

[Book Review]

*Haiku Review* '82      Ed. Randy & Shirley Brooks.

Indiana: High/Coo Press, 1982. 36 pp. \$ 4.00.

by *Atsuo Nakagawa*

It was decades ago that William J. Higginson expressed his intention of compiling and editing a haiku checklist, whose appearance not a few haikuists waited for in vain. Meanwhile several bibliographies on small scales began to appear from 1962 (for details, see *Haiku Review* '82). Then to our surprise, a young couple in Indiana, who had begun to publish mini-chap-books related with haiku, issued their first checklist, *Haiku Review* '80 in 1980, but this was not an impressive work.

Randy and Shirley Brooks edited and published their second issue of what may well be called "What's What in English Haiku." It has expanded to 36 pages from the 24-page *Haiku Review* '80, and is very rewarding either for reading or for mere acquisition. It contains voluminous information—"Directory of Haiku Books in Print," "Bibliography of Essays on Haiku and Related Topics," "Haiku Bibliographies" and lists of haiku magazines and magazines receptive to haiku, which are almost complete—in addition to a review of haiku books published in the years 1980 and 1981 by Elizabeth Lamb, LeRoy Gorman's inspiring assessment of alternatives in form and theme, and three interesting short essays on haiku and haikuists by Betty Drevnioc, Raymond Roseliep, and the editor (—maybe Randy).

Elizabeth S. Lamb, one of the most competent haikuists and haiku critics on the American continent, says in her "Haiku Books of 1980-81 and a Few Others" that 80 or more publications in, or relating to, the haiku field, appeared during the years, and her survey indicates no lessening of interest in haiku and points toward the continuing growth and development of western haiku, predicting that there will be a continuing need for haiku poets to maintain and increase their grounding in the classical Japanese form. She also sees increasing interest in haiku in the other poetry "communities."

Of the growth and development of English haiku, she stresses Bob Boldman's successful two-line form and Raymond Roseliep's ever-vigorous intriguing haiku production, and concludes that "Western haiku is becoming increasingly recognized in the broader area of 20th century poetry, and perhaps the day is not far away when it will be a fully accepted segment of modern poetry."

LeRoy Gorman, in his "Assessment of Alternatives in Form and Theme: Into the Postmodern," says that English haiku entered a modern era of exploration in the mid-sixties, and that the refinement of haiku form (which is the shortening of the classic 17-syllable form) served a crucial need to circumvent a bankruptcy in creativity. And he explores further experimental forms and possibilities in the future haiku poetry. Gorman chiefly analyzes experimental haiku in haiku-like forms appeared in the *Cicada* and commends "Visual Techniques" in one-liners like that of Bob Boldman's, of marrying free-form words in syntax with fresh uses of typewritten runes, and Bill Pauly's marriage of visual and one-line haiku.

Regarding what he calls "Reductive Poetics" he mentions Eric Amann's binary or two-word approach, Marlene Will's use of sound poetics, Gorman's use of phonetic spelling and neologism, one-word haiku, and George Swede's language-centered poetics, and says, "The idea of haiku that can be viewed as both a sound orchestration and a non-referent exploration is fascinating."

As to *haibun*, he sees its future in the haiku novella—the marriage of prose to haiku; and of *renga*, he predicts that there will be intense experimentation—even purely visual *renga*, sound *renga*, or mixes of all approaches.

In spite of their apparently "radical" new approaches—their premise being "haiku is an ever-expanding and receptive artform"—that go beyond the traditionally accepted haiku norms, they "appear steadfast in the purpose—to find the purity of expression Basho sought," a purity "possible through the exploration of new mediums"—and that is what Gorman believes, and he concludes that the haiku movement in English has reached a level of maturity and confidence that it can leave the security of proven technique, and that the postmodern era of haiku has set in.

Indeed the pursuit of poetic purity and poetic exploration are Basho's spirit, but I myself have never felt those examples which Gorman gives in

the essay to be worth serious consideration as poetry.

The most interesting sections of the book concern Raymond Roseliep. One of them is his literary note on some well-known poets who wrote English haiku besides other forms of poetry.

Another is also a little essay about Roseliep's contribution to haiku poetry in the English literature. The writer (maybe one of the editors, Randy Brooks) says that Roseliep's haiku have reached both haiku writers and those who are interested in contemporary poetry, and that many of his haiku have led editors and publishers to a greater receptivity to haiku in English, and gives besides a list of the poet's haiku books, lists of haiku magazines and other magazines which carried his haiku including *Poetry* and *Time* as well as a list of critical works on his haiku. It is a short essay but very convincing and shows a way of exploring the poetry world through haiku.

*Haiku Review '82* is a fine combination of a directory of haiku materials and literary articles on haiku. This continuing series should be recognized as a dependable reference for contemporary English haiku, even though it has one typographical flaw—printed in too small type for an average reader to read with ease.