-based university mindset: yugen (depth and mystery), kotodama (the spirit of representation), ma (space and time), and other styles that were intuitive and undefined in the Japanese language of Basho's day. It was the German-based university system that westernized the Japanese language, changing meanings, defining words from a Western point of view, a philosophical tradition that is, as Michael Marra points out in his book, *Essays on Japan: Between Aesthetics and Literature*, a "variation of the theme of reality and other visible, and invisible, speak-able and unspeakable, with the first term firmly grounded in the second and a single, clear mirror dividing the two."

This change from Japanese thinking to the German-based university system mindset voluntarily adopted by Japan has created many problems since they are two opposing schools of thought. Many who claim to be experts on Japanese short form poetics base their knowledge on seeing and understanding an opposite via an altogether different opposite. They use westernized Japanese to translate and decipher Japanese short form poetry and other literature: a hermeneutical nightmare.

The pre-modern Japanese language contains much more than what is stated in a poem orally according to syntax. Wrote Steven Heine in *Philosophy East and West* in reference to understanding the ancient Japanese language:

"The multiplicity of the semantic field cannot be contained by the syntactic grammar, and therefore require a suggestive and deliberately ambiguous expression which opens up rather than obstructs their philosophical ground."

Many of the words used today to accomplish this Herculean task didn't exist prior to Japan's adoption of the German-based university system, including, ironically,

the term, aesthetics.

What to make of nothingness, what Vera Linhartova called in her book, *Sur un Fond Blanc*: "a magical dot by which a mere space transforms itself into a blank space."

How does one reconcile using an opposite to make sense of an opposite? What is formlessness, the spirit of things, becomingness, and the role for reversed words (togo or sakashimagoto)? Are they relevant to modern haiku? Does one adopt the argument espoused by many modern haiku poets in the English-speaking world that English-language haiku cannot be defined by the mindset of Basho, that what was, isn't, that poets in the West should jettison Japanese aesthetic styles (tools), infusing in them, instead, Western thinking with Western tools, even though the tools of Modern Japan and the West were forged from the same forge?

A haiku is a haiku is an imagist poem is a word is a senryu is a word painting is
a . . .

Not every poem called a haiku is mundane or forgettable. There are exceptions of course. Unfortunately, the bulk are up there with the garbage poetry revered during the Meiji Era that were forgettable, anti-literature, and Hallmark greeting card-like that Shiki rose up against in protest. Some of the good poems composed today are, in actuality, hokku, not haiku. They exude becomingness, personify zoka, and drift freely down Heaven's River, asking to be interpreted by each individual reader.

They are layered with meaning, evoking a surplus of meaning, making use of the unsaid, *ma*, *kokoro*, and other Japanese aesthetic styles designed to do what Western aesthetic tools cannot.

In an arena without definition or academic discernment, senryu, haiku, word pictures, single words, Imagist short poems, prose sentences, political statements, and hokku, more often than not, get lumped together forming a literary conglomerate defying definitive identity. Haiku cannot, in its present incarnation, be defined as long as it insists on riding the fence, dancing between the impossibility of magnetic poles that push instead of mesh.

What to do? Will the international haiku community and Japan admit their error or, cede to the reality that Masaoka Shiki's experiment failed? Are they willing to rewrite what was with what is, and finally become the pine Matsuo Basho exhorted his students to become in order to write true hokku?

Matsuo Basho's disciple, Doho, wrote:

"The poet should detach his mind from self . . . and enter into the object, sharing its delicate life and feelings. Where upon a poem forms itself. Description of the object is not enough: unless a poem contains feelings which have come from the object, the object and the poet's self will be separate things."

Added Doho:

"Learn about the pine from the pine and the bamboo from the bamboo. . . the poet should detach his mind from self . . . and enter into the object . . . so the poem forms itself when poet and object become one."

Some examples of well-crafted hokku misclassified as haiku:

waiting up . . . the rain's rhythm becomes a prayer

Ferris Gilli, Georgia, U.S.A.
Frogpond Issue 36.1, 2013

monologue
of the deep sea fish
misty stars

Fay Aoyogi
Haiku 21 and Haiku in English

fading light . . .
a swan asks nothing
of the breeze

Claire Everett, Durham, England
Simply Haiku, autumn/winter 2011

rising tide
a blue heron lifts
the dawn

Susan Constable, Canada
Simply Haiku, Spring 2011

odors of spring . . .
a young bull's horns
sharpened by the moon

bright moon —
water holds the mirror
of all those present

summer ebb tide —
an urchin's pace into
the deeper sea

Ljubomir Dragovic, Bosnia & Herzegovina
Uska staza/A Narrow Road , Liber, Belgrade, 2011

evening of the day
leaving heaven
a fox

a wild boar
comes and eats air
spring mountain path

Kaneko Tohta
Tr. by The Kon Nichi Translation Group
Kaneko Tohta: Selected Haiku

one by one
frogs make holes in the pond...
starry night

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

The light is teaching
the air that ever travels
how roses are born

On their pilgrimage
the eyes of the passing night:
searching for the lark

As if distracted,
on my way, I touched the tree.
Now it answers me

With footsteps of air
I draw near the steeple bells
that are dreaming me

Agusti Bartra, Catalonia

lily:

out of the water...
out of itself

barking its breath
into the rat-hole:
bitter cold

Nick Virgilio, New Jersey, U.S.A.

summer dreams . . .
the night thick with
datura

twilight —
the chrysalis
forming

Svetlana Marisova, Russia/New Zealand

scattered showers the river full of somewhere else

Michele L. Harvey, New York, U.S.A.
Acorn, Issue #26, Spring 2011

tide pool
the stars sink
into the sand

the river
the river makes
of the moon

Jim Kacian, Virginia, U.S.A.

cracked soil
a day laborer bent
over his shadow

Sasa Vazic, Serbia

night rain
the small serrated song
of a frog

Ferris Gilli

june breeze
a hole in the cloud
mends itself

an'ya, Oregon, U.S.A.

The Heron's Nest Readers Choice Popular Poets Valentine's Award 2001

In the cow's eyes
the clouds have burnt out ---
autumn evening

Shoshi Fujita, Japan
The Haiku Universe

I long for haiku to kick the bucket and become what it once was before it tried to become something it wasn't: hokku without the Basho-esque waltz of muskmelons swollen with autumn rain peering into circus tents.

Wrote Haruo Shirane in Beyond the Haiku Moment:

"If haiku is to rise to the level of serious poetry, literature that is widely respected and admired, that is taught and studied, commentated on, that can have impact on other non-haiku poets, then it must have a complexity that gives it depth and that allows it to both focus on and rise above the specific moment or time. Basho, Buson and other masters achieved this through various forms of textual density, including metaphor, allegory, symbolism and allusion, as well as through the constant search for new topics."

I am not exalting Matsuo Basho as the consummate hokku poet, the one everyone should emulate. That would be ludicrous. He was far from being a god. He wrote his share of mediocre poetry. We're also not privy to the thousands of hokku he probably jettisoned, opting to only reveal to his readers a thousand poems. He cleared a path, gave us directions, and paved said path with examples. Others equally competent in the composition of hokku followed, including Yosa Buson, Kobayashi Issa, Chiyo-ni. Their hokku should too be studied, perused, and understood.

EXAMPLES of their poetry:

Kobayashi Issa:

that loner
must be my star ---
Heaven's River

Kobayashi Issa is a loner staring up at the Milky Way galaxy. He focuses on a star

that seems as if it doesn't belong to this starry microcosm. He identified with it. Do you identify with things in nature? Why so? This poem evokes a surplus of interpretative meaning. The Milky Way is a tidal movement, continually becoming (koto). There is mystery in this visage of the Milky Way galaxy: a river that seemingly runs through eternity, unfathomable, untouchable, and always evolving.

