It is an honor to be with you here today, an honor of which I am unworthy. The person who should be standing here before you is Robert Spiess, for twenty-four years the editor of *Modern Haiku*. On a February evening in 2002, I received a call from Bob. He said, simply, “I am dying, please come up and take over the magazine.” The next day I drove six hours to his cottage in Wisconsin, where I loaded all of *Modern Haiku* that was not mortal into the back of my van and drove home, never to see Bob again. If I could have one wish, it would be for his presence here today to enjoy the honor he so richly deserved. It is his work over more than three decades rather than mine that has brought American haiku to its present estate.

I have good news to report from America: haiku continues to grow in popularity. In fact, Michael Basinski, a curator of one of the leading poetry libraries in the United States, writes “haiku is the dominant form of poetry in the United States.” Imagine that!

But I have even better news. Not only is haiku popular, it is sexy! A leading cosmetics manufacturer has introduced a “Haiku” line of perfumes and intimate apparel. What this tells us is that they are certain that every woman in America not only knows what haiku is, but has an image of it as something exotic and sensual.

Japanese haiku has friends in high places. Some of the first generation of these friends, such as Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, have passed from the scene. Others, such as Michael McClure and Gary Snyder, who received the Masaoka Shiki award last year, continue to work to understand and explore it.

Of the poets writing in English today, haiku has no better friend than former United States poet laureate, Billy Collins. His poem titled “Japan” unfolds as an extended meditation on a haiku by Buson. Here are the opening lines:

Japan

Today I pass the time reading
a favorite haiku,
saying the few words over and over.

It feels like eating
the same small, perfect grape
again and again.

I walk through the house reciting it
and leave its letters falling
through the air of every room.

I stand by the big silence of the piano and say it.
I say it in front of a painting of the sea.
I tap out its rhythm on an empty shelf.

I listen to myself saying it,
then I say it without listening,
then I hear it without saying it.

Because Collins is the most popular poet on the American reading circuit, none have his potential to influence the American perception of haiku. As you can hear yourself, the message he has to share about haiku has at its core the belief that a haiku is a poem of significance and as well as sensual pleasure.

From its beginning as part of a counterculture, haiku has flourished outside the mainstream of American poetry. The advent of periodicals devoted solely or mainly to haiku, the birth of the Haiku Society of America, and the appearance of three editions of *The Haiku Anthology,* an anthology of the best of contemporary English language haiku, amply attest to this phenomenon.

In spite of its enormous popularity in the West over the past 50 years, haiku has, until recently, somehow resisted penetration into the poetic mainstream. Dismissed on the one hand as "suburban garden party poems" and on the other as trivial witticisms in seventeen syllables, haiku couldn't seem to get any respect.

Poets and editors such as Bill Higginson, Cor van den Heuvel, Elizabeth Lamb, Robert Spiess, and others have worked to overcome the misperception of haiku as a second-class form of poetry. There has been some success, as the existence of Higginson's *The Haiku Handbook,* van den Heuvel's *The Haiku Anthology,* and other works attest. However, for the most part, the attempt to draw attention to haiku by promoting the work of haiku poets as exemplars has been unsuccessful. After more than forty years of trying to achieve acceptance for "our" haiku, the only two individual collections of haiku available in American bookstores are those of Jack Kerouac and Richard Wright, both of whom achieved fame in other areas and whose haiku is merely an appendix to their main work. The only haiku that have appeared in magazines with national circulation are those by well-known poets who have demonstrated little or no understanding of haiku beyond its short form.

The inability of haiku poets to gain recognition of the poetic significance of their work suggested that it might be time to consider a different strategy to advance the art of haiku in the United States. If we couldn't draw haiku into the mainstream, perhaps we could draw the mainstream into haiku?

Based on the simple idea that the most effective way to advance the form is to involve the talents of the best poets in its development, at *Modern Haiku* we have worked to engage the interest of the best contemporary poets in the genre for which we have stewardship. Recognizing that the most talented poets may not have the deepest understanding of haiku, we have taken on the task of encouraging their interest and educating their haiku sensibilities. While we continue to publish the work of those who, like myself, are devoted to haiku as an art, we have striven to engage with haiku those who have already

proven their pedigree by publishing in places as *Poetry* magazine, recognized as the leading poetry periodical in the United States.

As a result of our efforts, the work of notable poets such as Billy Collins, Pulitzer prize-winners Gary Snyder and Paul Muldoon, and the beat poets Michael McClure and Lawrence Ferlinghetti have appeared in the pages of our journal in the last few years. We have begun a chapbook series that will highlight poets of the first rank with fine-press editions of their haiku. We inaugurated the series this year with a selection of haiku by Paul Muldoon, an Irish American poet who won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 2003. We have recently received a manuscript of haiku from former United States poet laureate Billy Collins, with a note that says in part, "Of course I would be interested in doing a chapbook of haiku."

