

James Kirkup (1918–2009)

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INTRODUCTION

FOR MANY OF those who wished to know about or understand Japan in the 1960s and 1970s, James Kirkup's first-hand prose accounts of living in the country were a helpful guide and introduction. Vivid, opinionated, and always lively, his travel books told the reader much about the daily life of the Japanese, their culture and their customs. Crammed with information, these quirky volumes brimmed with enthusiasm. Reading them, one was apt to forget that Kirkup was primarily a poet, even if one bought and read his poems. The story of his life in Japan is well enough told in those accounts, and other autobiographical writings: what this essay will consider is one aspect of his poetical encounter with Japan, his fifty-year engagement with haiku. It was in this connection that I encountered him myself.

James Kirkup first arrived in Japan at the beginning of January 1959. He had been invited to teach at Tohoku University in Sendai, a post in which his predecessors had also been English poets, like Ralph Hodgson¹ and George Barker.² His first experience of the

country is recorded in detail in *These Horned Islands: A Journal of Japan* (1962), which is not only his first and longest, but also his merriest book about the country. It is in this book that he recorded his early encounters with haiku, a poetic form that would engage him from then on until the end of his life, half a century later. He had only been in the country a fortnight when he said: 'I tried writing some English *haiku*, three-line poems, syllabic in pattern.' He explained further, 'The chief thing to look for in a *haiku* is its spirit of spontaneous reaction to nature, the expression of some quick and often faintly humorous observation about life and the seasons.' There were certain 'key words, the names of certain trees or flowers, and certain subjects which must be used to indicate the season in which the poem was written'. He had read 'English translations of some of Bashō's famous *haiku*, but they were heavy and literary'.³ He did not say who translated them, or precisely where his knowledge came from, but his remarks preceded the notable Penguin versions by Nobuyuki Yuasa (b. 1932) that did not appear until a few years later.⁴ R.H. Blyth (1898–1964), whose writings on haiku and Zen were the subject of an essay in the first volume of this series, and whose work had considerable influence on the American Beat poets of the 1950s, was not mentioned. Nor indeed was the American writer Harold G. Henderson (1889–1974), whose best-selling *An Introduction to Haiku* (1958) had been published the year before. But that had been in the United States, and so Kirkup might not have seen it.

FIRST HAIKU

The first small suite of haiku that Kirkup composed consisted of four verses. 'I wrote my *haiku* keeping to the strict form; I felt I was not qualified to break it: they were about Japanese faces.' The first one read:

Smile whiter than rice,
Beard thinner than first green shoots,
The wild man of spring.

This nicely allusive verse does not quite have the simplicity of haiku as we generally understand it now, and the other verses, one for each season, featuring a 'Sick boy with pale lips' or a 'Bargirl's autumn smile',⁵ remind the reader of some of the less successful verses in early Imagist anthologies, brief and yet still tinged with the language or practice of Romantic poetry. There were no more verses until much later in the book, nearer to the end of the poet's two-year stay. On a winter visit to see some *kamakura*, the 'charming little snow-houses'⁶ traditionally built by the inhabitants of a country village, Kirkup wrote a verse about one of these:

In my house of snow
The candlelight is golden
On the silver walls.⁷

He gave a Japanese translation, which omits the shining gold and silver of his original, but nonetheless he was clearly making friends and taking part in the poetic customs of the country. Later again, he attended a haiku party at the home of a doctor: 'We sat cross-legged for about four hours round a low table on which was a box containing ink-cake, brushes and an ink-stone. The doctor's daughter served us with green tea.' The process of composition was well described, from the fixed subjects to the selection of verses, some of which were rendered into English. As they worked the guests were served 'sweets made of translucent seaweed jelly, wrapped in transparent rice paper'. 'It was most appropriate that poets should be eating paper,' Kirkup cheerfully observed. But by now he had the appealing habit of composing short verses himself, leaving one behind him in a guest book, for example. The spirit of haiku has its origins in greetings and occasional verses: 'At Zuiganji Temple, Matsushima, I wrote this *haiku* for the priests:

The sun tiles the trees
With leaves of summer, and roofs
Are leafed with gold.⁸

The seasonal element is present, though the effect is still a little gilded.

