

AMERICAN HAIKU



Vol. II, No. 2
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AMERICAN HAIKU

Vol. II, Number 2

A publisher's full responsibility for content, policy and in all other areas is seldom if ever rewarded as when, for this issue, American Haiku subscribers and I, the publisher, have the pride and pleasure of enjoying as

EDITORIAL CONSULTANT FOR POETRY

Harold G. Henderson

with

POETRY EDITORS

James Bull and Robert Spiess

PUBLISHER

Clement Hoyt



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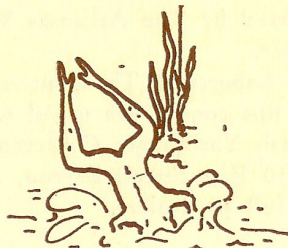
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NOTICE!

REMEMBER—Send mss for the next issue to James Bull, American Haiku, Box 73, Platteville, Wisconsin.



THE NYOGEN SENZAKI MEMORIAL HAIKU AWARD

of The Arkansas Writers' Conference

The Nyogen Senzaki Memorial Haiku Award will again be offered in The Arkansas Writers' Conference, as it was last year, but the prize money has been doubled. First prize, offered by Clement and Violet Hoyt, is \$25.00. The new developments in this category are: Second Prize, \$15.00, and Third Prize, \$10.00, both offered by The Arkansas Writers' Conference.

This is important! Those interested in entering this contest are urged to write Anna Nash Yarbrough, Conference Director, 510 East Street, Benton, Arkansas, for full particulars.

Incidentally, Clement Hoyt had the pleasure and honor of addressing The Arkansas Writers' Conference on haiku June 6-7-8 of this year in Little Rock. He enjoyed himself so much, heard so many interesting and practical talks given for writers and poets and found the members both so friendly and worth knowing that he plans to attend the next conference. He met professional writers from fifteen states at that conference and suggests any one interested in writing who lives anywhere near it attend the next one if possible.

Awards

The editors are pleased to present the following three haiku, which have been judged to be the best entries in competition of original haiku in English—as entered in the contest held by AMERICAN HAIKU and ending September 15, 1964. The cash awards were \$35.00, \$15.00, and \$5.00 for first, second and third.

First

Faces like wet leaves
glued to asylum windows
watch the brewing storm.

—Cornelia P. Draves

Second

Brown mimosa seed
where blossoms once invited
hummingbirds to feed.

—Ethel Freeman

Third

Dawn, and morning Mass:
two cardinals celebrate
at the garden bath.

—Ethel Green Russell

SPECIAL AWARDS

Each receives a one year's subscription to American Haiku.

After a spring rain,
the earth and a robin play
tug-of-war with a worm.

—Phil Adams

Crossing beneath
the street light and the moon,
my shadow is confused

—John S. Haney

In our old oak tree
the parasitic starlings
scold the mistletoe.

—Georgian Tashjian

After the crickets
have left for winter quarters
the clock ticks louder

—Joyce W. Webb

SPECIAL MENTION

Each receives one extra copy of American Haiku.

Willow branches

brush abstracts for all the shows;
my window frames them.

—Eloise Barksdale

A blur of blue wings—

a gray flashing bushy tail—
one brown acorn falls.

—Peggy Ann Boggs

Small blue-tailed lizard

streaks into rainwet mint bed—
no raindrop trembles.

—J Del B

The fall rain whispers

—and a grasshopper hinges
slowly down a thistle.

—Don Eulert

SPECIAL MENTION

Each receives one extra copy of American Haiku.

The same country road
that pointed toward the city
welcomes my return.

—Leonard Helie

Budding branches sway,
rain has washed the scented air—
sounds are magnified. . .

—The Herron

A golden sound fades,
taking with it the image
of a giant bell.

—William J. Noble

Yesterday we moved;
today, rain closing us in
makes the strange house home.

—H. D. Pote

COMMENTS ON HAIKU

By Harold G. Henderson

I agree with Clement Hoyt, and the other editors of *American Haiku*, that there should be some generally accepted standards for English and American "haiku," and that these standards must be concerned with both form and content. I agree also that the task of setting up such standards should not be attempted by any one self-styled "expert." I further agree that open discussion of the problem may well be profitable. (As well as a lot of fun!)

But where should we start this discussion? Assuming, as we apparently must, that haiku can be written in English, should consideration be given to ideas about haiku that are held by vast numbers of uninformed Americans? Should we, for example, discuss the wide-

spread belief that the statement: "A haiku is a poem in 17 syllables, divided into three lines, 5, 7 and 5," is a necessary and sufficient definition of haiku? Or should we plunge at once into the question of just how far, if at all, poems written in English can, or must, differ from Japanese haiku and still be properly called "haiku"?

Wherever we begin, we will surely reach the last-named subject of discussion. But before we can reach it, we must, I think, know at least something about Japanese standards for haiku. And perhaps the first thing to realize is that there seem to be few, if any, universally accepted hard-and-fast criteria. I am not here speaking only of splinter-groups, such as the modern poets who

claim that form is of no importance, or purists who insist that the poems of Issa, or of Chiyo, or even some by Basho, are "not haiku." I am speaking of that great body of poetry which nobody challenges as being "not haiku."

Anyone, who studies this great core of haiku, will, I think, conclude that there are norms, but that it is possible to depart from these norms, at least slightly, and still write haiku. As one obvious example, the 5-7-5 "syllable count" does emerge as a norm, but many, many haiku, including some of the most famous of them all, have other counts. Similar deviations from the norms of content will also be found. This seems natural, as the norms were developed by the poets themselves, each building on what had gone before him. The present generally accepted haiku conventions are primarily codifications of these norms. As such,

they can be immensely useful to us, but cannot be considered expressions of wholly immutable criteria.

Where it comes to establishing standards for haiku written in English, it does seem likely that our poets will eventually establish norms of their own. But what are we to do in the meantime? It seems obvious that we must build our work on Japanese norms, as any too great deviation from them would result in poems that were "not haiku." And, yet to accept these norms in their entirety is literally impossible.

Suppose, for example, that it is agreed to accept the 5-7-5 form as a norm. Should we count "syllables" as the Japanese do, or as we normally do in English poetry? Japanese "syllables" all end in short vowels, or in an "n" sound, which counts as a separate "syllable." There are no diphthongs, and long

vowels are counted as two "syllables." Is it desirable, or even possible, to count syllables our way? And yet if we count syllables our way, making no distinctions between long or short ones, and ignoring the effect of clustered consonants, are we not being quite heedless of the norm of "duration" in a Japanese line?

