HAIKU SOCIETY OF AMERICA 333 EAST 47TH STREET NEW YORK CITY 10017

MINUTES & PROCEEDINGS 19 February 1976

Minutes of the Business Meeting

The meeting was opened at 6:10 pm by Pres. Higginson in Conference Room 2 at Japan House.

Members present were Penny Bihler, L. A. Davidson, James F. DeRoche, Frances Drivas, Bernard L. Einbond, Wm. J. Higginson, Tadashi Kondo, Cor van den Heuvel, Dirk van den Heuvel, Dorsha Wallman. Carl Fredricks and Dorita J. Kerner were guests.

Minutes & Proceedings of the 29 January 1976 meeting were corrected to read “29 January 1976” rather than “19 January” at the tops of pages 3 and 5, and accepted as corrected.

Reports:
Treasurer’s Report

Balance as at Jan. 29, 1976		$740.50
Advance to Higginson for mailings/ printing/supplies	($100.00)	
To Japan Society: memberships for 4 HSA officers	($100.00)	
Income from dues		$78.00
Balance Feb. 19, 1976		$618.50

Note that some 60 members have not yet paid dues of 1976.

Preliminary to putting out a full membership list in the fall, the Treasurer reports the following new members have joined since November 1975 [street addresses redacted out]:

Penny Bihler, ————, Scotch Plains, NJ 07076
Charlotte Delabriandais, ————, Bishop, CA 93514
Sylvia Heimbach, ————, NYC 10011
Robert Mainone, ————, Delton, Mich. 79046
Kenneth Olsen, ————, Ft. Wayne, ILL 46804
Lilie Todd O’Neill, ————, Port Arthur, TX 77640
Raymond Roseliep, ————, Dubuque, IA 52001
Florence Davidson Strother, ————, Richmond, VA 23225
Tom Tico, ————, San Francisco, CA 40017
Dirk van Heuvel, ————, East Orange, NJ 07017

James F. DeRoche, ————, Flushing, NY 11355
Martin Harbeson, ————, Bishop, CA 93514

Respectfully submitted,

/signed/ Frances Drivas, Treasurer

Pres. Higginson welcomed these new members on behalf of the Society.

V. Pres. Davidson reported that Japan Society had received a donation on our behalf, to be used to help defray the expenses of our meeting room, and requested that further tax deductible donations to Japan Society in our name be held until the Japan Society's new fiscal year, starting July 1st, so that they might apply to our credit against fall meeting expenses.

On meeting dates, Davidson reported that we have reserved the third Thursday of each month through May 1976. Dates for meetings in the fall are not yet set, and she asked that we circulate the following

NOTICE

Members who can attend meetings are asked to drop a postcard to L.A. Davidson, Apt. 8-O, 2 Washington Square Village, NYC 10012, stating whether they would prefer to meet on Tuesday or Thursday evenings in September, October, and November, or if they have no preference. Please DO send a card, even if you have no preference, stating that. (Please do this now, before you forget!)

Acting for Geraldine C. Little, Chairperson of the Biennial Awards Committee, Davidson reported that the report of that Committee (see Jan. Minutes) should be amended to show that the award to Calvin French for The Poet-Painters is designated as the Shinzo Shirae Award, donated by Edythe Polster, and that the award to Foster Jewell for Passing Moments is designated the Gerald Brady Memorial Award, donated by Virginia Brady Young The ammendment to the report was accepted.

Reading Committee Chair Cor van den Heuvel announced that the Performing Arts Program of Japan Society has agreed to pay the honoraria of the readers at the April 6th reading.

The Society takes note of the following books by members (no endorsement implied):

Forest Stirling Bell, Cirque Poems (no ordering information given), short free-verse poems in sequence.

Dirk van den Heuve1, Tunnel a linked image poem, at 254 from From Here

Press, Box 2702, Paterson, NJ 0750

We also note the following magazines, which may be of interest to our members:

SEER OX: American Senryu Magazine, Michael McClintock, ed., Box 42923, Los Angeles, CA 90050; irregular (frequent), at $2.25/4 issues.

DRAGONFLY: A Quarterly of Haiku, Lorraine Ellis Harr, ed., 4102 NE 130th Place, Portland, OR 97230; quarterly, $5.00 per year.