JAPAN BEHIND THE FAN

In his next prose book about the country, *Japan behind the Fan* (1970), the by then much more widely-travelled Kirkup said plainly in the Foreword 'Life in Japan made a new person of me.'⁹ Mostly he described his travels, with only a brief reference to haiku in the second chapter, where he quoted a little-known verse by Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902) about snow, enthusing that 'the very words... seem to give a frozen feeling'.¹⁰ It is rather in the subsequent volume, somewhat ominously entitled *Heaven, Hell and Hara-kiri: The Rise and Fall of the Japanese Superstate* (1974), that Kirkup rhapsodized about the various arts he had discovered in Japan, particularly the theatre in its various forms. The seventh chapter, on 'The Writing of Japanese Literature', contains some discussion of poetry, in which he tried to illuminate the aesthetic concepts that inform it, making comparisons with English poetry. While it lacks an index, this volume does include a bibliography, which gives us some idea of Kirkup's reading. The main haiku title given here is the compendious anthology *Haikai*

and *Haiku* (1958) prepared locally in Japan by the Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, and undoubtedly the source of his early reading. Surprisingly, there was again no mention of the works of R.H. Blyth. But by this time Kirkup had already done a large number of collaborative poetry translations, and an anthology of these was provisionally listed, although it did not in fact appear until a few years later. In *Modern Japanese Poetry* (1978), there was just one haiku sequence, and since it was a sequence, it was presumably considered as a poem.¹¹ At the end of the eleventh chapter of the prose book, ‘Noh Plays and Players’, Kirkup described the strange meetings that occur in these dramas, the echoes and reverberations across time. He said that he found these also in his experience of Japan, in a way that he had never done in any other country. He concluded: ‘I lived here in a former existence.’¹²

POETRY

In the poems that he wrote about Japan, Kirkup vividly evoked his many travels and experiences there. Sometimes rapturously, sometimes erotically, but always with a certain freshness and vitality, he conveyed the sights and scenery and people. In an account of the poet’s work for the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Laurence Steven described *Paper Windows: Poems from Japan* (1968) as ‘a clear success, and one of Kirkup’s best [collections]’.¹³ His joy in the discovery of the country came through above all, and these and other poems were gathered again in *Japan Physical* (1969), this time with translations into Japanese.¹⁴ Facing the title page of that book is a picture of the blond poet wearing a dark kimono and standing at the entrance to a wooden house, probably the one that he lived in during the six years that he taught at the Japan Women’s University in Tokyo. The newer haiku sets and sequences are simpler and more direct than his first attempts:

Harvest moon:
bald head
fringed with willows.

Fresh-planted rice-shoots:
spurts of green rain
in sudden dense showers.¹⁵

These two examples come from ‘Summer Haiku’, although the first is strictly an autumn subject. The freshness of the poet’s way of looking, and his humour, are evident, as well as the fact that the 5–7–5 syllable count has not been adhered to strictly. In ‘Song of the New Mats: Thirteen Haiku’, however, rejoicing in the scent of green *tatami* mats, and again in ‘Ten Haiku: Love Poems from the Japanese’, a graceful narrative of love-making in a cold season, the form is more rigorously

observed. Kirkup's pacifism, one of his more deeply-felt themes, is expressed in 'No More Hiroshimas' and 'White Shadows', two of the strongest poems in the book, while its final long composition, 'Japan Marine', is broken up with short haiku-like verses, and in one section with others in the 31-syllable form of tanka. Clearly he has now fully engaged with the poetic practice of his adopted land.

DISENCHANTMENT

From the beginning of the 1970s, and thenceforward, a slightly more ambivalent and critical note entered into Kirkup's writing on the country. His collection of poems *White Shadows, Black Shadows: Poems of Peace and War* (1970) deals at once with racism and atomic warfare, and contains a number of poems of elegiac disillusion, several addressing suicides of different kinds among the Japanese. It also has a Japanese motif on the title page, three Chinese characters resembling a name that apparently means 'Flourishing tree of dewdrops',¹⁶ that might have been given to the poet by one of his friends, though its provenance remains a mystery.