Consider Virgilio's:

The town clock's face
adds another shade of yellow
to the afterglow.

Should we accept the four syllables of the first line as "equivalent in duration" to five short ones, and the eight of the second as "equivalent" to seven long ones? Or should we insist that the poem be printed in the 5-7-5 form? I.e.:

The town clock's face adds
another shade of yellow
to the afterglow.

These are examples of only a few of the questions that are bound to arise, not only about form, but also about all the other points that differentiate haiku from senryu and other short poems or verses.

Once we have started a discussion of such quite fundamental questions, I think we can go far. Such a discussion will probably not result in a generally accepted set of hard-and-fast "rules." (Question: Would or would not such a result be desirable?) It may, however, well result in a codification of accepted norms, which can serve as a guide to poets who write haiku (or "haikan") in English until they have time to establish norms of their own.



Maple leaves turning
their silver backs to wild wind
and to one thin boy.

—Hilda Aarons

Gone, its special care—
frogs, fish, turtles, insect wings—
yet, the pool is there.

—Margaret Abbott

18, 19 by PHIL ADAMS

18—

My son learns new words:
dropping stones on his toes—"Damn!"
smiles to me for praise.

19—

Proud of his loud bray,
the ass listens to his sound,
answers the echo.

20, 21 by HELEN AXTELL

20—

Caught in a sunbeam
motes lose the quality
of dust.

21—

Rocks are smoothed away
by the pale hands of moonlight—
I gather pebbles.

22, 23 by ELOISE BARKSDALE

22—

Clevery disguised,
the crocus transplanted spring
despite the snow man!

23—

Moonlight tiptoed past
the sleeping baby's cradle;
"S-s-sh."

Secretly, a child
picks wild blueberries in the
poison ivy patch.

—Susan Bauernfeind

Gnarled hands, old rose-bush,
tangled weeds; so loved a place
how many wars ago!

—Madeline Beattie

With flashing red breast
spring lit on my window sill
it's throat filled with song.

—Peggy Ann Boggs

The day was sodden;
four herons crossed the sky
retrieving twilight.

—Evan Booth

28, 29 by MILDRED BOINK

28—

Those small darting birds,
at dusk, become so tired they
fall down my chimney!

29—

Spring's cold, hard rain
tamped the earth back from around
that new hyacinth!

30, 31 by ED CASE

30—

The peony grew
all summer for the sake of
this three day bloom.

31—

A swift, silent motion
beneath the pool's glass surface—
another thought slips off.

32, 33, 34 by HELEN CHENOWETH

32—

The thunder rumbles
but heads of ripened wheat are
one vast sheet of gold.

34—

Small birds hovering
near dripping eaves of my house.
The night cries of snow.

33—

The praying mantis
betrays a twig of the tree—
late frost blackens buds.

Butterfly weed paints
pastures . . . birds discuss weather .
mobile homes appear.

—Jeannette Chappell

COLOR IN HAIKU

By James E. Bull

If haiku is "anamistic" (R. H. Blyth), then it deals with things. And as things reflect light vibrations in the form of color, so too must haiku, objective as it is, reflect figurative haiku color.

Taking the terminology used by Sanki Ichikawa in *HAIKAI AND HAIKU*, we could separate haiku color into its three properties—hue, value and chroma. Ichikawa offers five hues (names of colors): "universality; loneliness; slenderness; humble poverty; sober refinement." He assigns fourteen values (tones of lightness or darkness): "unearthly beauty; grace; delicacy; charm; simplicity; sincerity (of feelings); suggestivity; forlornness; calm; dignity; tranquility; resigna-

tion; sublimation; humor." Chroma (intensity of color) has to do with interplay of hues and values in terms of their brightness or dullness.

The three properties of haiku color have nothing to do with the subject of a given haiku; they have to do with its objects and their reflected light, their color—that which gives the subject its resonance of meaning, that which triggers "thoughts and emotions" (H. G. Henderson).

As one cannot discuss value and chroma without hue, the following essay is divided into five parts under hue headings, as adapted from Ichikawa. The haiku cited as illustrations are all taken

from AMERICAN HAIKU, volume two,
number one.

I. Universality

The haiku which triggers in us a sense of the immutable essence of life—the unfathomable truth of life which exists, we know, but which can be hinted at only—has the hue of universality:

Perched on my shoulder,
a downy woodpecker looked
at me with closed eyes.

—Patricia Woodward

AH, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 8

Ignoring her technique, we find something universal about Woodward's experience: a truth of existence which cannot be seen directly, only indirectly, through

the mutable, changeable stuff of the material world; the blindness of every man as he looks at reality with closed eyes—scared stiff—hoping that it isn't there, knowing deep within that it IS still there.

Two more examples of the hue of universality are:

The tangled vine
circles itself and extends
old roots and green ends.

—Marjorie Bertram Smith

AH, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 58

Shaking the muskrat—
snow falls from the trapper's hair—
and from a reed.

—Nicholas A. Virgilio

AH, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 65

In each, there is something inexpressibly true, inexpressibly inevitable about what Ichikawa calls "life and destiny": In Smith, the inevitable life force—"old roots and green ends"; in Virgilio, the terrible inevitability of the snow—of death. It is useless to dispute whether vine and snow are symbols (Ichikawa) or things (Blyth). The point is that through the mutable, changeable, evanescent stuff of life the poets strike something inexpressible about its essence—unchanging, universal.

II. Loneliness

The extreme objectivity of haiku gives it the hue of loneliness. In haiku, only the objects and their associations seem to exist. And contrary to what many American haiku writers seem to believe, more often than not, really good haiku place

the ego far in the background, things in the foreground. The sense is that man is engulfed by nature, lost in it, alone in it:

By the roadside

at sundown . . . a wrinkled old chief
selling bead bracelets.

—Gustave Keyser

AH, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 39

Through winter sea winds
the islanders climb the hill
bent almost double.

—Marjory Bates Pratt

AH, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 53

These two haiku are objective, but their

associations render them far more than flat pictures. In the first, the Indian race and the Indian chief are at sundown, standing on the edge of the road—on the edge of doom. In the second, the islanders, each seen individually battling the winter wind, move up hill on their isolated island at sea. There is no whining about the loneliness, rather a resignation and a sublimation, color values which so often accompany the hue of loneliness.