THE END, special issue: THE END OF THE YEAR 1975: WESTERN HAIKU ISSUE, price $2.00. "Dedicated to R.H. Blyth and Jack Kerouac." Pat Nolan, ed., Box 798, Monte Rio, CA 95462; no frequency indicated, subscriptions $10/4 issues.

The business meeting was adjourned at 6:40 for the program.

PROCEEDINGS

WJH: I take great pleasure in introducing tonight's speaker, who holds two degrees in linguistics from Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, and is presently studying for his second master's degree at Columbia University. Tadashi Kondo was first introduced to me, and to the Haiku Society, through his acquaintance with Cid Corman, the poet and editor, while Tadashi was studying in Kyoto. He has been a member of our Society since 1973, and we have been in active correspondence throughout that time. While a student in Kyoto he lived for two years in the Rakushisha, a cottage where Basho wrote some of his most important works; Tadashi was the personal assistant to Shiranshi Kudo, Eleventh Master of Rakushisha, and a key figure in the continuing tradition of renga.

[The following (edited) discussion was largely interspersed with the presentation by Tadashi Kondo which begins on page 5 of these Proceedings, and was printed in advance. Perhaps the easiest order in which to follow the paper and the discussion is to first read all of page 5, then begin here and read until directed to page 8, etc. A look at the Table and Figure on pages 6 & 7 will make it easier to follow the paper and the discussion.]

[after page 5] WJH: Perhaps it would be good to give an explanation of the table: The four columns headed "Akuoke," "Hatsushi-gure," "Hanami," and "Umegaka" represent, as you go down the columns, the succession of the seasons, verse by verse, that you find upon reading those named poems—these represent four actual poems, which are renga in the kasen form. Also the positions of the moon and flower verses in these particular renga are indicated in the chart. In other words, if you were to read "Akuoke," a poem which is in the Anthology Sarumino, you would find that the first three links are

in autumn, the third has the moon in it, and that the fourth is a neutral verse, the next three verses (there's a typo there) are in spring, etc.

DK: Question: You're using "link" and "verse" synonymously?

WJH: That's right. I should say that we're assuming some foreknowledge of the subject. This detailed technical discussion is preceded for most of us by having read some material dealing with the over-all idea of what this kind of poetry is about. It also follows up the workshop we did at our last meeting, which concerned moving from one verse to another. If you want to consider it like a sonnet sequence for a moment, that will help you to get some idea of the basic structure, although these links are shorter than a sonnet—they are haiku-length and less than that. [Kondo resumes presentation at top of page 8.]

English-language sources on the Japanese renga/renku:

R.H. Blyth, Haiku, I (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1949), pp. 126–144; a good discussion of the topic, with one complete renga translated arid analyzed verse-by-verse. Recommended as a first introduction.

Geoffrey Bownas & Anthony Thwaite, tr., The Penguin Book of Japanese Verse (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964), pp. 124–127; a complete translation of one full Basho-school renku. Good translation.

Donald Keene, ed., Anthology of Japanese Literature From the Earliest Era to the Mid-Nineteenth Century (NY: Grove Press, 1955), pp. 314–321, 377–383. Translations of the first half of a pre-Basho 100-link renga, and of commentary on renku technique by one of Basho's disciples, purported to quote the master.

Matsuo Basho [et al.], Maeda Cana, tr., Monkey's Raincoat (NY: Mushinsha/Grossman, 1973), a complete translation of the four renku from Sarumino with commentary.

Makoto Ueda, Literary and Art Theories in Japan (Cleveland: Press of Western Reserve U., 1967), pp. 37–54, 145–172. Theories, with examples, of one of the earliest renga masters, and of Basho,

Makoto Ueda, Matsuo Basho (NY: Twayn 1970), pp. 69-111. Basho's theories discussed, with two complete renku translated and fully commented upon.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE CLASSICAL KASEN (36-link renku)

Tadashi Kondo

FORM Kasen form renku consists of 36 verses or lines (often called "links"). The odd-numbered lines are commonly composed in 5–7–5 form (17 onji), and the even-numbered lines in 7–7 form (14 onji). A line of 17 onji is called the "long verse"

(chôku), that of 14 onji is called the “short verse” (tanku).

