

[BOOK REVIEWS]

by Atsuo Nakagawa

HAIKU REVIEW '84 High/Coo Press, 1984. 74 pp. \$ 5.00.

Two years ago, the writer reviewed the preceding issue of this serialized, painstaking compilation and editing by the Brooks, and called it "What's What in English Haiku," which is a dependable reference to contemporary English haiku and therefore is very rewarding either for reading or for mere acquisition. The editors seem to be firm in their decision to continue this pioneering, useful and academic work. For they published its third series in a far better shape and quality. This project would never be profitable because there are not many haikuists and libraries that would buy its copies, though there are lot of libraries and English-haiku writers. As in Japan, most haikuists do not buy books on haiku which they will study, and most libraries in the English-speaking countries are not interested in haiku literature yet.

Taking this fact into consideration, the Brooks' devoted work should be admired. None of its kind is found in Japan where almost one million haiku poets are living and writing numberless haiku every year.

The *Haiku Review* is published every two years by the High/Coo Press, Rt. 1, Battle Ground, Indiana 47920, U.S.A. This is the third issue of the series which, we see, has been further improved in format: the size of their type has been enlarged, the number of pages nearly doubled, and all the information given in it double checked, the editors Randy and Shirley Brooks say. As far as the reviewer is concerned, he finds no misprints in it.

The information given in it—"Haiku Bibliographies," "Haiku Books in Print," "Haiku Publishers," "Essays on Haiku," "Haiku Magazines and Societies," "Magazines Receptive to Haiku"—seems to have been meticulously and painstakingly gathered in this book. It is a wonder what voluminous useful data you can find in this modestly-priced book. It is a must for haiku poets and students and others who are interested in haiku poetry and culture. Besides those precious information, the book contains a review of the haiku books of 1982-83 by Elizabeth Searle Lamb. She has surveyed over 70 publications which appeared during the period, "ranging from the tiny, privately produced erotic senryu of Dan Liebert's *Man-Woman-River* to the

large, handsomely illustrated *Haiku Painting* by Leon Zolbrod, from a new edition of James Hackett's Zen-oriented haiku to the first haiku software, Marco Fraticelli's *Deja Vu*, designed for the Apple II Computer." She adds to it a piece of significant news from outside the haiku community that X. J. Kennedy has included an expanded section "About Haiku" in the Fifth Edition of *An Introduction to Poetry*, and concludes it with her homage to the late Raymond Roseliep who contributed a great deal to the haiku poetry in the English literature. In spite of her deep knowledge of haiku and her art in writing haiku, she is misleading in saying, "Although Japanese haiku are often erotic, this element has been slow in finding its way into English haiku."

The book also carries three other essays: "Kinetic Haiku for the Computer Screen" by Randy Brooks, "Connecting With Feeling: 5 Favorites" by Anna Vaker and "Dragonfly & Western Haiku Society" by Lorraine Ellis Harr. Of those, the first one is most impressive in the sense that it is a good and encouraging piece of news in this age of computer that haiku-composition has also *actually* participated, first of all the genres of poetry, in the latest electronic trend. It proves that the haiku is the literature which is most fitted to the present and the future. Even though Randy calls the products by the computer "kinetic haiku" because of the computer's function, the works composed by the machine would be at best the likes made impromptu by common haikuists at a common haiku meeting. They would not have any real life in them, as Randy says "computers will never be able to create haiku; they may only be used as a tool or vehicle of expressing human experiences ..."

Here is one instance:

All starred in the cold
I seize thin trails in the mist
Look the moth has gone

CICADA VOICES : Selected Haiku of Eric Amann 1966-79

George Swede, Editor. High/Coo Press, 1983. 64 pp. \$ 8.50.

Eric Amann, the father of Canadian haiku, is a physician by profession. He was deeply interested in the strange Oriental genre of poetry, the haiku, while he was still a medical student in New York City. At first, his idea of

the haiku was that of R. H. Blyth, that is, an expression of Zen in poetry, when he started a haiku magazine, *Haiku*, in beautiful format in 1967, followed by his publication of *The Wordless Poem* (1969). The book was acclaimed as one of the finest books of essays on haiku. This period forms Part One of this collection, in which we find some good haiku in the conventional form:

Last day of autumn:	First morning frost;
and still the sunset lingers	the sound of the old man's cough
in a one-way street	in the waiting room

Those haiku in the classical form remind us of some Japanese haiku masters' works.

In 1977, after ceasing his involvement with haiku for several years for personal and professional reasons, he launched another haiku periodical, *Cicada*, which was rated as the best haiku magazine in English. At the same time he organized the Haiku Society of Canada with his residence in Toronto as its base. He was then one of the pioneers experimenting with new forms of haiku in English, whose avant-garde haiku the *Cicada* printed.

However the editor George Swede has included only a few of Amann's experimental works produced in the second period of Amann's haikuist life: 1976-1979, which forms Part Two of the book. Apart from his experimental ones, surveying the haiku included in this part, we see that Eric seems to have come closer to Harold Stewart's view of haiku. According to the editor's four-page introduction to the book, Amann referred to the 'ah-experience' or 'a mood of serene calm and beauty.' Perhaps that is why the reviewer finds better haiku in the second half:

Winter burial:	Older than ever
a stone angel points his hand	under the blossoming pear tree
at the empty sky	the ticket seller
*	*
Lips to lips—	The names of the dead
no more questions	sinking deeper and deeper
no more answers	into the red leaves

The ones cited in the left side show that they are quite free of the Japanese tradition, while the ones on the other side proves that the haiku poet has

made greater progress in composing haiku.

Yet this selection of 94 from a total of 104 haiku does not dissipate the mystique surrounding the renowned editor poet that a collection of his haiku would inevitably reveal many previously unknown masterpieces. We only find in this collection the small body of superb traditional works and the few experimental pieces that have been known to most haikuists, and know that Eric's best work is at least the equal to any other North American haiku writer.