His next collection, *The Body Servant: Poems of Exile* (1971), while inventively describing different body parts, continued to record some disenchantment with Japan in its third section, 'Economic Animal Farm', a clear reference to Orwell. The Osaka Expo had recently finished, and it was several years since the Tokyo Olympics. In a down-beat poem on the threatened Japanese ibis, or *toki*, Kirkup wrote:

Today, Japan is flourishing.
But we must consider her in decline
when her wild birds are killed
by thoughtless hunters.¹⁷

One cannot but sense a personal disappointment in this, the feeling that Japan itself no longer lived up to his personal expectations. Yet his poetic interest, particularly in haiku, remained constant, and continued to thread its way through his work for the rest of his life. These volumes were among several by Kirkup that I read before coming to Japan myself, and though I got to know him later, I never learnt the significance of the Chinese characters decorating the former of them.

It was in the early 1980s that I first got into correspondence with James Kirkup, who was by then back in Japan after spells in other countries, and teaching at the Kyoto University of Foreign Studies. He wrote a lively column for the *Mainichi Daily News*, and privately published some of his own poetry in booklets under the imprint of Kyoto Editions. I have several of these publications, sometimes reprinting early poems, but one startlingly original little book is called *Dengon-ban Messages* (1980), and subtitled 'online haiku and senryu'. The title refers to the old message-boards that used to be provided at railway

stations in Japan, green boards on which stray messages were chalked up vertically in narrow columns. Kirkup embraced this idea with great enthusiasm, and the unnumbered pages contain hundreds of random impressions, all printed in lower-case script except for the first-person pronoun. That Kirkup retained the upper case for 'I' may say something about his world-view, but the lines are fresh, epigrammatic and often amusing. ('I see the ocean as it is when no one is looking at it.')¹⁸ It concluded with a letter to an editor in Nagoya who was supportive of his efforts, and is to me one of his best publications in this vein. Yet it was a form to which he would seldom return, since he more or less abandoned the one-liner from then on. Around the same time, however, a short novel called *Insect Summer*, intended as an introduction to haiku for children, appeared in bookshops in Tokyo.

CHILDREN'S VERSE

James Kirkup wrote a number of very good poems for children and young people ('Baby's Drinking Song' and 'Tea in a Space-Ship' come to mind), and a wonderful 'Japanese Cradle Song', which begins:

Grass for my pillow,
The night is green,
Stars for my window
And stones for my dream.¹⁹

The three succeeding verses are compact with mysterious and suggestive imagery, and have a beautiful rhythm. Yet, despite some lyrical passages and a strong appeal against environmental degradation,²⁰ the novel, *Insect Summer: An Introduction to Haiku Poetry* (1981), does not really work. One important reason is that Kirkup was essentially a poet, and could not easily create or enter personalities other than his own. But there are inherent technical difficulties too, in that the haiku by its nature does not lend itself to narrative, but instead resists it. The didactic focus of the project restricts it too, and similar attempts by other writers to do the same thing have fared no better. The story takes place in a fishing hamlet on an island south of Nagasaki, and there are some characteristic Kirkup touches in the prose, such as when he describes saké cups as 'no bigger than eyebaths'.²¹ Several classic haiku are introduced into the story in English translation, while some original verses are ostensibly composed at a moon-viewing party near the end. All of these employ the standard three-line form, without following the precise seventeen-syllable count on which Kirkup came later to insist.