THE KAISHI The lines 1 through 18 are on the first sheet (see the Figure on page 7), the lines 19 through 36 are on the second sheet. The front of the first sheet contains lines 1 through 6; 7 to 18 are on the back of the first sheet. And 19 to 30 occupy the front of the second sheet, 31 to 36 the back of the second sheet. The first verse (long) is called the hokku, or “starting verse,” the second line is the wakiku, or “side verse.” The last link (36) is called the ageku.

THE SEASONS The hokku must be in the actual season when the poem is written. The wakiku should be in the same season. Within the body of the kasen the seasons are also [determined] by certain guidelines as to frequency. Some links will governed be seasonal (ki no ku), while others will show no season, and are called “neutral” (zô no ku). Before changing season from one link to the next, it is desirable to compose a neutral link, but this rule is often broken. Guidelines for the various seasons may be summarized as follows:

With respect to spring and autumn: (a) Given a link in either season, usually the next two links will also be in that season—i.e. there will normally be a minimum of three links together it spring or autumn. (b) There should be no more than five links together in either spring or autumn.

With respect to summer and winter: There should be no more than three links in succession in summer or winter.

For what this looks like in actual kasen of the Bashô School, see the Table [below].

SPECIAL TOPICS There are three topics of special interest in the classical renga; and in the kasen form, the 36-link renku, these have been governed by special guidelines as to frequency and position. They are “love,” “moon,” and “flower.

Love is generally excluded from the first six verses. Two love verses (koi no ku) are expected in the second page (back of the first sheet), two in the third page (front of the second sheet). It is usual to have at least five verses without love between two pairs of verses with love. But as can be seen by referring to the Table on pages 6 and 7, these rules are not always adhered to (see “Hatsushigure” and “Umegaka”). Without at least one love verse, it is not a renku.

The moon is a very popular topic, and is traditionally assigned to three specific positions in a kasen (see Table). If the moon verse (tsuki no ku) appears earlier than expected, it is called a “pulled up moon” (hikiage no tsuki); e.g., “Akuoke” 3, 25, and “Umegaka” 24. A “dropped moon” (koboshi no tsuki) occurs when the moon appears later than expected; e.g., Akuoke 14, Hatsushiure 16, Hanami 14, and Umegaka 14. (Generally

speaking one is not supposed to drop the moon onto the 30th line, but see Hanami 30.) When the kasen is started with a hokku in the season of autumn, the moon should be pulled up to the second or third verse. Starting in autumn and omitting the moon from lines 2 and 3 is called “plain autumn” (su-aki), and is taboo.

The “flower” of renku, as with the haiku, refers always to the cherry blossom. The following rules do not apply to any other kind of flower’, such as plum or chrysanthemum blossoms. The next-to-last verse on each sheet (17 and 35) should be flower verses (hana no ku). If the flower verse appears earlier than expected it is called a “pulled up flower” (hikiage no hana); e.g., Umegaka 29. Apparently the location of the flower verse is less variable than that of the moon verse, so that one critic has remarked that Umegaka 35 represents “flowery love.”

Note that while a love verse may be of any season and is frequently neutral, the moon verse is usually in autumn (exception: Hatsushigure 16), and the flower verse is always in spring. One critic suggests that it is difficult to write a good seasonally neutral verse that is not a love verse, so weaker poets often resort to love verses when they feel the need of a neutral one.

TABOOS As noted in “On Writing a Renga” (Higginson & Kondo, in Haiku Magazine, vol. 6, no. 3, pages 21–23), there are special restrictions governing the first six verses of a kasen. The authors of the Basho School specifically excluded the following topics from the front of the first sheet: Gods, Buddha, love, mutability, effusiveness, nostalgia, place names, personal names, and sickness. The contemporary renku master Tamur’a Shuko, o? Kyoto, adds the following taboos to the classical list: travel, military affairs, foreign words, obscenity, and extraordinary events.

These are some of the special details of the classical Japanese renku in the kasen form. I do not offer them in the belief that American writers should accept these restrictions, but hope they will be helpful to those who wish to understand what Japanese poets do. I am very interested to see what kinds of things will happen in American renku.