III. Humble Poverty

Haiku poverty is not a hopeless poverty; it is a humble poverty, an austerity marked by simplicity, not squalor. And as the following example illustrates, the haiku does not treat the subject of poverty directly:

At the street corner—

he with banjo, she with tin,—
arm in arm they stand.

—Ethel Green Russell

AH, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 55

Russell's haiku has nothing to do with the couple's poverty, *per se*; it does, however, impart the values of calm, dignity, resignation and sublimation to the hue of poverty.

Haiku poverty is not always obvious; sometimes it is quite subtle. For example, there is the simplicity or "easy austerity" (C. Hoyt) in Barbara O. Moraw's

The season of rain.

From eaves onto lemon leaves,
the staccato drip.

AH, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 44

Life is not so lush when the rains come—"eaves" and "leaves," coupled with the words "onto" and "lemon" reinforce the sound, the monotony of the "staccato drip." The values are resignation and a dignified acceptance of the forlornness of the phenomenon.

The resigned acceptance of the matter-of-factness of nature—the simplicity, the humble poverty of nature—is captured in Sharon Nelton's

A change in weather—
Middle C on my piano
is flat again.

AH, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 45

It should be apparent that the hue of poverty is first cousin to loneliness. They are so closely related that it is sometimes difficult to decide whether a given haiku exemplifies one or the other, or both.

The problem lies in that the values are interchangeable.

IV. Sober Refinement

Sober refinement, an especially muted hue, is closely allied to loneliness and poverty, for we often find one or both of those hues with the former. At first glance, the hue appears to be drab, but analysis shows that it is enlivened with the values of simplicity and charm:

Sunset: carrying
a red balloon, he looks back . . .
a child leaves the zoo.

—Warren F. O'Rourke

AH, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 7

Notwithstanding the rather ragged tech-

nique, there is a sober refinement in the scene—day's end at a zoo is always sober, drab. But the values enliven the scene: the matter-of-factness in the handling of objects adds simplicity; and the child and red balloon add the all-important charm.

Peter Bailey captures the same hue and values in

Even the bluejay
is steaming where he perches
after this first spring rain.

AH, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 14

There is simplicity in the sober hue, in the drabness of the steaming bird, the steaming world. But the simple sobriety is refined by the humorous charm of the bird, ordinarily raucous of voice and pert of mien, now subdued by the oppressive heat.

V. Slenderness

Slenderness might be called fragility.

A dull brown cocoon—
and children picking apart
a silk spinner's dream.

—Ed Case

AH, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 20

Fragile the cocoon; fragile the contrast between "dull brown" and "silk spinner's dream."

The slender haiku often utilizes fragile objects and in so doing captures a certain value of delicacy, but that value is never sentimental, precious or effeminate.

Because of the color
of this chrysanthemum
I have missed my train.

—James Kritzeck

AH, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 40

By direct, matter-of-fact statement, Kritzeck saves his haiku from the sentimental, the precious, the effeminate; it is fragile but strong—masculine. It is noteworthy that Kritzeck's haiku is a so-called modern or "industrial" haiku, in that the train is an object of contemporary life. The "industrial" haiku does not constitute a new haiku hue. The difference between "industrial" and traditional haiku lies not in their hues, but in their objects.

To conclude the discussion of traditional hues and values, we might consider Robert Spiess' haiku:

Drifting into the room,
the milkweed seed distracts me
as when I was young.

AH, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 59

The "as when" may be "too-too poetic," but one is tempted to forgive it when he

considers the brilliant display of haiku color—hue, value and chroma.

The distraction is an impulse, the care-free boy's will—a wisp of youth in age—the fragile milkweed seed. The hue is slender and the values are sincerity (of feelings), grace, delicacy and suggestivity. The hue is also lonely, with the values of resignation, forlornness, calm, dignity and tranquility. There is also the hue of poverty, certainly the poverty of age (and perhaps of life) with overtones (values) of resignation, sublimation—yes, even humor. And there is the hue of sober refinement, for everything in the haiku is muted: the room is bare (as far as the haiku experience is concerned)—or at most, sparsely furnished; but the sobriety is refined by the simplicity and charm of the seed. In addition, there is a certain inexpressible something—a hue of universality—a truth to life in the

haiku—a continuity of youth and age, life and death.

The interplay of hues and values in Spiess' haiku brings us to the third property of haiku color—**chroma**. Chroma refers to brilliance or intensity of color—to its brightness or dullness. A color can be **brightened** by surrounding a given hue with a less intense hue or a darker value of the same hue. It can be **dulled** by adding its complement—for example, orange can be dulled by adding its complement, blue. The applications to haiku color are obvious.

In the Spiess haiku there are five hues—loneliness, poverty, slenderness, sober refinement and universality. All of these hues are muted, but the most conspicuous is slenderness—surrounded by what are (in this picture) hues of less intensity. The interplay of thirteen color values in the haiku, muted though they are, pre-

sents a brilliant chromatic effect—so complex it almost defies analysis. It is apparent that an extensive treatment of all facets of chroma is in order, but it cannot be done here.

What can be done, however, is to indicate that the color metaphor can be used in assessing haiku and non-haiku. For example, by the haiku color test the so-called “abstract” haiku is not a haiku. Consider

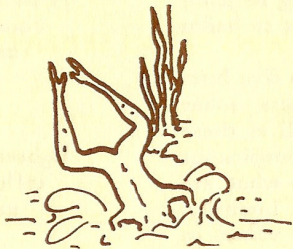
A hurry of Snowflakes
anonymous Saints
music and mathematics
—John Tagliabue
AH, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 62

Egocentrical
influentiality
unsymmetrical.
—Sam Bryan
AH, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 18

In utilizing the color touchstone to analyze these two pieces, one need go no further than hue. Certainly they have no traditional hue. And lacking titles (horrors!) or matrices of prose to tell us what they are about, they have no hue whatsoever, for they are not self-sufficient, self-contained. They do not reflect; they do not make sense.

In Tagliabue, we have one concrete ob-

ject which is not related to phenomena, but is incomprehensibly linked to abstract concepts. In Bryan, we have three more abstractions, which lack haiku sense because they are not phenomenal. The essential point is that in terms of color the haiku does not deal with abstractions; it deals with things. For without things there is no reflection, no hue, no value, no chroma—no color.