It was in a weekly English haiku column, edited by the late Satō Kazuo (1927–2005) in the *Mainichi Daily News*, that my own path crossed with that of James Kirkup, since we were both occasional

contributors. By now Kirkup had come to follow a strict 5-7-5 syllabic pattern, as I was more or less inclined to do myself. Once, later, he selected a verse of mine in this form that I had submitted anonymously to a competition. A more important link, however, came through Professor Satō, who had introduced me to a woman called Katō Kōko (b. 1931), who was about to start her own haiku group in Nagoya, and wanted some assistance with an English magazine. When I had agreed to help with this, Mrs Katō also recruited James Kirkup as a contributor, since he was a well-known poet, and something of a literary lion in Japan. The twice-yearly issue of the magazine in English, called *Kō*, was launched in the spring of 1987, and still continues publication. Kirkup sent haiku to every issue, and these were featured prominently at the beginning. He also wrote short prose pieces, often introducing haiku from other languages, and occasionally did reviews. His contributions were always interesting and lively, if not always quite what readers probably expected. When gatherings for the group and journal were held in Nagoya, both Kirkup and I were invited, and it was here that I first encountered him in person. He was the main speaker at such occasions, while I was asked to give a shorter warm-up talk, and he was always gracious in his delivery and presence. Now and then, he would present me with some of his new publications, volumes of autobiography or poetry, or translated fiction, and if I had the opportunity I would then review them.

Nagoya has surprisingly deep connections with haiku from the past, and with English poetry in more recent times, since it was also the place where *Poetry Nippon*, Japan's longest-lasting and most important English poetry journal, was published and Kirkup had contributed to this as well. He had also taught at a university there for two years, though by this time he was teaching in Kyoto, which would be his longest single period of work and residence. These things in themselves may have engendered his deepening involvement with Japanese poetic forms, though they had always engaged him, one way and another. Laurence Steven notes particularly: 'Kirkup's eye for the precise detail that will inform a scene with a sense of wonder is well served by Japanese poetic tradition.'²² The gifted and prolific author turned his hand to many different kinds of writing, including drama, fiction and translation, winning prizes for some of these. He also wrote dozens of college readers for use in Japan, and listed most of them in bibliographical accounts, giving him for many years one of the longest entries in *Who's Who* (where his recreation was given, until 2002, as 'standing in shafts of moonlight'). Even in the *DLB* the list of his works is almost equal to the essay in length (and includes titles like *I Am Count Dracula!!!*), in sharp contrast to the next entry, on the poet Philip Larkin. Occasionally, Kirkup himself seemed bewildered at his own variety. Nevertheless Laurence

Steven observed: ‘That Kirkup is able to hone his work down is made clear in the numerous volumes of haiku poems that he has produced throughout the 1970s and 1980s.’²³ In the first issue of *Kō* he offered a homage to Wordsworth in the haiku form:

From the topmost bough
one last persimmon hanging —
‘lonely as a cloud...’²⁴

This kind of direct allusion would not last long, but Kirkup would return to the splicing of poetry and haiku later, when he used the 5–7–5 syllable pattern as a verse-form for translating longer poems. The verses below give something of the flavour of his work, still with a Romantic tinge:

A fractured rainbow
is staining thunder clouds with
cathedral quiet.²⁵

A spider strolling
round my lonely room makes it
no longer lonely.²⁶

One of his first prose pieces in *Kō* revealed an early haiku contest, held in Britain in 1959, the year that he reached Japan, and establishing a history for the poem there equal to his own engagement with it. He dabbled then with composition in French, and introduced haiku and poets from other languages in his own translations. A representative verse that was often printed in later issues of the magazine is this one:

Stone face of Buddha —
on his gently-smiling lips
a snail is crawling.²⁷

In criticism he came to stress the exact 5–7–5 syllable count, placing himself in opposition to the general trend. But he won new readers all the same, and in 1990 was asked to become the first president of the newly founded British Haiku Society.²⁸ Numerous small collections followed, mainly from Hub Editions, a small private publisher in England, and some of these I myself reviewed. *Shooting Stars* and *First Fireworks* both appeared in 1992, the latter with some experimental verses, quickly followed by *Blue Bamboo* the next year, and *Formulas for Chaos* the year after that.²⁹ There was much to enjoy in these little books, although they were usually uneven (‘Kirkup’s work-ups’ he sometimes called them).