It's easy to take the nighttime sky for granted. There's much we can learn from the stars, the moon, the continuum that's eternity. Issa's use of "must" is not a definitive subjective statement. It is an epiphany.

moss in bloom
on his little scars ---
this stone Buddha

The Buddha is a statue made of stone (object). This object (the Buddha) is not the poem's focus. Its focus is what is growing out of the little scratches and chipped away spaces on said object: moss that is blooming. Nature is the consummate artist. Its canvas is everything in its tidal flow and the flow itself. Nothing in life is static. All decomposes, changes, albeit minutely. Issa observes zoka's handiwork. It marvels him to see the seemingly impossible breach the possible, a blooming plant anchored in stone. Statues are man-made. This man-made statute of Buddha is not an outgrowth of nature yet, ironically, nature will, in time, swallow it via decomposition caused by weathering.

don't swat!
the fly is wringing his hands
wringing his feet

Issa was a Pure Land Buddhist. He revered life and saw himself as a part of a global biosphere, neither superior nor inferior. He tells himself to see past the prejudices one harbors towards a so-called lowly fly. Why is the fly wringing his hands, wringing his feet? He doesn't put words into his readers' mouths. We are asked to make that determination. Life to the poet is more than meets the eye. It's complex. Nature and its creations were, to Issa, more than illustrative modifiers used to illustrate a concept.

distant hills
are mirrored in its eye . . .
a dragonfly

A mere statement? A dragonfly is a small, delicate creature that's older than humankind. Somehow, some way, with patience, Issa manages to see into a dragonfly's eyes, OR . . . is he imagining the act? Distant hills are mirrored in its

eyes. It's as if this insect's eyes are a conduit to all we often don't see, the is that isn't, that is. There is beauty in zoka's handiwork, even in what some would perceive to be the ugly eyes of an airborne bug. There is room for interpretation and mental exploration, especially in the utilization of what isn't said. What isn't said is a concept many schooled by the German-based university system have trouble comprehending.

Issa's hokku excerpted from
Kobayashi Issa
Tr. by Makoto Ueda
Dew on the Grass
The Life and Poetry of Kobayashi Issa

Yosa Buson

A mountain pheasant
moves his feet on the branch ---
the long night!

This is a deceptively looking hokku at first, a visage Buson had seen. It is much more, however. Buson was a well-known, successful painter. He valued white space, *ma*, and *makoto*, and other aesthetic styles, seeing in them ways to say much with little, drawing out the unseen and unsaid, bringing into play the metaphysical the Western world has trouble comprehending in a way compatible with Eastern conceptualizations. The infusion of various Buddhist doctrines, Daoism, Shinto, and animism in Buson's paintings and hokku are not tangible, concrete, and easy to define or categorize.

The aforementioned aesthetic styles and others not listed, are pathways into a realm the Yamato Japanese language took for granted intuitively and saw no need to define. When Japan adopted the German-based university system during the Meiji Era, they had to make their language comprehensible to the Western mindset; a mindset that comprehended philosophy, psychology, science, and art differently than them. Lacking definitions for many words in the aforementioned areas, what Michael Marra refers to as a "soft language", Japan adopted Western definitions, a decision that resulted in the semi-intellectual colonization of its culture.

Zoka, once nature's creative force, was now defined as nature, with an emphasis on objects (*mono*) versus becomingness (*koto*).

Wrote Michael Marra in his book, *Essays on Japan: Between Aesthetics and Literature*:

"The importation to Japan of the field of aesthetics forced a re-interpretation of concepts belonging to rhetoric, poetics, and theater in light of aesthetic categories, thus transforming these concepts into Japanese counterparts of Western beauty."

Marra also stated:

"The word 'beauty' coming from the West together with an arsenal of concepts belonging to the field of aesthetics forced the Japanese intelligentsia to rethink their cultural heritage in terms of Western ideas. It rerouted intellectual activities that had developed in Japan over a span of a thousand years into new frameworks of knowledge that used Western sciences as yardsticks for the discussion and evaluation of local cultural products."

A feral bird, the mountain pheasant, moves his feet on a branch. Slowness, and restlessness are inferred. Long night is a term the Japanese use to describe nighttime in winter. Long is the key word. Winter in Japan is frigid. Creature comforts such as propane and electricity did not exist. At night, one relied on candles to see, and wore heavy clothing to withstand the cold. The nights are LONG. Imagine the mountain pheasant, perched on a barren limb. It did not migrate to a warmer region. Like a human, it is restless, finding it hard to sleep, a captive to the frigid night. Like the cold night, its tail is long. It's a large pheasant with a rich coppery chestnut plumage, yellowish bill, brown iris and red facial skin. The female is a brown bird with grayish brown upper parts and buff barred dark brown below. How much of the bird was seen by Buson? The mountain pheasant avoids human beings. Where was Buson when he espied this scene? Outdoors with the bird, Buson could relate to the cold bird: its restlessness, loneliness, and sleeplessness. Buson became one with the pheasant, momentarily, in a sensory and emotive manner.

The dragonflies
of my beloved village,
the color of the walls!

The Japanese language uses no punctuation, thus, the comma inserted at the end of line two, was placed there by the translators to indicate a pause, in lieu of an indefinable cutting word that accomplished the same. Buson is visiting his beloved village. He sees dragonflies on the village walls. At the end of line two, there is a pause (ma), what Denis Garrison calls "dreaming room"; a moment to think, anticipate, and conceive.

The dragonflies
of my beloved village (PAUSE)
the color of the walls!

The walls were old, weathered, not beautiful to the eye. Enter the dragonflies

dripping from zoka's paintbrush. The reception of Buson to zoka's artistry is implied. There is no exclamation mark in the original. How would you respond to the presence of many dragonflies on a wall in your hometown around or near the family home? Would you take them for granted, not noticing them, their beauty, and the beauty they paint on the wall with their presence? What can be learned about nature and one's self from this visage? What emotions and memories does this evoke in your mindset?

Saying goodbye
to one who is going over the mountains --
the withered field!

The withered field contrasted with "saying goodbye" to someone evokes a surplus of interpretative meaning. Withered calls to mind something dying, something old, something lacking sustenance. Combining this to saying goodbye to someone is emotive, stirring. Is this person dying or about to die? Will this be the last time the poet will see this person? We, as is everything in nature, are impermanent, as are our theories and conceptualizations. The only constant is change. Observing nature outside the sphere of conceptualization, we can see beyond the now of our limited mindset, into a continuum of infinite possibilities.

Coolness --
separating from the bell,
the bell's voice

Buson makes excellent use of juxtaposition, contrasting coolness with the sound of the bell leaving the bell. Does the bell have a voice? Buson uses personification, a no no in some English-language haiku circles. An inanimate object, a bell has no voice. Yet, when it is rung, it has a sound that's song-like. Is the bell's sound (song) cold, or is coolness the mood it evokes when rung, its vibrant, resonant sound fading fast? What mood does it evoke in your mindset? Yugen (depth and mystery) exudes from this hokku, offering a cornucopia of interpretative possibilities.

Buson's Hokku excerpted from
Yosa Buson Haiku Master Buson
Tr. by Yuki Sawa and Edith M. Shiffert

Chiyo-ni

soaring skylark ---
what do you think
of the limitless sky?

Question haiku are a familiar sight on online haiku workshops. It is easy to write a question. Look at an animal or some other animate or inanimate object and ask it a question. What makes Chiyo-ni's hokku different and stand out? A skylark is soaring, which by inference, means it is flying high in the sky. The sky is limitless. Chiyo-ni was a Zen Buddhist nun and a contemporary of Basho. They knew one another. How did she as a Zen Buddhist view eternity, a sky without end? Did she really ask the skylark a question or was this a literary invent? What did she want to know beyond what she already knew? There is much people can learn when they step out of themselves, leaving preconceptions behind. To get an answer, Chiyo-ni becomes the skylark.

bird's song
left to the world
now it's just the sound of the pine

What was once a bird's song (beautiful by inference) has dissipated, the sound unable to stop, thrusting forward into infinity. It no longer can be heard by the poet except in his memory bank, and the senses they affect. The only sound the poet can hear at the moment is the sound of a pine tree caused by wind, moisture, sunlight, and other sounds. The song Chiyo-ni and others heard at first was now relegated to memory and the possibilities the memory of it can paint. Nothing is static in nature. Zoka is a sleepless artist, always creating. Chiyo-ni's use of "just" in line three creates a mood of aloneness, and pining for what was. A single well-placed word can be a masterful brushstroke, setting the tone for a hokku.

Telling all in a hokku is writing a sentence, complete or incomplete. It's via the infusion of kotodama, yugen, kokoro, makoto, and other Japanese aesthetic styles that transform a poem with a limitation of syllables into serious literature capable of entwining the visible and invisible, the said and unsaid, the felt and unfelt, into a vehicle that transcends the obvious, saying with a few words what many poets in the West say with many words.

wrapped around
this world's flower ---
hazy moon

What is the world's flower? In Japan, flowers are often used to convey what can't be spoken (kotodama). Is the term, as used in this hokku, metaphorical? What is the world's flower? Is it the Planet Earth? Chiyo-ni doesn't tell us. There is yugen and ambiguity in her poem, a poem that stimulates emotive response and emotional involvement.

when dropped

it is only water ---
rouge flower dew

Female hokku poets were rare during Basho's day, the role of a woman in Japanese culture subjugated to a secondary role, beneath men. Interestingly, it was a belief held by R. H. Blyth: "haiku poetesses are only fifth class. . ."