IRIS BOWEN WINS ARKANSAS HAIKU CONTEST

Iris Bowen of North Little Rock, Arkansas, won the Nyogen Senzaki Memorial Haiku Contest conducted by The Arkansas Writers' Conference in Little Rock June 6-7-8, 1964. The prize was \$25.00. The same contest will be offered again in 1965, with three additional

prizes offered: \$15.00 for second place, \$10.00 for third place and a book for Honorable Mention. Those interested should write Anna Nash Yarbrough, 510 East St., Benton, Arkansas, for requirements to compete.

SPIESS WINS TEXAS SENZAKI PRIZE

Robert Spiess of Madison, Wisconsin, won the \$25.00 Nyogen Senzaki Memorial Haiku Award offered by Clement and Violet Hoyt in the Poetry Society of Texas Annual Contests. Nicholas A. Virgilio of Camden, New Jersey, placed

second and Joyce W. Webb of Madison, Wisconsin, third. Winners were announced at the Poetry Society's annual banquet given November 14 in Dallas, Texas.

Black against silver—
a snowy winter twilight
though April is here.

—Judson Crews

A fat bumble bee
wears a yellow fur jacket
in summer's style show.

—Emma Crobaugh



The Chinese poppy
swayed in modulated shock
to release the bee.

—Ethel Catherine Davis

38, 39, 40 by KAY DAVIS

38—

Mosquitoes and I,
aware of the empty road,
worry in circles.



39—

Though I repented
when the last plot failed, spring sun
and loam tempt again.

40—

The thunder grumbles:
one clothes line may or may not
be worth the storming.

42, 43 by CARROW DEVRIES

42—

Walking in dirt road:
the yellow night-eyed farm house
and far off barking.

Scarlet flash of wings . . .
Outside the rain-splashed window
a cardinal sings.

—Edna Denniston

43—

The old, grey, woodshed
sits knee deep in cool fog
escaping the heat.

A bronze oak leaf curls
a fist upon my doorstep
protesting winter.

—Florence A. Dietz

JAPAN AIR LINES NATIONAL HAIKU CONTEST

More than 41,000 haiku were submitted in Japan Air Lines National Haiku Contest, conducted during a period of months in local contests over seventeen radio stations across the United States. J. W. Hackett of San Francisco, winner of San Francisco's KCBS Radio Station Contest, was the national winner as well. An earlier version of his prize winning haiku appeared in *American Haiku*, Vol. I, No. 1. This haiku, in the version winning the Grand Prize is:

A bitter morning:
Sparrows sitting together
Without any necks.

Each radio station, conducting one of

the local haiku contests, awarded five top prizes and many other prizes besides to contestants. Examples are: five top prizes and two hundred and fifty additional prizes were awarded by Radio Station KCBS, San Francisco, to as many contestants out of the more than 3,000 haiku submitted in that radio station's local contest. Five top prizes and one hundred and forty-five prizes were awarded by Radio Station KQUE, Houston, to winning and placing contestants out of the 1342 haiku submitted in its local contest.

The five best haiku from each of the seventeen local contests were submitted in the national contest, which was judged by Alan Watts. J. W. Hackett received as the Grand Prize: two round trip tickets to Japan, awarded by Japan Air Lines.

The total value of prizes given in the National Contest and the seventeen local contests probably exceed anything offered as awards in a poetry contest in the United States.

The contest defined the haiku as a poetic form usually of seventeen syllables, though not necessarily so, written in three lines. In an article appearing in the JAL Courier, chairman of the Department of Literature at the University of Washington, J. Frank Jones, who judged the Seattle Contest, gave the following as his definition of haiku: "In my opinion, the image in a haiku should signify one of the following: (1) an event, possible or actual; (2) a new, fresh way of looking at things in nature; (3) a thought of general importance."

Since the structure of the haiku, rather than its other several characteristics, has

occupied so much of the attention of American Haiku readers, it is interesting to note that Hackett's winning haiku, which in its first form appeared in American Haiku as a structural variant, appeared in its final and prize-winning form as a traditional 5-7-5.

The eighty-five haiku submitted from the seventeen radio stations in the National Contest will be published in a limited edition. Each of the writers included will receive a copy.

One of the features of the haiku contests was a special, separate contest for children, conducted by Radio Station WRR, Dallas. The winner was Carol Marie Harris, Richardson, Texas. Carol is four years old.

46, 47 by MAGDALENE M. DOUGLAS

46—

She loved her flowers—
Cows graze in the day-lilies
unconcerned with death.

Rain glossed rooftops,
petals unfastened by wind—
a hook in my heart.

—Mary Dragonetti

47—

Frantically the wren
circles 'round the fallen gourd
housing her babies.

From the garbage dump
mixed with stink and flapping gulls
spring the cattails.

—Cornelia P. Draves

50, 51 by PAT DRESBACH

50—

February wind
blows children into their houses . . .
to search for kites.

Grounded again
on pyracantha berries,
robins, drunk as lords

—Lee Eldredge

51—

Silencing the stars,
drowning out the city lights . . .
the sound of moonlight

Blue smoke on the hills
and the wild geese flying south
with an arrow sign.

—Amy Bissett England

Laying down the fan,
I listen . . . the small cool sound
of leaves tap-dancing.

—Virginia Eustace



Bases full, one out,
tying run is at the plate.
My son eats popcorn.

—William J. Feeney

I dress for the Ball—
the whirling dead leaves arrange
their own amusement.

—Amy Woodward Fisher

57, 58 by GA-GO

57—

Gold motes flimmering
in the beam of warm sunlight
enchant the sick child.

58—

Their tall stems quiver
as evening primroses open
to the hovering moths.

59, 60 by KATHERINE GORMAN

59—

Swallows on hot wire
telegraph dots and dashes,
travel-music score.

60—

The old bluejay scolds
the young cat, then flies away
to private follies.

THE HAIKU EVOLVING

By John S. Haney

Now that we have a magazine of American Haiku, the process of adapting haiku to our own image has begun. To what extent shall we honor the old restrictions—to what degree shall we reject the eternal laws of change? It seems to me these are important questions.

I feel deeply and strongly that the seventeen-syllable concept is the basic, and the only norm which should be adhered to closely—not dogmatically. A syllable or two one way or the other was allowed even by the old Masters, and Basho himself was known to have relinquished certain of the old ways.