KIRKUP AND THE MOON

One of Kirkup's most common subjects, as also with traditional poetry in Japanese, was the moon, for which he made novel and often amusing comparisons. In the first of these collections he described it as a helium balloon, an abalone shell, a slice of coconut, a jellyfish, an eyelash, the face of a monkey, a dandelion clock, a pocket torch and a paper kite, while in the last of them he saw it as an eyeball, a cocoon and a boiled potato. The list is by no means exhaustive, but shows his genuine imaginative flair. Another volume gathered prose pieces and translations, drawn from *Kō* and several other journals. *A Certain State of Mind: An Anthology of Classic, Modern and Contemporary Japanese Haiku in Translation* (1995)³⁰ has much of interest in it, is informative and stimulating, but is carelessly assembled and has no overriding theme. Usually the translations that Kirkup did were regular in form, and accomplished with the help of Tamaki Makoto (b. 1943), his Japanese companion and assistant. Many further selections from modern haiku poets appeared in *Kō*, often quite substantial ones that have not yet been collected. Of these it can be said they are generally successful. There are perhaps two ways of translating poetry or haiku. One is to create a special voice for the poet in the target language, but this is obviously impossible with a large number of different poets. The other is to provide a luminous version through which the original poem may shine, and this is largely accomplished in my opinion.

When I met James Kirkup, he was approaching seventy, quite a large man, who had described himself somewhere as 'a modest six feet', had a pale boyish face, and by this time was becoming portly. Sitting near him at a gathering in Nagoya, I noted his large hands, and thought of all the words that they had typed or written, and the handwriting that he jovially evoked as 'frantic knitting'. When he stood up to speak, he drew himself up inside his jacket, and held out both hands, the little fingers pointed outwards. A smile began to break upon my face, but when he began to recite in his musical voice, I realized that he adopted this posture to give himself fully to the poem. On another occasion we both joined an outing to Meiji-mura, an outdoor architectural museum near Nagoya, for the purpose of composing haiku. James was very gracious through all of this, though I was surprised at his shy reluctance to show me what he had written on the journey back, saying he wanted to revise the verses further. Once or twice I had dinner with him, when he whispered one or two little secrets to me, but the only occasion on which I dined with him together with his companion and co-translator, Tamaki Makoto, was disappointing. They ate swiftly and in complete silence, while I munched noisily and tried to talk, but nothing was revealed of how they worked together. Since James read little Japanese, I have always

assumed that he worked from cribs: but how were the poems selected, revised, discussed? Nothing of their method was vouchsafed me.

The journal of the British Haiku Society, formed in 1990, was wittily named *Blithe Spirit*, alluding both to the English poet Shelley, and to the pioneering work of translation and interpretation done by R.H. Blyth. In 1994, the three-hundredth anniversary of the death of Matsuo Bashō (1644–94), the greatest poet of this form, and the thirtieth anniversary of the death of Blyth, were jointly commemorated. David Cobb, who had succeeded Kirkup as president, edited an anthology of Blyth's writings for the Society, and Kirkup wrote an introduction, recalling that he had once met Blyth, and warming to the fact that they shared pacifist convictions, and had both been conscientious objectors in wartime. Kirkup added further that he had encountered Blyth's books in the early 1950s, and studied them assiduously ever since. It is a mystery, then, that neither Blyth nor any of his books is mentioned in Kirkup's writings on Japan, despite this long familiarity. But perhaps it is another instance of the 'creative memory' that Kirkup cheerfully alludes to in his letters and his later writing, evidenced in some of the more improbable encounters that his autobiographies record. This, combined with his apparent preference for writing over talk (he was a good deal more voluble on paper than in speech), are characteristics that he shared with Frederick Rolfe (1860–1913), the self-styled Baron Corvo, so that I have sometimes wondered whether there might not be scope for a 'Quest for Kirkup' biographical account, along the lines of the famous book by A.J.A Symons.³¹ Be that as it may, and despite the fact that my own correspondence with the poet eventually foundered, I cannot but acknowledge that he was a gifted and committed writer, whose dedication to the haiku continued fruitfully right until the end.