A History of Haiku, Volume One

This poem is embellished with a feminine touch and, therefore, a feminine view of life in pre-modern Japan. When rouge flower dew is dropped, it is no longer a human-made product comprised of water, coloring, and scent. From whence it came, it returned. What was once water, was transformed into a human beauty product, and eventually returned to its original form, the water from whence it came. Everything in some way or another comes from nature. It is what the finite human mind does to things that create artificiality. Eventually, however, a patient, persistent nature will digest what is, turning it back into what was and will be. This is a subtle poem, reminding us that we are impermanent as well as everything we create. How this is interpreted by each individual reader is a subjective journey dependent upon cultural memory, language, experience, education, genetic imprint, and biospheric assimilation.

Chiyo-ni's hokku

Tr. by Patricia Donovan and Yoshie Ishibashi,
excerpted from Chiyo-ni Woman Haiku Master

In conclusion:

None of the great hokku masters prior to the Meiji Reformation wrote great poems every time they sat down to compose a poem. They were trailblazers, exploring the world around them, under them, above them, and inside themselves. They shared in common a respect for hokku, the path that took them there, a strong work ethic, and an awe for zoka. Nature to them was not a series of formed objects (mono). It was the personification of zoka, nature's creative force. All in life is in motion, nothing is static, everything changing, impermanent, in a continuum of impersonal expression. Pioneers, yes, but more importantly, they were artists who paid their dues, took the craft seriously, and saw hokku as literature. They didn't write quickie, hackneyed poems. They had their own original voices, yet weren't arrogant, thinking they'd arrived, seeking to change something they hadn't fully explored. Hokku wasn't a genre to reform, it was a pathway to live, breathe, and walk down, their cultural memories and heartbeats in tune with zoka. The proof is in their poetry. Compare their hokku, even their worst, with the Western invent, haiku.

Wrote John O'Connor in his essay, *Back to the Future*, for the New Zealand Poetry Society:

"Haiku basics are no longer well understood. Yet without them it is impossible to write good haiku."

Basho, Buson, Issa, and Chiyo-ni were teachers and poets who made a difference. They elevated the medium to new heights that endure today. There is no living modern haiku master. Why? Most people cannot quote a single haiku penned by another poet with the exception of a gimmicky verse or the infamous joke-ku, tundra. Why? And why isn't haiku taken seriously by the Western public school system? Why is what is taught in school different from what is taught by haiku associations, blog teachers, and in how-to handbooks? Why isn't haiku taken seriously as literature by the literary mainstream outside of haiku circles?

Why can't haiku be defined? Why has it become an anything-goes non-genre that sticks its tongue out at convention? Decades from now, will this versification withstand the test of time and be studied, parsed, and expanded upon in the German-based university system that bred it? Will it stubbornly hold onto its Japanese moniker, haiku, even though it is a colonized Western invent?

Is it possible to compose hokku that's relevant, indigenous, and in sync with nature's creative force? Is nature itself relevant? Have we, as human beings, outgrown the need to identify with something far more dynamic and complex than the biosphere we've sculpted with our finite minds and limited understanding regarding the continuum of becomingness that is nature? Is the symbiotic identification and conjugal connection with zoka more than kigo or seasonal words? What is the role of nature in hokku?

What does the word, nature, mean beyond objects? Can a person living in Los Angeles, California, or Tokyo, Japan, where buildings and pavements cover almost every square inch and the skies are thick with smoke belched out of motor vehicles and factories, write poetry that somehow connects with the tidal flow of nature?

Is hokku a pathway into the now and then, a river without end, sajiki's only a map; seasonal words, tour guides showing us something beyond the aha, beyond the comfortable mirror we stare into when we are unable to comprehend what Basho, Doho, Buson, Chiyo-ni, and Issa understood, perched somewhere above the floating world untouched by the German-based university mindset that has a hard time dealing with the metaphysical OM and IS and ISN'T . . . Nature is everywhere, continually sculpting the planet, never static; human beings in their own microcosms thinking they're above it all, and know it all, and have no need for the unseen, unsaid, and whatever else they can't explain, the yellow brick road closed for repairs . . . and me, unable to shut up, unable to stop composing hokku and waka, thinking haiku took a wrong turn with Shiki who meant well, but

. . . it's early in the morning. I desire to detach my mind from preconceptions, to enter into the bamboo, sense its delicate life and feelings, sip with it sunlight, the Cheshire Cat smiling, Basho and Doho folding clouds into paper cranes that spew words . . . my mind dancing with the Great Clod on a butterfly's wing with Chuang Tzu.

Those composing and promoting haiku today are admonished to pay attention to the following words delivered by Japanese scholar Nishi Amane in 1877 before Japanese Emperor Meiji and his court during a series of lectures, later published as *The Theory of Aesthetics*:

"If one composes poems and songs without following rules at all, merely expressing whatever comes to mind, surely what results is not a form of poetry. If a road is very dangerous, winding to the right, returning to the left, climbing a precipice, then it must not be called a road. This necessity of sameness in difference: proportion and balance cannot be lacking."

Tr. by Professor Michael F. Marra
Modern Japanese Aesthetics

Jasmine tea, anyone?

What Is and Isn't: A Butterfly Wearing Tennis Shoes

By Robert D. Wilson

This paper is the summation and postscript of a five-essay series on Japanese haiku aesthetics featured in successive issues of *Simply Haiku*. As a summation, there will be some repetition, which is necessary, in order to bring to nest, full circle, the points made. I recommend reading the previous five essays in order to get the gist of what has been said. This is a pivotal series of essays that challenge haiku thought and perception in the literary world, both in and outside of Japan. It is this author's contention that a reformation of the genre is needed in order to save it from extinction. Standing like a shadow behind me as I penned these essays are Buson's words, as relevant today as they were when he wrote them:

"Leaders of the haikai [hokku] circles today each advocate their own poetic styles and speak ill of all the other styles. Extending their elbows and puffing up their cheeks, they declare themselves to be master poets. Some try to appeal to the wealthy, others to the eccentrics, but most of the verses selected in their anthologies are unrefined works, the kind of verses that would make knowledgeable experts cover their eyes at first glance and throw them away."

Yosa Buson

Tr. by Makoto Ueda

The Path of the Flowering Thorn

In the twilight of dawn

A whitefish, with an inch

Of whiteness

Matsuo Basho

Tr. by Makoto Ueda

The hokku Matsuo Basho conceptualized and pioneered during his lifetime is almost non-existent in present day Japan. It is also non-existent in the English-language haiku literary world. In its place is a bastardized haiku-like versification that degenerated from the hokku Masaoka Shiki temporarily reformed and renamed haiku.

During the Meiji Era in Japan, Masaoka Shiki, disgusted with the denigration of hokku by State-sanctioned hokku schools and the veneration of Basho as a Shinto god, sought to reform the genre, believing it would become extinct if its denigration continued. Basho was worshipped, his persona more important than the poetry he had popularized and helped to shape as a literary genre. Once taken seriously as a discipline and art form, the hokku composed during Shiki's day had become a joke, reduced to doggerel not much different than the short poems attached to today's greeting cards.

*I will shut my ears
And, thinking only of blossoms,
Enjoy my nap*

Torigoe Tosai (1803-1890)

Tr. by Donald Keene

*The nightingales ---
When I was young it was love
That kept me awake*

Hozumi Eiki

Tr. by Donald Keene

What disgusted Buson during his lifetime, likewise disgusted Shiki during his lifetime.

The hokku written during Shiki's lifetime time was superficial and hollow. Hokku was no longer thought of as a literary art form. Instead, the composition of hokku had become a popular form of social interaction and amusement. So-called hokku masters sold the use of their names and assessed others' hokku for a fee; and all hokku schools claimed to be aligned with Basho, who'd been officially canonized as a Shinto god by the Imperial Court. Enmeshed into the Confucian-infused government's political need for control of the populace, hokku became a tool to educate and facilitate what the populace believed and didn't believe; a benevolent, covert brainwashing. The influence of the West, after Admiral Byrd, who forced Japan to open its doors to the outside world, having been, beforehand, a closed-off society, was growing, in the Imperial Court's eyes like a malignant tumor.