— Tadashi Kondo

[discussion at end of “Love” paragraph on page 8:]

WJH: Tadashi, could you tell us what a love verse is? Someone might think it was like a Shakespearean sonnet …

TK: A love verse is anything about woman or man in relation, for example, a short verse by Michael McClintock: “stripping each other / the two move as one” (from “The Split Moon,” HM 6:3, p. 31). Obviously this is the connotation of love.

WJH: Does it have to be that direct? That's very obvious, having to do with overtly sexual activity. Are there other verses in that renku that perhaps do not so obviously indicate sexual activity, but which would be classified as love verses by a Japanese?

TK: For example, you can indicate a bride, or marriage …

WJH: How about neko no koi (cats in love)? Isn't that a love-verse subject?

TK: It is not love, it is not human love. Usually they describe man and woman.

PB: Tadashi, it has to be about man and woman, it can't be about parent/child, or … ?

TK: No, because in Japanese we have two words for "love"—it's not ai, it's koi, in renku.

PB: Like agape and eros …?

TK: Yes.

WJH: The thing I was driving at, does the "love verse" have to be so obviously involved with an actual display of sex? Can't it be more subtle than that?

TK: Oh, sure, it should be. Usually it is very subtle. Overtones.

CvdH: How about the haiku of the umbrella and the raincoat walking together? If that happened to be in a renku would that be a love verse? TK: In a certain position, yes, that kind of thing is ok.

TK: For example, one love verse goes this way: "The day a lady does not go out of her house, he likes indoors." He runs a taxi cab and usually goes out of the house to catch a customer on the back of the horse and he carried them—usually he goes out when the weather is fine. And he has many chances to see beautiful women outside, but if it is raining or some bad weather he can't go out, he has no business.

CvdH: This is a cab driver you're talking about?

TK: No, in Edo Era they don't have any cabs, there are horses for hire …

CvdH: It's just the opposite now, a cab driver has lots of business on a rainy day. (laughter)

TK: So on the rainy day he likes indoors.

WJH: That's pretty subtle. Frequently what to a Japanese appears to be a love verse, or have some connotation or undertone of love to it, the Western reader might read and not be aware of that at all.

TK: In that case, his [the man of the given example] mind is simply moved by seeing someone; there's no physical contact at all.

[discussion following "Moon" paragraph on page 8:]

TK: The three basic positions of the moon are the 5th, 13th, and 29th verses.

BLE: Is there any reason for that? Why the 5th rather than the 4th?

LAD: Where these rules set down by some master, or were these from research that determined how renku actually look, I mean you looked at the poems and researched it?

TK: These rules come down from the rules of renga, it's the preceding form of renku.

LAD: And these rules were made out by …

TK: By a person called Nijo Yoshimoto. He made up very precise rules. But they were too rigid; couldn't move at all. Before the Edo Era, they followed exactly the rule. But after Basho, they changed, they didn't have to follow the rules exactly. Basically, they had the rules, but they can change them as they want.

WJH: Tadashi likes to make the distinction that before Basho it's "renga," after Basho it's "renku." I fail to see that in terms of the form there's a basic difference. There's a difference in terms of some of the objectives.

TK: The method is different. Before Basho's time it was called haikai no renga or "playful renga." It was not as strict, so they could change, they could use any vocabulary, so it was not traditional renga any more. They called it haikai no renga and it is the equivalent of renku.

WJH: Well where we get confused is the Japanese love to invent a new term, just like they give themselves new names. Actually what they're doing is they're naming a new cycle of an ongoing tradition. And just because the cycle has shifted there's a new name for it. For example, this so-called serious renga of an earlier day eventually came to be called ushin renga And a less elevated style is called mushin renga. Then the low style becomes dominant, and more playful, and becomes haikai no renga And then Basho comes along and it's called renku. It's still the same basic kind of poetry. It's written in

sequence by a number of people together—whichever term you use.

[discussion at end of “flower” paragraph, page 8:]

(Here we discussed the fact that the word hana [“blossom”] is specific to the “flower verse,” and that it always means cherry blossom unless modified (e.g., ume no hana “plum blossom”). Kondo went on to point out that it is possible to use the word sakura (“cherry”) also to mean cherry blossom, as in the following poem by Basho:

ki no moto wa shiru mo namasu mo sakura kana

Under the trees! Soup, fish salad and all/ In cherry blossoms.