RETIREMENT IN ANDORRA

Laurence Steven remarked upon 'a move that seems somehow characteristic of Kirkup's personality', when in 1977 'he both took up residence in the principality of Andorra [...] and accepted a position as professor of English at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies'.³² When he retired from Japan in 1989, he became permanently resident in Andorra, and continued to write prolifically from there, enlivening the British press with his obituaries, for example.³³ His last haiku project resulted from a visit to Andorra by the Japanese haiku poet Michio Nakahara (b. 1951), who not only sought out Kirkup and his companion in their mountain fastness, but asked them to translate a collection of haiku for him too. When this handsome silk-bound volume appeared a few months after Kirkup's passing at the

age of ninety-one in 2009, it was described on the cover as ‘Kirkup’s last work’. Reviewing this for a newspaper, I noted how unique it was that a new collection by a Japanese haiku poet should appear complete with translation on first publication. One verse stood out, in this context:

The hands that have stopped
writing resemble the wings
of a frozen crane.³⁴

James Kirkup translated a great deal from French and German, almost all of it fiction or drama. His work with Japanese, however, dealt almost exclusively with poetry. After his death, his remains were brought back to Japan, and interred at a temple in Kyoto in the presence of his Japanese friends and admirers. The temple, Jōjakkō-ji, is located half way up Mount Ogura, which itself has profound connections with the classical poetry collection, *Hyakunin-issū* (A Hundred Poems by a Hundred Poets), all of them written in the form of *waka*, or *tanka*, and many times translated. James Kirkup essayed this form too in later years, particularly after his retirement, when he was asked to translate or revise various collections, including the one mentioned. His most substantial work in this field was a large selection from the *tanka* poet Saitō Fumi (1909–2002), who wrote many of her poems in old age.³⁵ *Utsusemi*, a small book, which appeared in 1996, collected Kirkup’s own *tanka*, but took its title from a classical reference.³⁶ It is therefore appropriate that he should have come to rest finally in a place with such rich poetic associations, and I am told his typewriter will also be enshrined there.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to James Kirkup’s literary executor, Makoto Tamaki, for permission to publish the haiku printed here. His name, and the names of all those contemporary with James Kirkup in Japan, have been given in the main text in Western order, with the family name last, since that is how they appear in all the relevant English publications. Researchers may be interested to know that Kirkup’s large book collection, and some of his papers, have been lodged permanently in South Shields, the town where he grew up in England. The collection is divided between the Museum and Central Library, as the website explains. Further information can be found at <http://www.thejameskirkupcollection.co.uk/> The bulk of Kirkup’s personal papers, including a great deal of correspondence, have been deposited in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University in the United States. Detailed information, and a listing of the contents, not all of which have yet been sorted, can be found at <http://drs.library.yale.edu:8083/fedora/get/beinecke:kirkup/PDF> .

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Ralph Hodgson was the subject of a biographical portrait by John Hatcher in Volume V of this series.
- ² ‘There is a long tradition in Japan of having British poets teach at the universities,’ Kirkup tells us before listing them up: ‘Robert Nicols, William Empson, Edmund Blunden, Ralph Hodgson, George Barker, G.S. Fraser, Anthony Thwaite, Francis King, and now me: an odd assortment.’ James Kirkup, *These Horned Islands: A Journal of Japan* (London: Collins, 1962), pp. 14–15. William Empson was the subject of a biographical portrait by John Haffenden in Volume IV of this series; Robert Nichols was the subject of a biographical portrait by George Hughes in Volume V, and G.S. Fraser by Eileen Fraser also in Volume V.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 66.
- ⁴ Bashō, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches*, translated by Nobuyuki Yuasa (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966). This highly influential volume helped to popularize not only the poet, but the haiku form as well, and is still in print.
- ⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 67.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 375.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 377.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 425.
- ⁹ James Kirkup, *Japan behind the Fan* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1970), p. ix.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- ¹¹ *Modern Japanese Poetry*, translated by James Kirkup, edited and introduced by A.R. Davis (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1978). The haiku sequence is ‘At the Miyako Hotel’, by Hino Sojo (1901–56), pp. 86–7.
- ¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 171.
- ¹³ Laurence Steven, ‘James Kirkup’, in *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Poets of Great Britain and Ireland, 1945–1960*, Vol. 27, ed. Vincent B. Sherry (Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research Co., 1984), pp. 186–94. This quote p. 192. The book is James Kirkup, *Paper Windows: Poems from Japan* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1968).
- ¹⁴ James Kirkup, *Japan Physical*, edited with Japanese translations by Fumiko Miura (Tokyo: Kenkyusha).
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- ¹⁶ James Kirkup, *White Shadows, Black Shadows* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1970). The characters on the title page read 露木茂 (*Tsuyu-ki-shigeru*) and may have been intended as a Japanese version of his name. Tsuyuki Shigeru (b. 1940) is the name of a television broadcaster, though what this might have to do with the book is not clear.
- ¹⁷ James Kirkup, *The Body Servant: Poems of Exile* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1971), p. 38.
- ¹⁸ James Kirkup, *Dengonban Messages: Oneline Haiku and Senryu* (Kyoto: Kyoto Editions, 1981); the poem occurs halfway through the book, which has around a hundred unnumbered pages.
- ¹⁹ *Japan Physical*, *op. cit.*, pp. 44–5.