Wrote Donald Keene in his book, *Dawn to the West*:

"The haiku poets of the day . . . were not aware that their art had become stagnant and even meaningless. They rejoiced in the undiminished number of pupils and in the respect that they still commanded . . . "

"Their good opinion of themselves was confirmed in 1873 when the Ministry of Religious Instruction appointed four haiku masters as special instructors, charged with identifying haiku poetry with the policies of the Meiji government."

Wrote Shiki:

"Basho's haiku have acquired a power virtually identical to that of a religion. His many believers do not necessarily follow him because of his character or conduct, nor do they respond to him because they have read his poems; it is his name alone that rouses in them awe and yearning."

Basho Zodan

Tr. by Janine Beichman

Masaoka Shiki: His Life and Works

Shiki's words parallel in many way the passage I quoted earlier by Buson.

Wrote Janine Beichman in her book, *Masaoka Shiki*:

"Shiki's attacks on the old-style haiku masters and on some of Basho's poems . . . derived from the same effort to force people to see and judge the haiku in purely literary terms. The idea that haiku must be viewed as part of literature was not only one of the central ideas of Shiki's haiku reform, but was its necessary and basic premise."

Shiki rightfully believed that hokku, to be effective and considered as a legitimate literary art form, must succumb to academic scrutiny, be thought of seriously, and removed from the hands of a manipulative government. Shiki wisely accessed also the need to un-deify Basho as a Shinto god, since hokku, deemed the handiwork of god, could not be fairly assessed; to denigrate or parse them, would be equivalent to sacrilege. Basho's hokku was considered to be an oracle of god, void of error, and hokku written by the so-called hokku masters during the Meiji Era who claimed to be spiritual descendents of Basho, was thought of in a similar light, especially in view of the high positions in the Imperial Court held by four of the Era's most well-known hokku masters.

About Basho, Shiki wrote in *The Haiku Poet Buson*, a book he wrote extolling the poetry of Yosa Buson:

"He simply took himself as his basic poetic material and went no further than expressing the truth of objects related to him. In modern terms, such poverty of observation is really laughable."

Tr. by Janine Beichman

Shiki had little time to waste in this world, the victim of acute tuberculosis. To get his point across, and to effect the change he wanted to make in the hokku world, necessitated drastic measures and an influential audience. He accomplished this via a column he wrote for a newspaper with his attacks on Basho and the hokku status quo.

He was successful in generating an audience and in igniting a fire that soon swept through the halls of academia and into the pens of many influential hokku poets, some of whom became his disciples.

Shiki, during his reformation of hokku, renamed the genre, haiku, and, as previously mentioned, downplayed Basho, criticizing his poetry, in order to get the Japanese people, especially the literary elite, to see past their idolatrous worship of Basho, and examine the genre scholastically; to define, refine, parse, and dissect it as the mainstream academic world did with any legitimate literary poetic genre. By doing so, he hoped to rescue hokku, to continue what Buson, Basho, and Issa had pioneered, to cast a lifeline into a muddy, stagnant pond, and to re-breathe life into the all but dead genre.

Wrote my close friend, Sanford Goldstein, and Seishi Shinoda in their book, *Songs from a Bamboo Village*:

"Shiki attacked professional haiku teachers who wanted to commercialize their idolatrous veneration of Basho and how this crass commercialism produced plagiarism and second rate poetry that was destroying the credibility of haiku."

Doing so got him an instant audience, as it was illegal to say anything bad about Basho, which was what Shiki wanted. One must remember that his days were numbered, and he had no time to waste."

Continues Goldstein and Shinoda,

"... Shiki's primary aim was to show where Basho's real genius lay. Shiki used the tactic of shocking his readers by pointing out Basho's bad poems. Most of the master's haiku, wrote Shiki, were worthless, the good haiku, only a small percentage of the total number."

About Basho, Shiki wrote in *The Haiku Poet Buson*:

"Matsuo Basho alone possessed a sense of grandeur; wielding a sublime brush, he expressed a majestic vision of heaven and earth, and depicted the beauties of nature, to astound an age."

Basho, however, was a human being, not a god. His poetry weren't godly oracles. Not every hokku he composed was flawless. Basho's poetry too, had to be held up to academic scrutiny. To bring this point home, Shiki boldly critiqued Basho's work, calling much of it average. He also exposed people to Yosa Buson, a relatively unknown hokku poet who'd openly acknowledged his debt to Basho, but forged his own unique style of hokku. Shiki, in un-deifying Basho, wisely ascertained the need to get poets and scholars to see beyond the insular world of Basho, to de-clone, so-to-speak, hokku as a Basho-only centric medium. Buson's hokku was an effective tool.

*coolness --- suzushisa ya
parting from the temple bell kane wo hanaruru
the sound of the bell kane no koe*

*so far from the moon --- tsuki ni toku
the color and fragrance oboyuru fuji no
of wisteria iroka kana*

*winter trees --- fuyukodachi
the moonbeams tonight tsuki kotsuzui ni
penetrate the bones iru yo kana*

*spring night --- haru no yo ya
a young lady-in-waiting kitsune no sasou
courted by a fox uewarawa*

Tr. by Makoto Ueda
The Path of the Flowering Thorn

Read: Re-inventing the Wheel

<http://haikureality.webs.com/esejeng89.htm>

Thanks to Shiki, hokku, now called haiku, in a short time, was once again taken seriously in Japan. His reformation was a monumental work, to which a great debt is owed. He'd single-handedly taken on Japan's literary establishment, the State-run Shinto Sect, and the Imperial Court, dethroned Basho as a god, and did

so while dying from tuberculosis. It was his hope thereafter for the poetic genre he'd renamed haiku to be taken seriously by the international mainstream literary world.

Shiki's conceptualization of haiku, unfortunately, was flawed. A student of the German-based university mindset that eventually superceded Japanese thought in Japan's university system, Shiki's haiku was conceived with Western values, definitions, mimetic and non-mimetic, an educational arena Matsuo Basho, were he alive, would not have understood or been able to influence. Haiku, in essence, depreciated into a self-colonized Western genre. Without the mindset indigenous to hokku's origination, haiku soon slipped into the same morass as its predecessor, the newly reformatted genre not equipped to accommodate a poetic voice dependent upon an economy of words that included the seen and unseen, the heard and the unheard, utilizing styles (aesthetic tools) hitherto unused in Western literature.

Refer to The Colonization of Japan Haiku

<http://simplyhaiku.theartofhaiku.com/summer-2012/features/japanese-haiku-aesthetics-v.html>

The fire Shiki lit, in time, spread throughout the Western hemisphere, setting into motion what is currently referred to as the Modern Haiku Movement; a tidal flow of thought shared by Japan and other countries via the German-based university system, most of the world has adopted.

*They didn't hire him
so he ate his lunch alone:
the noon whistle*

Gary Snyder
"Hitch Haiku" in The Back Country (1967)

*with a long nose
a painting of Jesus ---
the cold wall*

Akito Arima
Tr. by Emiko Miyashita
(*Simply Haiku*, March-April, 2004, Vol. 2, No. 2)

Much of what is passed off today as haiku is doggerel, what Kai Hasakawa, a noted Japanese scholar and critic, calls "junk haiku", lacking depth, memorability, and the connection with zoka, nature's creative force that Basho deemed essential to the composition of hokku. In essence, haiku has sunk to the same low level of literary competence popular during the Meiji Era.

". . . because of the extremes of modern realism, kokoro is neglected, and only 'things' have come to be written about in haiku. These are what I referred to as 'junk' (garakuta) haiku. Sooner or later, this tendency will have to be corrected. For one thing, it is a serious departure from the main principle of Japanese literary art. And more to the point, 'junk haiku' just aren't interesting."

An Interview with Hasegawa Kai
Robert D. Wilson, Interviewer
Tanaka Kimiyo and Patricia Lyons, Translators
Simply Haiku, Autumn 2008, vol 6, no 3

What is missing from today's haiku? Was Basho off-base and overly biased by Daoist thought when he wrote:

"Those who pursue art follow zoka and have the four seasons as their companions. Nothing they see is not a flower and nothing they imagine is not the moon. If one sees no flower, he is the same as a barbarian; if one has no moon in mind, he is no different from the birds and beasts. Go beyond the barbarians and depart from animals; follow zoka and return to zoka."