It seems to me that the demand for strict adherence to the 5-7-5 arrangement of lines is one of the conceits which stands in the way of the haiku evolving

into its potentials. Already we are permitting the break-up of lines in order to achieve the 5-7-5. This I go along with, although I submit that those of us who practice it are kidding ourselves a bit.

Why not permit four lines; or five lines; even more occasionally if they seem compatible? This would provide shaping an arrangement on the page more pleasing to the eye; and would tend to break the monotony of the traditional three-line haiku, at the same time acknowledging its artistic inherencies.

I realize this could readily lead too far afield, but I rely upon common sense to rein such impulses. Also, it would obviously be impracticable and should not be insisted upon where space is at a pre-

mium, and format must be taken into consideration.

Of course we should not be discourteous to the Japanese authorities, old and modern; or ungrateful for their understanding and help—but I do not think we are obliged to accept their pronouncements as final word—nor do I think they would expect us or want us to.

And let us call the haiku a haiku, while it is becoming naturalized. I can conceive of nothing so distasteful or so detrimen-

tal to its cause, as surrendering the American haiku to a phony name.

The objective in haiku, I suggest, lends itself somewhat more to the precise 5-7-5—the subjective strives further for creative scope and individuality, and identity—and perhaps, if I may say so, invites literary significance.

I do not say the one is wrong, and the other is right.

I plead for choice.

61, 62 by JAY GEE

61—

Your bracelet jangles.

It plays chimes of strange places
which you will never know.

62—

They eye solitaires.

Safe in his inner pocket
two five dollar bills.

. . . "and if I jump in—
and if I don't jump in"—says
the frog to the moon. . . .

—John S. Haney

Bridge at night . . . The lights
a string of giant diamonds
on a coal-black throat.

—Mary J. Harrar

First day of autumn . . .
in the distance can be heard
tolling of a bell!

—Robert Davis Harris Jr.

Swift windshield wipers
slice back blurring cataracts—
April surgery!

—Helen Harrison

Slim curve of new moon,
take your sharp hook out of me.
You touch too deeply.

—Tamara Hawkinson

The trout cuts the air
arching silver in the sun
for one moment free.

—Leonard Helie

Chianti and laughs
to the old beat of slapping
at thirsty mosquitoes.

—Mary Kaaren Hense

Serene in her web,
the black widow eats her mate—
the red hourglass gleams. . . .

—The Herron

Squatting motionless
the suntanned child and the toad
stared curiously.

—V. Lee

Yesterday locusts
lunched happily here . . . Today
hail jumps in the grass.

—Evelyn Tooley Hunt

73, 74 by ELSIE JACHOWSKI

73—

Looking through Grandma's
old photographs the children
find only strangers.

74—

Watching the wild-life
enjoy her garden, she smiles—
and cuts her finger.

March sun—kite-flying:
Searching ponds and leafless woods
for secret places.

—Florice Stripling Jeffers

This son, once knee-bounced,
makes me crick my skinny neck
when I advise him.

—Gustave Keyser

77, 78 by WALTER H. KERR

77—

Welded into
the asphalt street
—a toy car's wheel.

78

Moon racing—
and on the sun dial,
a snail tracing.

LET'S STAY WITH HAIKU

By Gustave Keyser

In a previous issue of AMERICAN HAIKU, Mr. Harry A. Brandt proposed a break-off from the traditional haiku, to be called "haikan," as a divergent form more suitable to the American creative mentality. Other than the title, no information was provided regarding what a "haikan" is to be, as opposed to the fundamental principles of the haiku. However, I would take vigorous issue with any movement toward establishing a divergent genre if the reason for this is primarily because American poets do not have the Japanese viewpoint, or are not capable of that naive poetic vision exemplified by all true haiku.

Granted, American national philosophies, credos, and life tempos are not similar to Japanese philosophies and con-

siderations of life meanings. The average American simply is not raised with the innate simplicity and gentleness of viewpoint traditional to the average Japanese family. To the Japanese, everything animate and inanimate has an inner life of its own. It is this recognition of the individuality of objects that is the heart of haiku content.

With Americans, such a quality of thoughtfulness is a rare matter of individual personality. Actually, it is the naive, imaginative receptiveness of a child to all things around it—a quality most of us regrettably lose in maturation. But some do not; and these are the potential good haiku poets. The proposed "haikan" appears to be directed to those who have lost simplicity; or so it would seem

from Mr. Brandt's statement: "Let all those who insist on haiku as haiku struggle as they must with their difficult self-assignment."

Learning haiku structure is certainly not a difficult task; nor is acquiring an understanding of haiku content and spirit difficult for anyone genuinely interested in knowing what is a haiku. Where then, is this extreme difficulty we are told haiku embodies? It lies in the visionary qualities of the individual poet, of course.

79, 80 by KAREN LINDSEY

79—

Starless, moonless night;
a cigarette stub glows, then fades . . .
as we wait.

Some will never be able to create true haiku, no matter how thoroughly they know the technical requirements. But for others, an affinity with haiku will come naturally. These are the grown-up children, with a simplicity of vision uncluttered by any urgency to philosophize or moralize in the haiku they write. From these will come the American Bashos and Issas.

I propose we stay with the traditional haiku. It is worth the struggle.

80—

A few droplets
and the cloud passes by . . .
Our words are bright and barren.

Only yesterday
the song of the yellow bird . . .
And the autumn sky.

—Carol Law

Bickering sparrows
vie for favored night perches
among my housevines.

—Roimor

83, 84 by EDWARD MORIN

83—

A million green eyes
fan his blue tail—this trembling
peacock frightens me.

84—

A boat light flutters
this moment on the river—
first star at nightfall.

85, 86 by VIRGINIA NELSON

85—

That silly old frog
sitting under the plum tree,
winks his eye at me.

All around me,
the creak of boards, drying,
in a faint dust of silence.

—Peter Olwyler

86—

She purred a soft tune
all winter; now spills kittens
all over my June

On the beach the hole
of a crab; here a sandhouse full
of cockle shells.

—Joy Eleanor Phelps

89, 90 by VIOLET M. PARKS

89—

As we ran, our toes
made dimples in the wet sand . . .
now cups of sea foam.

90—

Home in the hot sand
the lizards lie, question marks . . .
countless ones before.