- ²⁰ James Kirkup, *Insect Summer: An Introduction to Haiku Poetry*, Introduction and Notes by Atsuo Nakagawa (Tokyo: Hokuseido, 1981; first published New York: Knopf, 1971). See pp. 95–6.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.
- ²² *Op. cit.*, p. 192.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 193.
- ²⁴ *Kō: Haiku Magazine in English*, Spring-Summer 1987, Kō Poetry Association, Nagoya, p. 4.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, Autumn-Winter 1988, p. 7.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, Spring Summer 1989, p. 1. Note the emphasis again on ‘lonely’, a feeling Kirkup often stressed. One of his most resonant and beautiful lines to me is ‘lonely extinctions of impossible longing’, which occurs at the end of a poem on W.H. Auden in an otherwise mediocre collection called *The Sense of the Visit* (Brampton, Hunts.: Sceptre Press, 1984), p. 25.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, Autumn-Winter 2005, p. 56. It may have originally appeared in a newspaper.
- ²⁸ For further information about the society, see <http://britishhaikusociety.org.uk/>
- ²⁹ All these titles, generally handmade, and some of them including verses from as far back as Kirkup’s first book about Japan, were published by Hub Editions, in Flitwick, Bedfordshire, England. Other titles featured tanka, and haiku versions of French poems.
- ³⁰ James Kirkup, *A Certain State of Mind: An Anthology of Classic, Modern and Contemporary Japanese Haiku in Translation, with Essays and Reviews* (Salzburg, Austria: University of Salzburg, 1995).
- ³¹ See A.J.A. Symons, *The Quest for Corvo: An Experiment in Biography* (Harmondsworth, Penguin: 1986; first published 1934), *passim*. Kirkup shared a keen sense of neglect in exile in later years, and also harboured grudges against some of his contemporaries.
- ³² *Op. cit.*, p. 194.
- ³³ He wrote about 300 obituaries for *The Independent*, and a special tribute to his work in this genre was paid by Richard Canning in this paper on 16 May 2009, in addition to the usual obituary by James Fergusson.
- ³⁴ Michio Nakahara, *Chō-i / Message from Butterfly*, translated by James Kirkup and Makoto Tamaki (Tokyo: Yūshorin, 2009), p. 211.
- ³⁵ Fumi Saito, *In Thickets of Memory / Kioku no shigemi*, A Selection of Tanka in Japanese and English translated by James Kirkup and Makoto Tamaki (Tokyo: Miwa-shoten, 2002). Kirkup had heard the poet’s work recited at the New Year’s Poetry Reading at the Imperial Palace, to which he had also been invited, in 1997. Following the Introduction, he provides some notes on the translation process, pp. xix–xxvi
- ³⁶ James Kirkup, *Utsusemi: Tanka* (Hub Editions, Wisbech, Cambs.: 1996). The Foreword gives some details of his involvement with the form, while a note supplies the meaning of the title: ‘The word *utsusemi* has a double meaning: it is the empty shell left by a cicada; it is also the human envelope,’ p. v.