Matsuo Basho
Tr. by Peipei Qui
From *Kohan Basho zenshu*

The great bulk of haiku composed today is quasi-observational and illustrative-centric, lacking integral connectivity with Basho's zoka, nature's creative force, a doctrinal tenet of Daosim; the four seasons treated as passersby instead of companions. Many well-known haiku poets and teachers negate the need in international circles for kigo altogether, such as Japanese poet/professor, Ban'ya Natsuishi, who favors fanciful imagery, surrealism, and cartoonish wit as evidenced in his *Flying Pope* haiku-like poems:

His underwear
made with withered leaves
Flying Pope

While flying
the Pope read aloud
haiku without season words

Ban'ya Natsuishi
Tr. by Jim Kacian
The Flying Pope
2008

Most haiku journals and publications today feature haiku intermixing them with senryu, a major flaw, without differentiation or academic basis. With the downplay and omission of kigo, the difference between the two distinct genres move into a gray area that no one has been able to accurately define in any detail with the exception of Makoto Ueda, who authored *Light Verse from the Floating World: An Anthology of Postmodern Japanese Senryu*.

What is haiku? What is hokku? Are they one and the same? There is much confusion as to what is and isn't a haiku in the world today. Dictionaries and the Western school system's conception of the genre differ markedly from the various Heinz variety definitions espoused by haiku associations, publications, online journals, and blogs.

Writes Natsuishi:

"There are muki haiku, non-seasonal poem, whose keywords are not connected to seasonal aspects. It is a new style of expression in contemporary haiku. Freed from seasonal limitations, contemporary muki haiku, have been enriched and expanded with keywords that indicate all living things (animals, plants, and any natural phenomenon), human beings themselves and the culture created by human beings (the body, human relations, family culture)."

Ban'ya Natsuishi

Technique used in Modern Haiku: Vocabulary and Structure

<http://worldhaiku.net/archive/natsuishi1.html>

Haiku defined by the Haiku Society of America:

"A haiku is a short poem that uses imagistic language to convey the essence of an experience of nature or the season intuitively linked to the human condition."

Hokku: *A hokku is the first stanza of a linked-verse poem.*

http://www.hsa-haiku.org/archives/HSA_Definitions_2004.html

Haiku defined by Merriam Webster Dictionary:

An unrhymed verse form of Japanese origin having three lines containing usually five, seven, and five syllables respectively; also: a poem in this form usually having a seasonal reference.

Writes Ray Rasmussen:

"Haiku is a minimalist form of poetry. The writer has 17 or fewer syllables through which to convey an experience."

<http://raysweb.net/haiku/pages/haiku-definition.html>

Posits Jim Kacian:

"A brief poem in 1 to 4 lines, often concerned with nature or the human experience, and usually juxtaposing a pair of images; at its best, it fosters a resonance which deepens over time."

A Haiku Primer

<http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/ethicalesq/first-thoughts-a-haiku-primer-by-jim-kacian/>

Writes Susumu Takiguchi in the *World Haiku Review*:

"Defining haiku has become misleading. It has ceased to serve the very purpose it is supposed to attain. Any attempt to define haiku is limiting and excluding. What is needed is "inclusion" as haiku is ever expanding and is transcending borders – be it language, traditions, mythology, climates/seasons, culture, ethos, symbols, and poetic sensibilities."

<https://sites.google.com/site/worldhaikureview2/reportbymodrats>

Pontificates Susan Shand in the Gean Tree Press Blog, on January 8, 2013:

"So what is haiku anyway? I imagine that you will get as many varied responses to that question as people you ask. Everyone has an opinion, everyone is in their own place of relationship to this small poetry form and their understanding of it. I'm not sure if I have a clear answer to that question, mostly because I approach haiku on an instinctive level rather than a rule level, I am content-biased rather than form-biased."

In referring to the aforementioned Haiku Society of America's definition of haiku and hokku, this same person wrote caustically: *"Anyone who has a problem with those definitions needs to address the defining authority or come up with a better definition which can be supported by consensus."*

There is no commonly agreed upon definition of haiku propagated on-or-offline by the world's haiku organizations. Either said definitions are generalized to facilitate almost anything contained within a short poem, or they contain a series of sub-genres such as neo-classical, gendai, shintai, vanguard, free form, etc.; a growing list accommodating the blender mentality that has befallen haiku, a genre seemingly without boundaries. Chaos-ku?

Wrote Michael Marra in his book, *Modern Japanese Aesthetics*:

"If one composes songs and poems without following rules at all, merely expressing whatever comes to mind, surely what results is not a form of poetry. If a road is very dangerous, winding to the right, turning to the left, climbing a precipice, then it must not be called a road. This shows the necessity of sameness in difference: proportion and balance cannot be lacking."

Perhaps the solution regarding what a haiku is and isn't can be explained more clearly apart from the Western German-based university mindset.

Wrote Yosa Buson in the preface to *The Collected Haiku of Shundei* (1777):

"There are no gateways to haikai. There is only the haikai gateway itself. . . Call on Kikaku, visit Ransetsu, recite with Sodo, accompany Onitsura [Basho's associates, all dead at this time]. Day after day you should meet these four old poets and get away from the distracting atmosphere of the cities. Wander around the forests and drink and talk in the mountains. It is best if you acquire haiku naturally, thus should you spend every day and some day you will meet the four poets again. Your appreciation of nature will be unchanged. Then you will close your eyes. Suddenly the four poets will have disappeared. No way of knowing where they became supernatural. You stand there alone in ecstasy. At that time, flower fragrance comes with the wind and moon-light hovers over the water. This is the world of haikai."

Tr. by Yuki Sawa and Edith M Shiffert
Haiku Master Buson

Note: The translators substituted haiku for haikai in Buson's preface for the benefit of English-language readers. The word "haiku" did not exist during Buson's lifetime as a designation for haikai [hokku].

There is a danger today when trying to define haiku and hokku via the German-based university mindset that dominates international thought.

Writes Michael Marra in his book, *Modern Japanese Aesthetics*:

"When we consider the impact that Western philosophy has had on Japanese scholars since the late nineteenth century --- and the impact that Japanese scholarship still has to this day [also influenced by the German based university system] on the ways in which Westerners represent Japan to themselves --- attention to the work of Japanese aestheticians clarifies the complex web of paradoxes in which all scholars of Japan, East and West, are inevitably trapped when talking about their subject matter. The realization that moments of cultural specificities are often couched in the language of Western realities is one of the major concerns of present-day aestheticians. Such a realization, however, cannot be achieved unless we analyze the hermeneutics of major Japan aestheticians of the past (and a few of the modern responses to them)."

Here are some examples of current-day haiku, each one followed by a hokku composed by Matsuo Basho, to provide a comparison between Basho's hokku and what's currently heralded as quality haiku.

Note: Doing a comparative analysis of today's popular haiku and Basho's hokku necessitates my giving examples. By doing so, it is not my desire to embarrass or hurt those poets quoted. A poet posting his or her work online or via a contest should, however, expect public scrutiny, negative and positive, as that is the nature of the beast.

2012 Tokutomi Memorial Haiku Contest

First Prize Winner

*frost-covered window
I add a rubber ducky
to the bubble bath*

Roberta Beary

Beary's poem is anything but a memorable poem. It's a word painting. It is winter. The poet is taking a bubble bath with her rubber ducky. Literature to be taken seriously by the mainstream literary world? Hardly. Beary's poem lacks imagination, tells all, and utilizes no aesthetic styles to introduce readers to a surplus of meaning. The frost on the window is used as a contrast with the comfort of a warm bubble bath, the bather oblivious to the harsh weather outdoors, her attention on a rubber ducky. Hokku, as it was conceptualized by Matsuo Basho, is zoka-centric. Zoka is the creative force of nature. In Basho's worldview, life is a continuum, always changing, impermanent, in a constant state of becomingness (koto). These attributes of zoka are referred to by my friend and fellow author, Don Baird, as its DNA. If they are not present in a hokku, according to Basho, one's poem is not a hokku. Taught Basho: "Follow zoka and return to zoka." How is the handiwork of zoka interacting with the poet's last two lines, and what does the poem, as a whole, tell us beyond the obvious?

*I add a rubber ducky
to the bubble bath*

Let's examine a hokku by Basho. Yes, he wrote poetry hundreds of years ago. He was not privy to the resources of learning available to us today. I present his poetry in this essay, sandwiched between award winning haiku penned today, to illustrate a point: Ancient or modern, a haiku to be remembered, must be well crafted, allow room for interpretation, and have the ability to lodge itself into a reader's consciousness. Matsuo Basho utilized styles (tools) in his compositions, learned from decades of study, practice, and experience. The majority of his poems weren't written overnight, and he had no tolerance for mediocrity. He often reworked his poems and only allowed a thousand of them to be published. Basho dedicated his life to crafting poetry, and had paid his dues. The path to greatness is a long, arduous, winding trail with bumps, roadblocks, and obstacles to overcome and understand. We can learn from Basho's hokku as Shiki did, who considered Basho and Buson to be the planet's two finest hokku poets.