—-tr. by Makoto Ueda

Here where the word hana does not appear, but only sakura the poem is obviously speaking of the blossoms of the cherry, the petals even.)

PB: But two flower verses is the usual thing …

WJH: What happens if there are a lot more; does that disturb you?

PB: That’s breaking the rules again.

TK: It won’t happen.

WJH: It has been my theory that the reason for saying you can only have so many verses of one season following one another, or you can only have the moon in these particular places, or a flower in these particular places, is because the seasonal thing is very popular. And because in particular the moon which is an autumn season word, and the word hana which means “cherry blossoms” and is a spring season word, are very popular topics, and if they were not restricted then people would be popping them in all the time. You would end up with a poem, a whole 36-link renku, about cherry blossoms and moon, and there would be nothing else in it. In order to have some variety, it’s necessary to do that.

[discussion following the last paragraph on page 8:]

TK: So actually, a neutral verse is not too easy to write.

CvdH: But there are an awful lot of them here in these four [poems illustrated in the

table].

WJH: But the point is there are supposed to be a lot of them. It's easier to write a neutral link that has love in it than one that does not. And yet you're supposed not to have too many love verses, so it's like people are sort of "giving in" to writing a love verse. If you look at the tables you'll find that the majority of the love verses are not in a season. It's maybe a 75/25 split. For example, after the two summer verses in "Akuoke" [vs. 11 and 12], you may not want to write another summer verse, so the next two verses are neutral, but they happen to be love verses also.

BLE: But there are more neutral verses that are not about love [in the examples in the table].

WJH: True, but the point is that you can only write a total of four verses about love in the whole damned thing. You're only permitted four verses. Maybe in "Hatsushigure" these poets are showing us their virtuosity by delaying love until the last minute. (Laughter)

CvdH: Did you say that there should be more neutral verses than seasonal verses?

WJH: No; there should be a number of neutral verses, though. As Tadashi said, there is supposed to be, theoretically, a neutral verse before you change the season. In other words, if you're going to have three verses in spring, you ought to have a neutral verse before you then go to autumn or winter or whatever. They don't always do that—but that is the rule, which is designed, I presume, in order to create some neutral verses, because if every verse is bound up in the seasons you never get out of the seasons.

CvdH: How subtle are the season words? You talked about the subtlety of the love verses … I mean if someone mentions snow then we're talking about winter, obviously, but if …

WJH: Well, what season is the morning glory? It's autumn. By definition, because it's in a list of words that says "autumn" above it in a directory somewhere? …

?: Covered by convention.

TK: In the South Pole you can have snow in summer.

WJH: Tadashi, give us some examples of season words that do not obviously, to our minds, have something to do with the season.

TK: Let's look at the "Split Moon." The first verse is about the moon, so it's autumn. The second verse, "they open slowly,/ the moth's wings" that's about the moth, so I might consider it to be summer. Because usually the moth is active in summer.

WJH: Alright, but is the moth in fact a season word in Japanese?

TK: Yes. The next verse, “this empty lot / filling with wing-sound: / the nighthawks,” this nighthawk might be summer

?: What’s “crow”?

TK: Crow is winter.

JFD: So, in other words, in order to understand these poems very well, you have to have a sensibility for the things that are associated with each season.

WJH: I think that happens, for the better poets—it becomes subliminal.

LAD: In writing haiku in English, though, we adapt the seasons to our own seasons, which are somewhat different from the Japanese, right? (General agreement.)

TK: In Japan, too. The seasonal feeling is based on Kyoto, not on Hokkaido or Kyushu …

LAD: So the others write on the Kyoto season words, do they, or do they adapt …

TK: Yes, they did, but now they do not do that, because they are aware of the reality of the seasons. But in the Edo Era a person in the south of Japan used the same seasonal code as they used in Kyoto.

WJH: You said “seasonal code”? That’s beautiful. That’s what it is—a code!

TK: Obviously, the season words have different feelings in different places. When you have snow here and when you have snow in Minnesota—the snow is different. The feeling is different. The snow in Connecticut … ?

(To be continued in the March Proceedings.)