91, 92 by MARJORY BATES PRATT

91—

In the warm cow barn
smell of milk and reek of dung
mingle together.

92—

Slush and sleet of March
and a small mutt at someone's door
wailing to get in.

Half awake I saw
scowling out of the mirror
my grandmother's face.

—Jeanne Prahl

Wings ebony-tipped,
a white gull circles over
smoke-blackened chimneys.

—Sister Mary Randal

Snowman in straw hat,
holding pink azaleas, stares
his astonishment.

—Marjorie E. Reynolds

Bravo! Once again
the circus tiger did not
consume the trainer.

—Telsa

HAIKU IN SWAHILI

For some time I have been contending that a haiku is either a haiku, both in structure and content requirement, or it is **not** one, no matter **what** language it is written in. Imagine my delight, therefore, upon receiving a letter from Anita Speer Smith of Indianapolis, Indiana, which contained haiku written in Swahili with English translations. Following are some of her haiku in Swahili followed by her English translations:

Ni mtoto mwema.

Kuna nyoka shambani—
shoka lilitosha.

Oh, he's a fine boy.

There was a snake in the field—
his ax did the job.

Mtoto na ngoma,
mzee anakaa jikoni.

Je! Itatosha?

Small boy with a drum;
old man sitting by the fire.
Isn't that enough?

U macho? Ndivyo.
Ndimi niliye na macho yako
ukiwa macho.

You are awake? It's so.
It is I who have your eyes,
you being awake.

(Many thanks to Anita Speer Smith!)

Now, by all the heavens, if it is possible to write recognizable haiku in Swahili, it is possible to write them in Arawak, Malay or Burmese and have them **still** remain haiku **both in form and content**. And that being so, it is certainly possible to write definitely recognizable haiku in English.

By Clement Hoyt

A searchlight stroking
the sky with a long finger
points at the new moon.

—Katherine Saunders

Twilight fills my room;
scent of lilacs is stronger
in the shadows.

—E. Nel Snyder

As raw east winds blow,
snow crawls up the locust tree,
finding no shelter.

—Amelia W. Swayne

A winding river
of irises; a bee
busy travelling.

—John Tagliabue

He might be watching
as I view his cast-off skin—
two shadow boxers.

—Georgian Tashjian

The road vanishes
under a burden of leaves;
a wind is rising.

—June Thomas

Fallen filbert leaves
float golden on the dark pool,
over a slow crab.

—Donald J. Tickner

Frail blades of grass
crushed beneath my feet; I move
. . . and so do they.

—Mary lou Wells



Majorettes strut by—
old men, picking snagged teeth,
wink and remember.

—Lourine White

106, 107 by PATRICIA WILLIAMS

106—

Butterfly children
touch, pause, then flutter away
in a game of tag.

107—

It frosted last night!
See, the elms have put on their
red ivy flannels.

108, 109, 110 by ADELE WIRTZ

108—

In a plat of weeds
and a tangle of wild grass,
one petunia.



109—

The mocking bird scolds
when I pick figs from the tree
I long have thought mine.

110—

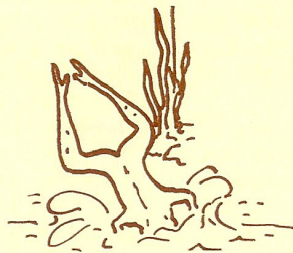
There is no partridge
in my pear tree but the bees
fill it with promise.

Under-water-land,
fairy forest—I know moss
is a pest! I'll rake!

—Anna Nash Yarbrough

It isn't the cold,
or the dying leaves . . . It's just
that the birds have flown.

—Virginia Brady Young



BOOK REVIEWS

TALES FROM THE JAPANESE STORYTELLERS — collected by Post Wheeler; edited by Harold G. Henderson; privately printed by The Japan Society of New York and not for public sale; and 750 copies for sale in Japan by John Weatherhill, Inc., 50 Ryudo-cho, Azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan (printed in Japan).

Even if this little masterpiece were not such a rarity, due to its limited publication, it would be a treasure worthy of being sought by connoisseurs.

Post Wheeler, an American in the U. S. Diplomatic Foreign Service stationed for years in Japan, became fascinated by the *hanashika*, Japanese public storytellers. Seeing they were doomed to disappear, Wheeler dedicated himself to recording their stories. From this monumental treasure house of lore still in

manuscript form, Harold G. Henderson has selected a number of the tales and edited them in that inimitable manner he has when treating Japanese literature. The result is an absolute jewel. Among other facets, the naturalness with which poetry plays its occasional part in the lives of the Japanese is one of the subtler beauties of this very beautiful book. For it is a beautiful creation physically as well as aesthetically. The crests of ancient families used as decorations at the beginning of each tale have that restrained exquisiteness and harmony with the stories they introduce that only the Japanese and those dedicated to their arts, such as Harold Henderson, seem to be able to achieve. Again Henderson has taken jewels of Japanese creativeness and added a lustre rare indeed and strangely his own. (Reviewed by C. Hoyt.)

THE AUTHORITARIAN SYNDROME IN HAIKU

By James E. Bull

The recently issued two-volume HISTORY OF HAIKU (Hokuseido Press: Tokyo, 1963-64, \$6.00 each) brings to a close R. H. Blyth's monumental work, begun fifteen years ago with the publication of the first book of his four-volume HAIKU.

There is no question that the two volumes of a HISTORY OF HAIKU are valuable. Together, they comprise a fertile field of figures, styles, masterpieces and near misses. The wealth of material is truly startling, particularly that in the second volume, "From Issa up to the Present," which contains an invaluable account of the development of modern Japanese haiku.

From the point of view of the reader-

writer of American haiku, however, Blyth's statements about such things as the visual vs. oral-aural comprehension of Japanese haiku and the development of contemporary "World Haiku" are most important. They are important, not only because of the position Blyth holds in literary affairs, but also because of the possibility that American haiku writers will place blind faith in the statements of established authority and in the judgments of expert opinion.

"World Haiku," the last chapter of HISTORY (vol. 2), follows what one would think to be the last chapter in any book, the "Summary."

The "Summary" ends on page 347; "World Haiku" begins on page 349; page

348 is blank. Nothing in "World Haiku" is indexed. (The last thing indexed in the HISTORY is Blyth's definition of "Heaven," page 347). In other words, "World Haiku" appears to have been added after the second volume of HISTORY was in page proofs. One might conclude that it was added hastily, as an afterthought, for the chapter does not live up to its title.