Study and pick apart Basho's hokku academically. What do they say to you? What aesthetic styles did he use to write each poem? Why are they memorable in the 21st century? View them as literature. Judge them as literature.

*departing spring ---
birds weep, and fishes' eyes
are tearful*

Tr. by Makoto Ueda

It is the end of spring. Do birds cry? Do fish cry? It's a sight not uncommon in Chinese poetry. For example:

"Resentful of parting, I brood over the cries of birds."

Tu Fu, Tang Dynasty poetry, Spring View

Did Basho lament the end of spring? Does he identify with the birds readying themselves for migration? Are the fish representative of those he is about to say farewell too? Is this hokku, therefore, a farewell poem to his disciples?

None of Basho's hokku were frivolous. He carefully, intuitively utilized aesthetic styles in his compositions, using the said and unsaid as allies, the genius of the genre being its ability to say much with little via an economy of words. Anyone can write a short one- to three-lined haiku-like poem. A poet can dazzle his or her readers with cuteness, innovative word placement, touch their heart with common experience, and make them laugh or cry. It takes work, skill, and forethought, however, to craft a hokku that elicits a surplus of meaning that's activity- (koto/objective) biased and zoka-centric.

2012 Basho Festival Haiku Competition
First Place Winner

Former fisherman
sweating to clean the beach
still debris-piled

元漁師汗して浜の瓦礫掻く

Kyoko Shimizu
Aichi, Japan

A man who used to fish is sweating as he removes debris from the beach he used to fish from. There is no yugen (depth and mystery). The poem "tells all" and is a shasei (life sketch) haiku.

Fisherman: object
Beach: object
Debris: objects

In essence, it is an incomplete sentence that forms a word painting. Memorable? No. Great literature? No. Is there room for interpretation beyond the obvious without stretching the imagination to make it seem so? No.

What relationship does this poem have with nature's creative force? Does it follow and return to zoka? What makes this assemblage of words (objects) a poem?

*ice is bitter
in the mouth of the rat
quenching its thirst*

Tr. by David Barnhill

Basho is traveling by foot on an arduous journey, without creature comforts. He is dirty, exhausted, hungry, thirsty, and lonely. He stops at a hut in Japan's Fukagawa region to drink some water. The water there is not potable, and is disease ridden. Residents purchase imported drinking water from vendors. Basho may have been without the funds to purchase a container of drinking water and is forced to sip the bitter, dirty water no one in the region, except for the very poor, drink. Does the wandering poet feel like an animal, drinking out of desperation? This poem is filled with sabi (lonely beauty), sensitivity, and poignant sadness.

Is this hokku a reference to the following verse in the Daoist *Zhuangzi* that admonishes one to live within their own means and to find happiness within that experiential sphere?

"A sewer rat drinks from a large river, yet the amount of water he takes is just enough to quench his thirst."

Tr. by Makoto Ueda

Is Basho, by writing this hokku, ruminating on his current situation in life, reminding himself to be thankful for the breath he breathes, knowing that life can take a downward spiral, emotionally and physically, if he harbors and dwells on

dissatisfaction? What was he thinking when he composed this poem?

14th HIA Haiku Contest

First Place Winner

*Two blackbirds
fighting for a breadcrumb ---
sparrow is faster*

Tugomir Orak (Croatia)

In this haiku-like poem, two blackbirds are competing for a breadcrumb. The faster bird gets the breadcrumb, personifying Charles Darwin theory regarding the survival of the fittest. The poem's focus is the breadcrumb (object). There is no mystery; all is said, leaving no need for a reader's participation as an interpreter. Birds fighting over a breadcrumb are an everyday occurrence. We learn nothing in this poem about the artistic handiwork of zoka, nor does it help us to ascertain the continuum, the ever-changing tidal flow of nature and time, ever impermanent, that affects our beings. The poet has made a simple shasei observation, sharing something seen. It is a word painting, and not a good one at that.

Too many poems winning haiku competitions today and being heralded in journals as exemplary are anything but. They are blasé, forgettable, and not taken seriously as world-class literature by the mainstream literary world.

There is much we can learn from Basho, warts and all, if we subscribe to his belief that the infusion of zoka in hokku is indeed essential. Shiki longed to see hokku become a respected literary genre. He dedicated a large percentage of his short life to that quest. The literary academic establishment does not respect what is called haiku today, save for a few. The Western colonization of haiku, which Shiki was a part of, temporarily succeeded in rescuing hokku from oblivion, but due to the flaws in its re-conceptualization via the German-based university mindset, and the flawed teaching of writers like Blyth, Yasuda, and Henderson, the genre once again faces oblivion.

Change was needed during Buson's time; change was needed during Shiki's time; and it is needed today.

This time around, Basho worship isn't the problem. The problem lies in the path hokku's reformation took. The cure is a re-examination of the genre as it was originally conceptualized and finding ways to make its expression relevant in the modern world. Let us once again turn to Basho, not to emulate him as clones, but to study the form, aesthetic styles, and methodology he used to compose world-class literature.

*summer grass ---
all that remains
of warriors' dreams*

Tr. by David Barnhill

Basho is looking out at a field of dry summer grass, a lifeless field that's brown, desolate, the remains of something that was once beautiful, alive, and breathing as only life can during the spring months. This same field is an ancient battlefield where Japanese warriors once fought. The young warriors who died on this battlefield were once vibrant living human beings, much like the field's grass when it was green before summer's advent. Spring, like youth, is a time for hope, beauty, and dreams. Seeing the dry, scorched grass, Basho was reminded of its counterpart, the ashes and bones of dead soldiers, buried beneath the dry grass. Impermanence is a reoccurring theme in Basho's hokku. In Basho's Daoist-inspired worldview, nothing in life is permanent; all is transient, changing, like an oil painting that doesn't dry. We die. Other life forms in nature die. It's not because we and other life forms in nature cease to exist . . . we/they change shape, form, visible and invisible, everything a part of a continuum wielded by zoka's brush.

Irregardless of whether or not you subscribe to Daoist thought as conceptualized by Basho, his poem is a powerful, poignant hokku with room for multiple meanings . . . one laden with *sabi*, *kokoro*, *yugen*, *makoto*, *ma*, etc. It can even be interpreted as a statement regarding the futility of war.

Writes Haruo Shirane about this hokku in an interview with him by Udo Wenzel:

" . . . It represents two landscapes at the same time: the present landscape, of the summer grasses before the eyes of the traveler, and the past landscape, of the battlefield where many warriors lost their lives in a futile struggle."

Note: Read the reprint of this interview in this issue.

Basho's poetry had something to say that oftentimes lingers in a reader's mind after reading them. This is the mark of great literature and why Matsuo Basho's poetry is remembered and studied hundreds of years after his death. Can this be said about our own haiku? Is there a surplus of meaning in our short poems? Do our poems develop a life of their own in the minds of our readers?

Blogging Along Tobacco Road

Featuring Poet: Colin Stewart Jones

*crescent moon –
tonight the man
is beheaded*

This short poem is a senryu masquerading as a haiku; what some might label, Halloween-ku. Jones's poem is excerpted from a haibun that was published in *Haibun Today* on January 7, 2009. A haiku in a haibun must be able to stand alone for it to be labeled a haiku. This poem cannot stand alone. Alone, it is a macabre word painting. What does the "*crescent moon*" have to do with a man being "*beheaded*"? How does this poem join in a symbiotic waltz with zoka, nature's creative force? What is there to be interpreted by the reader beyond the obvious? If haiku is to be taken seriously by the mainstream academic literary world, the haiku world must find better examples of the genre to extol to the circle they influence. Jones's poem is not memorable, isn't activity-

(koto/objective) biased, utilizes a meter not indigenous to haiku (short/long/long versus short/long/short), nor does it reflect effective use of haiku aesthetic styles (tools).

Studying a poet's body of work is an excellent way to learn about his poetry, styles, and techniques. Let's examine another hokku composed by Matsuo Basho:

*dozing on my horse,
with dream lingering and moon distant:
smoke from a tea fire*

Tr. by David Landis Barnhill

Basho was on horseback, having traveled for what seemed like forever. He'd fallen in and out of a semi-sleep on his horse more than once. Exhaustion had overcome him. The sun hadn't risen yet, the moon, waning like a slowly fading lantern.

