

# Roadrunner Haiku Journal

May 2007 Issue VII:2

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

**Jason Sanford Brown, Scott Metz and Richard Gilbert, Editors**

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## Gendai Haiku Translations

Translated by Richard Gilbert and Itô Yûki

In the early 20th century, Takahama Kyoshi, one of the two main disciples of Masaoka Shiki, presided over the Hototogisu group (and its journal), which he had inherited from Shiki. Due to his dictatorial and uncompromising style, by the 1920s, several prominent poets had broken with him. Paraphrasing Itô Yûki's article,<sup>(1)</sup> the 'New Rising Haiku movement' (*shinkô haiku undô*) wished to compose haiku on new subjects, and utilize techniques and topics related to contemporary social life. These poets frequently wrote haiku without kigo (*muki-teki* haiku), and explored non-traditional subjects, such as social inequity, utilizing avant-garde styles including surrealism, etc. Therefore, along with aesthetic and technique differences, the New Rising Haiku poets, who began the gendai (modern) haiku movement in earnest, had strong philosophical, sociological and intellectual differences with Hototogisu and Kyoshi. During the war, over 40 New Rising Haiku poets were persecuted; they were imprisoned and tortured, and some died in prison. These progressive poets were also made to sign false confessions and denounce their own and others' poetry and thought. Various progressive journals were banned and printing presses destroyed. Many of these poets, after a stay in prison, were sent to the front lines of the war. Itô writes that Takahama Kyoshi became the president of a haiku branch of the fascist government culture-control/propaganda group known as The Japanese Literary Patriotic Organization (*nihon bungaku hōkoku kai*), which was devoted to both censorship and persecution, along with a host of other war crimes. At the time, the Director of the society was Ono Bushi, whose title was: The Agent of Investigation of the Minds of the Nation's Citizens (*kokumin jyōsō chosa iin*). Perhaps the most notorious statement published by Ono reads:

I will not allow haiku even from the most honorable person, from left-wing, or progressive, or anti-war, groups to exist. If such people are found in the haiku world, we had better persecute them, and they should be punished. This is necessary. (Kosakai, 169; trans. by Itô, with Gilbert)

At least one poet who survived imprisonment reported that he was commanded by the Secret Police to "write haiku in the style of Hototogisu" (Kosakai, 79). According to the fascist-traditionalists, to write haiku without kigo meant anti-tradition, which in turn meant anti-Imperial order and high treason. As such, all New Rising Haiku was to be annihilated. Ito writes, "We are reminded of how the Nazis preserved so-called pure nationalist art, while persecuting the modern styles of so-called 'degenerate art'" (Cf. Shōzō Kosakai, *Mikoku: Showa haiku danatsu jiken* [Betrayal/Informer: Showa era haiku persecution]. Tokyo: Daimondo).

One sees that, historically, "freedom of expression" in the gendai haiku movement was not an idle aesthetic notion. A significant context to modern Japanese haiku history links certain influential persons and groups promoting traditionalist haiku culture with Japanese national-socialism. It would be a mistake to assume, regarding these facts, that traditional approaches are inherently lacking or that traditional haiku culture is by nature nationalist, particularly these days – however, history leaves little

to the imagination; more light needs to be shed on these facts, if only so that people outside of Japan can obtain a clearer understanding of the context of gendai haiku. Clearly, the spirit of the gendai poets in the face of fascism, repression and persecution is laudable. The liberal, democratic spirit and freedom of expression exhibited by the New Rising Haiku poets remains at the core of gendai haiku.

安死術夜戦の谷の蟹にある  
anshi jutsu yasen no tani no kani ni aru

clean kills: in a night war a canyon a crab

平畑静塔  
Hirahata Seito

砲音に鳥獣魚介冷え曇る  
houon ni choujuu gyokai hie kumoru

at the shriek of artillery  
birds beasts fish shellfish  
chilling dim

西東三鬼  
Saito Sanki

戦死者が青き数学より出たり  
senshisha ga aoki suugaku yori detari

war dead  
exit out of a blue mathematics

杉村聖 林子  
Sugimura Seirinshi

枯れし木を離れ枯れし木として撃たれ

tareshi ki o hanare kareshi ki toshite utare

leaving a withered tree  
being shot as a withered tree

杉村聖林子  
Sugimura Seirinshi

戦争が廊下の奥に立つてみた  
sensou ga rouka no oku ni tatte ita

war  
has stood  
in the depth of the corridor

渡辺白泉  
Watanabe Hakusen

機関銃眉間ニ殺ス花ガ咲ク  
kikanjuu miken ni korosu hana ga saku

a machine gun  
in the forehead  
the killing flower blooms

西東 三鬼  
Saito Sanki

塹壕の三尺の深さ掘りて死し  
zangou no san-shaku no fukasa horite  
shishi

a trench dug  
to a depth of three feet --  
death

杉村聖林子  
Sugimura Seirinshi

Lived

Saito Sanki (1900-1962)  
Sumimura Seirinshi (1912-1990)  
Watanabe Hakusen (1913-1969)

Arrested by the Japanese Secret Police

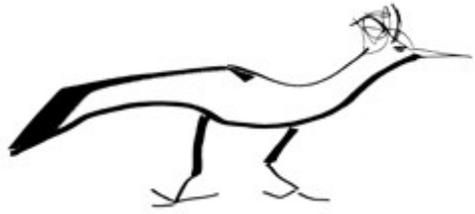
Saito Sanki (August 31 1940)  
Sugimura Seirinshi (May 3 1940)  
Watanabe Hakusen (May 3 1940)

Publication note <sup>(2)</sup>

(1) Itô Yûki, *New Rising Haiku: The Evolution of Modern Japanese Haiku and the Haiku Persecution Incident* (Red Moon Press, forthcoming).