The chapter is not about "World Haiku" at all, but about English language haiku—specifically about Blyth's views of what haiku should be in English, and about the haiku of J. W. Hackett, who appears to be one of Blyth's disciples in the United States. But before treating the Blyth-Hackett "World Haiku," we must put it in perspective.

In the first volume of the HISTORY (1963), Blyth makes several significant

statements about haiku techniques—about visual vs. oral-aural comprehension of Japanese haiku: "Haiku have no rhyme, little rhythm, assonance, alliteration, or intonations . . . (and) not much onomatopoeia. . . . Nowadays, 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 mouth" (p. 7). It is noteworthy that back in 1949, in volume one of HAIKU, Blyth used a good deal of ink saying just the opposite about rhythm, onomatopoeia and the oral-aural nature of haiku (pp. 357-371).

This is not to say that a man cannot change his mind in fourteen years. I only want to point out that Blyth gives no indication in volume one of the HISTORY that he had ever held another view; that in volume one of HAIKU,

fourteen years earlier, he was careful to illustrate his points, whereas in HISTORY he makes the unsupported statements quoted above.

With that background, one should be prepared for the Blythian fireworks in "World Haiku" at the end of volume two. In that chapter, Blyth devotes most of his comments to what Clement Hoyt has called "one fifth of a haiku"—to "structure" (see AMERICAN HAIKU, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 2-3). Says Blyth, "Europeans and Americans have to decide whether their haiku are to be in rhyming couplets or triplets, alliterative verse, free verse, what some rude people call 'a dribble of prose,' or in five, seven, five syllables as in Japanese" (HISTORY, vol. 2, p. 349).

Then Blyth quotes two cumbersome

5-7-5 translations of Basho's famous frog and crow haiku to illustrate that "... a strict adherence to 5, 7, 5 syllables in English has produced some odd translations of Japanese haiku" (p. 349). He concludes from this that "The ideal, that is, the occasionally attainable haiku form in English, would perhaps be three short lines, the second a little longer than the other two . . ." (p. 351).

Blyth began, fifteen years ago, with a pejorative attitude toward modern Japanese attempts at freeing the form from 5-7-5. He noted then that there were many haiku of more than seventeen syllables, but very few of less than seventeen. In HAIKU (vol. 1), he gave the name "haiku" to such contemporary pieces as deviated markedly from 5-7-5, indicating the pejorative in the quotation marks (p.

376). At that time he thought of 5-7-5 as the regular "rhythm-scheme or syllable division" of haiku (p. 375). It is noteworthy that he thought of 5-7-5 not simply as a matter of "syllable division" but as a matter of "rhythm-scheme." In 1949, then, rhythm was considered an important facet of haiku form. But in 1963 (HISTORY, vol. 1), we find that haiku have "little rhythm" (p. 7). And in 1964 (HISTORY, vol. 2), the contemporary Japanese haiku poets are not scored for having abandoned 5-7-5. Blyth does not have unreserved praise for syllable deviation, but he does manage open praise for one 5-5-5-5 (p. 315), and at one point he does grudgingly admit that "With great loss (old 5-7-5) there is often some gain" (p. 341). Finally, with "World Haiku" (i.e., English language haiku), having separated rhythm from

form in Japanese haiku, we drop 5-7-5, concentrating upon ". . . three short lines, the second a little longer than the other two; a two-three-two rhythm, but not regularly iambic or anapestic . . ." (p. 351).

The significance of all this lies in that it provides background for the appearance of thirty-one poems ". . . chosen, not altogether at random, from a forthcoming book of haiku by J. W. Hackett of San Francisco" (p. 351).

Hackett is no stranger to AMERICAN HAIKU readers, having been published in the first two issues of the magazine, and having won first prize in the first issue with his "Searching on the wind, / the hawk's cry / is the shape of its beak" (p. 6). AMERICAN HAIKU readers have been waiting for a year for the appearance of Hackett's book, which was

announced in the magazine's second issue as "Now Available." At that time, the editors (James Bull and Donald Eulert) hailed him as ". . . one of the foremost practitioner—authorities on haiku in English" (p 51).

In "World Haiku," Blyth quotes from a letter by Hackett, in which the "practitioner-authority" sets forth his haiku theory. "I regard 'haiku' as fundamentally existential, rather than literary . . . as primarily an experience, rather than a form of poetry." Hackett then quotes Basho on "intuitive experience" as "the basis of Haiku." Following this, he announces, "And now, his criterion, is my own" (p. 351). He continues with, "For Haiku is ultimately more than a form (or even a kind) of poetry; it is a Way—one of living awareness" (p. 352).

One can marshal Blythian support for

Hackett's non-literary haiku, relying upon such a facile statement as, "Haiku is not really literature for it dispenses with words as far as possible" (104). However, the most significant point in Hackett's statements lies in that they emphasize the "Zen" of haiku. Actually, Blyth has stressed the Zen "Suchness" of haiku for years, book after book. And although he does not have unqualified praise for the American's work, Blyth is pleased to find this quality in Hackett, whose poems, according to Blyth, ". . . are (aimed at) the Zen experience, the realising, the making real in oneself of the thing-in-itself . . ." (p. 351).

AMERICAN HAIKU poets could profit from basing their work on "experience," "the thing-in-itself." They (and J. W. Hackett) might also note an important Blythian qualification in the "Pref-

ace" to HAIKU (vol. 1): "I understand Zen and poetry to be practically synonyms, but as I said before, if there is ever imagined to be any conflict between Zen and the poetry of haiku, the Zen goes overboard; poetry is the ultimate standard" (p. v).

Using Blyth's argument, if one can separate Zen and poetry in haiku, it stands to reason that there is a difference between Zen and haiku: Zen is "thing-in-itself" experience; haiku is a way of expressing "thing-in-itself"—art. Zen is experience; haiku is poetry, the expression of experience. Expression, even "artless" expression, involves form.