Suddenly he was jolted awake . . . the smell of a tea fire. His journey was over. Food and sleep awaited him like old friends.

Basho encapsulated in a seventeen-syllable poem, a moment, a transition, hunger, thirst, exhaustion, a mood, and deep longing . . . making ultimate use of a poetic form dependent upon an economy of words. He didn't dwell on the hardships of travel. The poet pressed on. He contrasted the high in his hokku (waning moon, lingering dreams) with the low (tea fire smoke) to portray the fine line of what is and isn't, when we see with more than our eyes.

Red Dragonfly
February 27, 2011

*still winter
a heavy book about
nutritional supplements*

Johannes S.H. Bjerg

What does "*a heavy book about nutritional supplements*" have to do with winter? This is a surreal haiku-like poem that's obtuse and beyond the cognitive reach of readers. Basho and those he influenced made hokku accessible to the masses via the usage of common language and terms people were familiar with. The use of obscure language and word pictures was disdained. Bjerg is an innovative contemporary graphic artist/painter. He stretches boundaries, forges new ground, as is to be expected in the art field he excels in. He treats haiku like he does his art, viewing it as a canvas without rules. An artist, however, studies the works of great artists in order to better understand the medium and to acquire and fine tune skills. Picasso did, Dali did, Matisse did, and Warhol did. One must learn and master the rudiments, the fundamentals of a genre before pioneering new ground. The haiku world needs to slow down, take a long breath, swallow its pride, and imbibe the rudiments and fundamentals of the hokku Matsuo Basho and other early hokku masters gave the world. Only then will it be able to credibly compose quality haiku that can be considered valid literature. Innovation

is fine. Basho encouraged innovation and individuality; but innovation and individuality without solid learning and properly honed skills, is non-productive, and poisonous to the genre . . . a genre awash today in a sea of confusion and lack of identity.

*ready to become
a skeleton in the fields ---
the winds piercing my heart*

Tr. by Peipei Qui

Basho composed this hokku, influenced by a chapter in the *Zhuangzi*, The Perfect Happiness, that extols the Daoist belief that complete happiness is not limited by barriers of the flesh, circumstance, or station in life. Happiness comes from within. It records a conversation between Zhuangzi and a skeleton.

In the conversation, "*The skull said, 'Among the dead there are no rulers above, no subjects below, and no chores of the four seasons with nothing to do, our springs and mountains are as endless as heaven and earth. A king facing south on his throne could have no more happiness than this.'*"

Basho was ready to face death when he set out on the journey of which he writes about in this hokku. He knew his journey would be arduous. He knew he was getting older, his health ebbing. Life to Basho was transitional. It was not finite. When his body seized to function and shut down, his spirit would move on.

Basho recorded more than an observation of what he'd seen. He wasn't a painter of physical landscapes. He painted psychological landscapes, sharing with readers his life, his innermost feelings, in a way that hinted, suggested, without being subjective, without a fixation on objects. His poetry is layered. We can benefit as poets by layering our poetry with more than the visible.

*Neanderthal man
bombing Afghanistan back
to the Stone Age*

Dimitar Anakiev

WAVING THE RED FLAG, haiku from the left front
dedicated to Joseph Joe Mussomeli

Balkan poet, Dimitar Anakiev, calls the above poem a haiku. It is an incomplete sentence, an anti-war diatribe utilizing a three-line format that resembles a haiku visually. Apart from its visual similarity, Anakiev's poem is the antithesis of hokku composed by Matsuo Basho, Yosa Buson, and Issa Kobayashi. It is subjective, leaves little to interpret, makes no reference of nature, and has no connection with zoka, which Basho called essential to the genre. Instead of utilizing aesthetic styles (tools) to invoke a surplus of meaning that every reader can interpret differently, Anakiev makes a blunt, biased political statement, ranting: A "Neanderthal man bombing Afghanistan back to the Stone Age." The poem is a senryu, not a haiku, a distinction few in international haiku circles understand.

Still alive,
They are frozen in one lump:
Sea slugs

Matsuo Basho
Tr. by Makoto Ueda

Basho's hokku above is in symbiotic sync with the tidal flow of nature. It is a poem that can be read multiple times, eliciting multiple interpretations. It is not a nature poem, describing something observed in nature, and nothing more. If the slugs are frozen, how does Basho know they are still alive, in a cryogenic limbo? Did he identify with the sea slugs, he too exposed to the harsh elements of winter without suitable shelter? There is pathos in this short poem, beckoning, through the power of words, a poetic transference between Basho and his subject. What appears to be dead and unmoving is an illusion. The slugs are in a cryogenic state of suspended animation. What is death? What is the cessation of movement and change? What is impermanence? There is much to be grasped and interpreted in this hokku. Basho's poetry withstands the test of time, his hokku venerated and studied worldwide.

Why is this?

*one who loves someone koi seshi hito
with the one who doesn't koi naki hito to
drinks beer biiru kumu*

Tsuji Momoko
Tr. by Makoto Ueda
Far Beyond the Field

An early example of poetry masquerading as haiku, this incomplete sentence is a senryu void of any connection with zoka, unless, of course, as some modern haiku poets are doing today, the poet considers "beer" to be an expression of nature and the four seasons. To call this a haiku is a misnomer. It is a saying, nothing more. My father had a saying: "Put your all into all you do and if you fail, you are still a success."

Using Momoko's poem as a model, have I composed a valid haiku by putting this saying by my father into a three-line schemata?

*put your all into
all you do and if you fail
you are still a success*

What was Basho's conceptualization of hokku? How does it differ from modern haiku? Are hokku and haiku two different literary genres? Can lessons be learned from the old master's hokku and hokku conceptualization that can save haiku, giving back to it what Shiki during his short lifetime had attempted to do? OR, has modern haiku reached a point of no return, an unruly virus that defies definition and direction; an anything goes short form poetic free agent rising into the Wild West of the night?

As previously mentioned, Matsuo Basho wasn't perfect. He was a pioneer who helped to refine and popularize a poetic genre during his lifetime in Japan. As Shiki rightfully pointed out, not every hokku Basho composed was stellar. Some were so-so, a few were mediocre. The majority, however, of the one thousand published hokku he is credited with composing, are timeless, as relevant today as they were when they were written.

To emulate and copy Basho would be ludicrous, antithetical to what he strived for and taught. That kind of thinking brought about the near demise of hokku during the Meiji Era. Instead, I offer Basho's hokku as examples, as a standard of excellence we can strive for when composing hokku. I say hokku, because haiku as a genre has deviated from its ancestral roots to a point of no return. I think it's best to give hokku back its name, to explore how Basho's hokku were composed, including the styles used to write them. The time for a reformation is now, if hokku (haiku) is to survive and regain its rightful place as a poetic genre to be taken seriously by the international literary community; a full circle reformation. .
. from hokku to haiku to hokku.

What can we learn today from Matsuo Basho, and how can this knowledge help us to compose world-class hokku?

*don't resemble me ---
cut in half
a musk melon*

Matsuo Basho
Tr. by Makoto Ueda

This is a much misunderstood hokku penned by Basho. Some quote it when justifying their departure from the characteristics that identify and define hokku poetics. Being a clone is one thing. A serious poet cannot look at him or herself in the mirror and think he or she is a poet if what is seen in the mirror is something other than himself or herself. Basho did not advocate jettisoning the rules and doing one's own thing. That's the antithesis of education. He became a successful poet through study, hard work, and experience. Jettisoning the rules after a year or two of composing haiku is the equivalent of telling an eight-year-old student to throw away his schoolbooks and define the world around him via his own sphere of ascertainment. One needs a foundation to build a house on. Likewise, a poet needs a foundation from which to craft a body of serious poetry. Once the foundation is built, the house is ready to be constructed creatively within an architecturally engineered sphere that assures the building will be safe and last. The instinct Susan Shand claims to be her guide is only as good as the knowledge and experience that shapes it.

Wrote Doho, Basho's devoted disciple:

"It is the sound made by a frog leaping into a pond from wild grasses that we hear the voice of haikai. Haikai exists in what one sees and what one hears. The sincerity of haikai is to put what a poet feels directly into verse."

Doho

Tr. by Peipei Qui

From Doho's book: *Sanzoshi* (The three notebooks, 1709)

The ancient pond

A frog leaps in

The sound of the water

Tr. by Donald Keene

Feeling versus non-feeling . . . Star Trek's Dr. Spock versus India's Mahatma Gandhi . . . a hokku without feeling is a poem that doesn't breathe. It is dead. It lacks the makoto (beauty) that is evident in all aspects of nature, including the finite, the dead, and the living. That is what Basho meant when he said:

" . . . if one sees no flower, he is the same as a barbarian; if one has no moon in mind, he is no different from the birds and beasts. Go beyond the barbarians and depart from animals; follow zoka and return to zoka."