(2) These haiku translations originally appeared in *NOON: journal of the short poem issue 4*. The introductory text on gendai haiku history appeared as part of a *Haiku Heute* online interview of Richard Gilbert by Udo Wenzel, and is available in English at [[tinyurl.com/2rbdob](http://tinyurl.com/2rbdob)].

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## Dietmar Tauchner

winter night  
the secret life  
in a lit house

night wind  
the rhythm  
of the universe

no more words  
the rain  
over the sea

## marlene mountain

hemlock's hidden roots i feel for mine

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

another thought i need washes out

## Ian Daw

almost dark -  
more space  
between the hailstones

inside her the heat fades from our clothes

evening clouds -  
Fenrir comes  
for the sun

**Glenn G. Coats**

an iron man  
the shadow of a flag  
opens and closes

the Spanish guitar  
a forest of ice  
breaking

bird songs  
under the shopping carts  
freezing rain

**Patrick Sweeney**

black puddle  
heart receives  
the red maple leaf

new tea  
even I'm  
forgiven

dried saffron  
what I've taken  
from the world

**Susan Constable**

drought –  
the snake coils  
a rainbow

silent night  
my fingers find  
all the right notes

dying embers  
she changes from lace  
to long johns

**Ann K. Schwader**

stiff breeze —  
a forsythia's  
forsythitude

sundial  
the white hours  
till spring

daylight savings  
she wonders  
what for

**Peggy Willis Lyles**

first snow  
she says God  
is a good man

maybe  
maybe not  
the seedlings thinned

blue butterflies  
a knife without a handle  
on the lichened stone

**Paul Pfleuger, Jr.**

Neon light  
like a carpet  
on Ghost Month waters

The year I'd stay  
becomes seven...  
a grasshopper's landing

Spring for me...  
still asking much  
of Mother

**Kala Ramesh**

running downhill  
I fall through  
the autumn sky

weathered field—  
waiting for the buds to bloom  
not by name

this quiet lake  
allows me to break  
the clouds peak

**Ashley Rodman**

dark eye  
towards Jupiter  
stormy

breeze  
blossom soft  
on the leaf

warm night  
below the quilt  
dark mushrooms

**Philip Miller**

the icicle 's last drip frozen winter wind

insects hum  
in one held chord—  
autumn haze

biting off my words in time distant thunder

**Laryalee Fraser**

another spring  
same old creak  
in the gate

grandchild's laugh  
the accent of violets  
on my tongue

birthday balloon  
my knotted  
breath

**Victor Ortiz**

slot canyon  
our few words  
in deep shadow

desert trail..  
enough distance  
between us

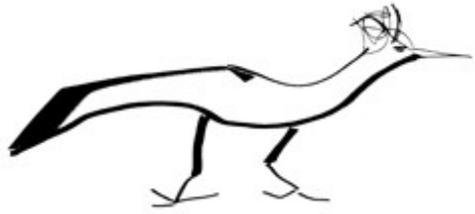
buffeted  
by the desert wind  
we plan our future

**Fay Aoyagi**

wind from the east  
I ride the green horse  
of a warrior deity

widdershins—  
incantation to defrost  
a butterfly

wintry woods  
I follow the trail  
of the Karamazov brothers



# Roadrunner Haiku Journal

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## Southwestern Haijin Spotlight

### Dru Philippou

Dru Philippou was born on the isle of Cyprus, raised in London, and currently lives in northern New Mexico. She completed her MFA in Creative Writing at Naropa University, Boulder, Colorado. She teaches poetry at the University of New Mexico.

One of her recent creative essays, "Haiku Geometry," is featured in the February 2007 issue of *Modern Haiku*. A selection of her poetry has been featured in the journal *Tiger's Eye*, spring 2006. Her haiku and haibun are widely published and anthologized. She received two nominations in 2006 for the Pushcart Prize; one for an haiku and one for an experimental poem.

She says: "The haiku is the dominant part of my writing. It takes me far ahead of what I think I know and symbolizes my capacity for creative vision."

big blue of sky  
the chickadee's  
heightened song

crows lift in the air  
the shift of  
shadowed pines

fistful of asters  
a way of holding onto  
the entire sky

crescent moon  
the child swivels  
on her mother's hip

up among  
the sound of sparrows  
broomcorn stubble

double moon  
a circle of women  
share the sacred vessel

deer bones hollow sound of the wind

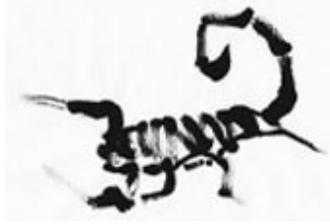
end of summer  
a brown ale bottle  
on the roadside

falling star  
a deeper stillness  
follows

abandoned pasture  
row of crows  
on the sagging fence

Some of these poems originally appeared in *Acorn* and *Modern Haiku*.

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# Roadrunner Haiku Journal

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## The Scorpion Prize for Best Haiku/Senryu of ISSUE VII:1

a fossil  
turned  
to face you

3 mushrooms  
my color

one stone  
reached out  
to you

The poems by john martone are exceptional in their capacity to meet the brief of the senryu, the wonderful doubly whammy of brevity combined with bite. The "fossil" is exposed less than the self-regard of the speaker. That same speaker is impervious to the fact that his positioning of himself with the "3 mushrooms" is emblematic of his own immanence. The Human Resources and Development Office cliché -- "reached out" -- brilliantly reveals the threat in what looks like a treat.

Paul Muldoon

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