Traditionally, Japanese haiku form involved (in part) 5-7-5 syllables. Now, it is true that the "masters strayed from 5-7-5," as J. W. Hackett says (HISTORY, vol. 2, p. 351). But to consider

that "straying" tantamount to "license" seems a bit strained. Certainly generations of Japanese poets were not born with the ability to manage ". . . one emission of breath, one exhalation of soul" (p. 350) in seventeen syllables, divided into 5-7-5 rhythm. They were not born with that ability any more than they were born with the ability to walk. They had to learn to give poetic form to their experience of "the thing-in-itself." As artists, they had to learn to differentiate between experience (Zen) and art (haiku). But Hackett, the "practitioner-authority," says, "I use 2 lines whenever I wish, and there is no doubt that some Haiku experiences can be more naturally expressed in this way" (pp. 351-352). Well, this only proves that Hackett cannot separate haiku (Zen) experience from haiku (poetic) art. The "natural" expression of a haiku

(Zen) experience is one thing; the “unnatural” expression of a haiku (artistic) poem is another. The one is an expression of “Haiku experience”; the other is a haiku. There is a difference. And the crux lies partly in the form of the expression. Form is one thing that separates Zen experience (which might be expressed poetically) from haiku poem (which might express some Zen).

The emphasis upon the Zen in haiku experience may be dangerous. It is true that Blyth has stressed it throughout his many volumes on haiku. And it seems equally true that Hackett has dropped haiku poetry for Zen experience, possibly confusing the function of the haiku with that of the koan. Hackett’s emphasis upon Zen may be what leads him into a too frequent use of “poetic” synesthesia,

as in his “Drifting whitely / over a deserted beach . . . / the sound of surf” (AMERICAN HAIKU, vol. 1, no. 2, p. 22). One might check Blyth’s HAIKU (vol. 4, pp. 339-341) for a few examples of Japanese use of the same device. One might contrast the synesthetic effect of Hackett’s poem with that in Basho’s “The sea darkens; / The voices of the wild ducks / Are faintly white” (Blyth translation, p. 339). A comparison of the poems in which Hackett relies on synesthesia indicates that he uses the device in order to give the Zen impression of getting at the “thing-in-itself.” One might find it difficult to understand the reason for the seeming Zen-Existential strain, in view of the fact that Blyth himself has said, “Where there seems to be least Zen, there may be most” (HAIKU, vol. 1, p.

244). Is it possible that the converse may also be true?

And what about the form of Hackett's "supra-literary mission" haiku? Of the thirty-one haiku published in "World Haiku," twenty-two seem to fit part of Blyth's ideal— ". . . three short lines, the second a little longer than the other two . . ." Six of the pieces are traditional 5-7-5; two are 5-6-4; two are 6-7-5; and the remaining twenty-one, no two alike, range from 2-5-6 to 5-7-7. On the surface, it appears that Hackett is justified in saying, "It seems clear that the whole matter of syllables and lines is an arbitrary one, and should be" (HISTORY, vol. 2, p. 352). After all, Hackett has the approval of Blyth's "ideal," and he has produced a great number of variations, and he is (according to AMERICAN HAIKU) a "practitioner-authority." But is Hackett

really as free of tradition as one might suppose? The importance of five-syllable lines in his work indicates that he is not.

Twenty percent (six) of the published pieces are 5-7-5; sixteen of thirty-one begin "5"; fifteen end with "5"; and eight begin and end in "5." Is there something "natural" about "5"? If so, and if we follow Blyth's "two-three-two" rhythmic formula (p. 351), the most aesthetic (not arithmetic) middle line of three would almost have to be "7." Thus, the "ideal" in English would be 5-7-5, as it is in Japanese. One might conclude from this evidence that ". . . the whole matter of syllables and lines is (not) an arbitrary one, and should (not) be."

At the beginning of this essay, I mentioned the possibility that American

haiku writers will place blind faith in the statements of established authority and in the judgments of expert opinion. It seems to me that R. H. Blyth is, unquestionably, an established authority: he has made enormous contributions to haiku knowledge in English. In the course of producing six volumes specifically on haiku, he has also contradicted himself on essential points. To follow **blindly** his statements about Japanese and English language haiku might be disastrous. To follow **blindly** the expert opinion of J. W. Hackett, now discovered by the established authority, R. H. Blyth, might be equally disastrous. To follow **blindly** the lead of any of the editors of AMERICAN HAIKU (past, present, or future) might be just as devastating.

I doubt that there is any single "best" solution to this dilemma. But I suspect

that the authorization solution is certainly not what we need in naturalizing the haiku form in English. It makes small difference whether or not authorities and experts and editors consider themselves the final word. Contemporary American haiku writers seem to want authority; they seem eager to grasp the hand of the expert; and many openly "aim" at a given editor. They will make the expert's word, the authority's word, the editor's word, **The Final Word**. And one man's authority can become ratsbane to another. Such a situation seems destined to lead to internecine warfare between "Orthodox" and "Reformed" Haikuists.

It is unfortunate that Sanki Ichikawa's HAIKAI AND HAIKU is not better known in this country, for it is most illuminating to read the "Preface" to that scrupulously disinterested book and dis-

cover how it was constructed by a committee of leading Japanese scholars and translators, over a period of twelve years, 1946-1958. A perusal of that well-balanced book, the work of a twenty-four-man committee, indicates the virtue of the committee or symposium approach in criticism.

Not that one must belittle the truly great work of Blyth. No! Not that one must belittle any real poetic or non-poetic, literary or non-literary, contribution made by J. W. Hackett. No!

The point is that Blyth is but one man. And J. W. Hackett is one man, an interpreter of R H. Blyth. Together, they have produced what appears to be a Blyth-Hackett haiku, seemingly born of authoritative contradiction and expert misinterpretation of the function of poetry.

I am not suggesting the establishment of an official committee which would dictate standards. However, a group of some sort (the composition of which is beyond the scope of this essay) might be formed to assess particular and cumulative developments in English language haiku. The group would not dictate, but analyze and inform. And as it is the only English language magazine devoted exclusively to the form, AMERICAN HAIKU might open its pages to the group for the dissemination of its findings. In this way, the committee might serve to alert those most interested in haiku, concerning new and important developments. In this way, the committee might also serve to alert all concerned—, if and when an authoritarian syndrome (real, imagined, intended or unintended) shows its head in English language haiku.

A BOOKSHELF FOR THE HAIKU POET AND READER

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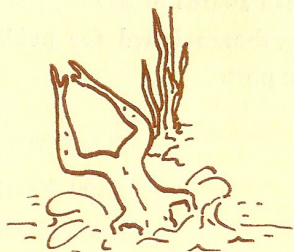
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