Matsuo Basho

Tr. by Peipei Qui

from *Kohan Basho zenshu*

I'm reminded of two hokku penned by the late exiled Catalan poet, Agusti Bartra, from his deathbed:

The light is teaching

the air that travels

how roses are born.

As if distracted,

on my way, I touch the tree.

Now it answers me.

Agusti Bartra

Last Poems (1977-1982)

Tr. by D. Sam Abrams

Wrote Doho in *Sanzoshi*:

"Accomplished poets tend to have flaws. The Master [Basho] often said: 'Let an innocent child make haikai. The verse from a novice's mind is most promising.'

These words warn us of the habitual flaws of accomplished writers. When getting into the substance of an object, one either cultivates the primal breath (ki) or suppresses it. If one suppresses the momentum of the primal breath, the whole poem will lose vitality. The late Master also said: 'Haikai must be composed on the momentum of the primal breath.'"

One can approach hokku intellectually, composing a poem that's technically well written. Everything that makes a hokku a hokku is there . . . *almost*: the said, the unsaid, contrast, ma, aesthetic styles, nature, impermanence, the proper metric schemata, BUT, if it lacks a soul, the primal breath, ki, it isn't in sync with zoka. Natsuishi's *Flying Pope* poems lack soul. Cor Van den Heuvel's one word "*Tundra*"

haiku is soulless (a single word, an object). Obtuse poems posted by intellectuals using obscure terms and references also lack soul. Halloween-ku, Chaos-ku, Instinct-ku: words, just words, assembled to form a poem.

Don't imitate Basho, follow his example. Let your hokku breathe, give life to the words you compose and share. Give readers a reason to remember and relate to your poetry. Wrote Hagiwara Sakutarō in his book, *Principles of Poetry*: "Poetry kindles the humanness of humanity, and is the burning of human desires." We should, as Sakutarō asserts, not pursue "the completion of beauty but the creation of beauty . . ." To accomplish this using an economy of words requires thought, practice, acquired skill, and much study; a study that necessitates approaching hokku with a Japanese, pre-Meiji Era mindset that is far removed from the German-based university model dominating current world thought.

A child is born into this world with a tabula rasa, a blank slate. His perception of the world has not been formed yet. It must be acquired. Basho advocated approaching the composition of hokku as a young child, free from subjectivity and conceptualization. Buson taught this as well.

"Haikai values a verse that detaches itself from the mundane while using a language that is mundane. Making use of the mundane while being detached from it --- such an art of detachment is very difficult to put into practice. 'Listen to the sound of one hand clapping,' said a certain Zen monk. In those words lies the Zen of haikai as well as the art of detachment from the mundane."

Yosa Buson

Tr. by Makoto Ueda

The Path of the Flowering Thorn

Buson was telling a disciple in this passage to step outside of himself when composing a hokku. How does one step outside of oneself while retaining a sense of humanness and empathy in order to compose an objective hokku?

View something in nature without preconception, with a blank slate, then close your eyes and see it without your eyes. Listen to the sound of one hand clapping, the stillness of an owl's flight.

Wrote Dohō:

"The Master has said: 'Learn about pines from pines and learn about bamboo from bamboo.' By these words he is teaching us to eradicate subjectivity. One will end up learning nothing with one's subjective self even if one wants to learn. To learn means to enter the object, to find its subtle details and empathize with it, and let what is experienced become poetry. For instance, if one has portrayed the outer form of an object but failed to express the feelings that flow naturally out of it, the object and the author's self become two, so the poem cannot achieve sincerity. It is merely a product of subjectivity."

This advice alone, if infused into hokku, can make a huge difference in the quality of our poetic output. Subjectivity, in Basho's mind-view, had no place in hokku. This is a difficult concept for the Western mind to grasp. Westerners have a

propensity for defining everything. It is hard for the Western-trained mind to grasp koans, metaphysics, and the aesthetic concepts of the unseen, yugen, and ma. Western conceptualization of such terms and the conceptualization of Japanese poets prior to the 19th century are vastly different. In order for a poet to grasp what Basho was talking about, one must empty his or her head of preconception when viewing something in nature in order to grasp its essence when composing a poem about it. How to do this? You are a human being, not a wizard or shaman. You cannot physically transform yourself into a tree or a bamboo stalk . . . Western versus Eastern thought . . . Close your eyes without thinking. Gaze at the pine tree. Feel the pine tree. Smell it, hear it, follow the path of the empty mind. It is there that you will find your haiku.

In his book, *Sanzoshi*, Doho again quotes from his master, Matsuo Basho:

"The Master's teaching is all about awakening to the lofty and returning to the common, that is, to constantly pursue the sincerity of poetry and return to the haikai we compose every day. Those who always adhere to [the sincerity of] poetry have the original color of their mind naturally manifest in the form of poetry. Therefore, their composition is natural and never constrained with artifice. When the original color of the mind is not beautiful, one tends to make artificial effort on superficial expressions. It is a reflection of the vulgarity of a mind that does not make constant effort to seek the sincerity of poetry."

Haiku cannot be forced, intellectualized, or pretended. A haiku is not a poetical assemblage of words that says whatever fits the fancy of its author. It is a vehicle, a bearer of something far removed from Western thought. What does a baby think when it sees a kitten for the first time, its mind unconditioned by forethought, learning, and the experiential (negative and positive)?

A haiku is much more than the definition espoused by the Haiku Society of America and its defender, Susan Shand:

"A haiku is a short poem that uses imagistic language to convey the essence of an experience of nature or the season intuitively linked to the human condition."

Haiku to Basho, Chiyo-ni, Doho, Buson, Issa, Kikaku, Ransetsu, Sodo, and Onitsura was a path: The Way of Poetry; a way that necessitates jumping with Alice into a wonderland without walls or definition, a world where intuition melts into a cup of tea the Mad Hatter is sharing with the Cheshire Cat on a tree limb made of dreams recorded in a caption that hasn't been filled yet. What is, isn't . . . it's time to re-examine the genre from a different perspective. Was Basho wrong? Were Buson, Issa, and Chiyo-ni products of a by-gone era whose poetical views no longer equate with the now we've pioneered with Neon Buddhas, one word anomalies, Flying Popes, and a Blythian propensity to over-intellectualize a genre with recipes on the backs of boxes of Uncle Ben's Instant Rice?

Wrote Basho:

"Haikai has three elements. Sekibaku is its mood. While having fine dishes and beautiful women, one finds true joy in humble solitude. Fuyu is its quality. While

dressed in brocaded silks and satins, one does not forget those who are wrapped in woven straw. Fukyo it its language. One's language should stem from emptiness and represent the substance of things. It is very difficult to stay with the substance of things while joining in emptiness. These three elements don't imply that a person who is 'low' aspires to be high, but rather that a person who has attained the high perceives through the low."

Wrote Haruo Shirane eloquently in his book, *Traces of Dreams*:

"The essential movement of haikai was the unceasing search for new poetic associations, new languages, new perspectives, and new styles, but it was a newness that existed in relationship to established associations and worlds, which were reconstructed and transmitted by Basho and other haikai masters and which were embodied most concretely in the landscape, the ultimate bearer of cultural memory and the primary ground for haikai re-visioning."

Without a roadmap, without established associations, aesthetic styles, and a worldview shaped historically by Daoist thought, animism, and Zen Buddhist exploration, hokku, currently called haiku, is nothing more than a hodge podge radical free agent poetic virus growing in a thousand directions at once, unable to be defined, defying rules, a "little dab a do ya" versification with a dash of this, a dash of that: Imagism, haiku, senryu, prose, incomplete sentences, political rants, whatever fits the fancy of the poet, almost all of it endorsed by the world's most vocal haiku organizations.

Without direction, without a birthright, without a solid academic, yet heartfelt, foundation, haiku will soon die. Perhaps it already has, its residuals, the doggerel passed off today as the descendents of Basho's hokku.

Let us return to the hokku Matsuo Basho and other visionary poet warriors envisioned; not to copy Basho and his predecessors, or to hold them up as impeccable gods, but to see hokku without Western eyes, to see it as it was made to be viewed, breathed, and spoken.

Be gone preconception, subjectivity, arrogance, and the fixation that progress entails recklessly diving into the darkness without regard to what was!