

**My experience of the Haiku International Association 20th Anniversary
Symposium entitled “Haiku Worldwide – Present and Future” held on 28
November 2009 at Hotel Arcadia, Ichigaya, Tokyo.**

By Annie Bachini

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the formation of the Haiku International Association (HIA) on 16 December 1989, a symposium was held in Tokyo with panelists invited from four different countries. The panel consisted of Akito Arima, President of the HIA; myself, representing Britain; Marijan Čekolj, President of the Croatian Haiku Association; Lenard D. Moore, President of the Haiku Society of America; and Stefan Wolfchutz, President of the German Haiku Society. Tsunehiko Hoshino, Vice President of the HIA, chaired the discussion. (1)

It became apparent to me from the responses to the questions put to us by Tsunehiko Hoshino that different countries put emphasis on different aspects of the genre. Having said that, although we were representatives of our countries, it is inevitable that our personal perspectives would be present to some extent in what we said. For example, Marijan spoke at length about the spiritual and philosophical aspects of haiku. If another person were representing Britain, this may have seemed a more important focus of British haiku. I suspect I came across as quite pragmatic, but that was because I was trying to be representative.

Lenard D. Moore made the point, with regard to the question of whether haiku would ever be part of mainstream poetry in our countries, that it was important to teach haiku in colleges and not just in schools for this objective to be achieved. Both Lenard and I thought that haiku would eventually become part of the mainstream in the US and the UK. Stefan, however, did not foresee this happening in Germany.

Akito Arima predicted that there would be more Internet kukai, and some of you will know that there is already the Shiki Monthly Kukai, which attracts large numbers of submissions from poets living in various countries. Akiko Sakaguchi told me, at the ginko and kukai she organised for us the next day, that she organises an Internet kukai, but restricts the number to ten because otherwise the number of haiku that have to be read make is more of a chore than a pleasure.

Kireji is a very important aspect of haiku in Japan, and whilst I agreed that the two parts of a haiku written in this way can evoke a spark that enables an understanding of the whole, effectively creating a third component, I said that in Britain we tended to write in accordance with the dictates of the experience and this may mean writing in one sentence (which can also have more than one aspect to it).

Tsunehiko Hoshino noted that it is very helpful to the HIA for journals to have English translations. It will, of course, also mean that poets will have a wider readership for their work.

There was an air of celebration at the Symposium and the event was treated as an ‘occasion’. Everyone was smartly dressed, with some women wearing kimonos: very different to the jeans and T-shirts usually seen at British haiku events. The Symposium lasted for around two hours, and so was broad rather than deep in order to cover a number of topics, but discussions continued at the wonderful party held immediately afterwards.

I was picked up on for saying that in Britain haiku poets do not use metaphor or simile. Although I accept that anything can be a metaphor, that is different to writing a haiku and being conscious of its possible metaphorical resonance simultaneously.

Surely that takes away the 'aha' experience. The writing and reading of haiku are completely different processes to me. I accept that when we read a haiku we project all kinds of things onto it that may be unrelated to the literal meaning. So, although I do not like projection within a haiku because it does too much work for the reader, even I project when I read them, even onto my own.

A renga was started at the party by Marshall Hryciuk (President of the Haiku Society of Canada 1990 – 1997) and Karen Sohne with Tadashi Kondo (renga expert) present.

It was a delight to meet people whose names I had seen in various haiku contexts and to now know what they look like.

In the days leading up to the Symposium, we delegates felt privileged to visit the offices of the Modern Haiku Association, the Association of Haiku Poets, and the Museum of Haiku Literature. Contrary to popular belief, anyone can join the Modern Haiku Association. It is not restricted to avant-garde poets. At the Museum of Haiku Literature, I stood next to an original kakejiku (scroll) by Bashō. That was a truly momentous moment (captured on my camera!).

The Haiku International Association is supported by the Association of Haiku Poets, the Modern Haiku Association, and the Association of Japanese Classical Haiku, as well as a number of corporations. "The purpose of the Association is to promote friendship and mutual understanding among poets, scholars and others who share a common interest in haiku, though they may live in very distant parts of the world". (2)

My thanks go to the committee of the Haiku International Association for inviting me to the Symposium and to those people responsible for co-ordinating the day and ensuring our stay was so enjoyable and interesting: Tsunehiko Hoshino, Tōru Kiuchi (Chairman, Executive Committee of the Symposium, HIA), Hana Fujimoto, Emiko Miyashita, Toshio Kimura (Director of HIA), and Masako Kakutani. Thanks also to the Association of Haiku Poets for their generosity and exchange of ideas, in particular, Takaha Shugyo, President of the Association of Haiku Poets. Equally generous was the Modern Haiku Association, and many thanks to all the people who took part in our talks at their offices, including two Vice Presidents: Terai Taniko and Kazuichi Murai.

On a more personal level I would like to thank my fellow delegates for their good company, everyone who gave me books and presents, Akiko Sakaguchi for arranging a 'feast' and a ginko and kukai, and Stephen Gill for helping to organise my stay in Kyoto, after Tokyo.

(1) The titles accorded to people were held by those mentioned at the time of the Symposium; some may have changed since that time.

(2) HI, No.83, p7.

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