If people in the West are going to be find haiku worth reading, a haiku must be able to speak to something inside them. While this is true, not every short poem that can produce a response in the reader is a haiku, which brings us to the question of what makes haiku unique. Most of the things I have said thus far could apply to any kind of poem. But haiku is not *any* kind of poem, but a *specific* kind. It is not form that makes haiku unique, nor its brevity, as many poets who have attempted haiku in the West have failed to realize. What makes haiku unique in *Western* poetry is its introduction of a seasonal consciousness into the poem.

It is both a privilege and challenge for poets in the West to add to this rich tradition that was born here in Japan. Among poets of the first rank, it is Billy Collins who has explored the potentials of haiku most deeply and has produced the most memorable poems. Here is one of his best:

Mid-winter evening,
alone at the sushi bar—
just me and this eel

This haiku was first published in *Modern Haiku* last year and was given a modest "*Modern Haiku* Award. last year. It has since become a regular part of Collins's well-attended public readings. So the most popular poet in America today reads and talks about haiku at every opportunity. Thus "The Gospel of Haiku" is spread.

We have also engaged others, strong, steady poets who are not so much burdened with celebrity as they are blessed with skill and sensitivity. Barry Sternlieb, Alexa Selph, William Ford, and others who have achieved national recognition for their work on longer forms are now are enjoying the challenge of haiku.

At *Modern Haiku* we are not only working to foster the development of American haiku, but to increase recognition of what Japanese haiku poets are doing today. We regularly publish the work of twentieth century and contemporary Japanese haiku poets, some of whom are here today.

One of the most interesting translations we have had an opportunity to share with our readers are the haiku of Itaru Ina, a Japanese American whose four years in a detention camp during the Pacific War form a lesson on the shadow side of the American psyche. We have also published an essay by Hiroaki Sato on Japanese wartime haiku that we hope will give America food for thought on its current actions.

In the book publishing area, foremost are the chapbooks by first-rank American poets I discussed earlier. In addition, if I may be permitted to mention it, is My *Haiku: A Poet's Guide,* an introduction to the writing of haiku in English, which was recognized as the "best book of criticism" by the Haiku Society of America in 2004. We have in press a scholarly history of English-language haiku by *Modern Haiku* associate editor Dr. Charles Trumbull, the current president of the Haiku Society of America. Thus, balancing the presentation of poetry and scholarship, we hope to open a new age of haiku in the West.

One issue that I believe has been debated in Japan is whether it is possible to compose haiku in a language other than Japanese. That this is an issue is revealed that often Japanese works use the word "HAIKU' in English or in katakana(put the word "haiku" in katakana here, please) rather than the kanji "Kanji Haiku" when referring to poems in English. To be honest with you, when I first learned of this I was a little offended, but as time goes on, I find it a more and more suitable arrangement. After all, we are not writing "Kanji Haiku, but something completely different, different in both language and culture.

But what is this "haiku" we are talking about? How is it like Japanese haiku? How is it unlike?

The consciousness of haiku in the West is often divided between an awareness of classical Japanese haiku on the one hand and 5-7-5 pseudo-haiku in English on the other. As Dr. Arima Akito has observed, We live in the age of *zappai*." Nowhere is this truer than in the United States.

For those of us writing haiku in English, it is important both to honor the Japanese aesthetics that have informed haiku over the centuries and also to explore the potentials of our own language. This second area is one in which the Japanese masters, ancient and modern, can offer no guidance. Of primary importance to poets writing haiku in English are the sound devices, such as rhyme, alliteration, consonance, assonance, and onomatopoeia, that are available to us.

Early translations of Japanese haiku, by Henderson and others, and early models of haiku in English, used rhyme at the end of the first and third lines to emphasize haiku's status as a poem. While rhyme places haiku squarely in the mainstream of Western prosody, rhyme tends to close the poem rather than allowing the images to linger and work their magic. This leads most haiku poets to avoid end rhyme entirely and look for other devices more suited to its potentials.

Assonance, the use of repeated stressed vowel sounds, is less obtrusive than rhyme and thus more effective in haiku, as in this poem by Mary-Alice Herbert, the “oo” and “ah” sounds help us feel the poet’s sense of wonder in an autumn scene:

All Hallow’s Eve
swallows
loop the moon

The effective use of sound can penetrate the boundary between sound and meaning as this brilliant haiku by Peter Yovu demonstrates:

mosquito she too
insisting insisting she
is is is is is

While some poets believe that a haiku is a poem for the eye rather than the ear, readers often find that the poet’s skilful attention to rhythm or cadence can add noticeably to a poem’s artistry, as in this haiku by Robert Gilliland:

transplanting the sage—
a wheelbarrow full of bees
from backyard to front

I would like to particularly note two things about the use of language in this poem.
The first is the use of accented syllables “sage,” “bees,” and “front” to end each line. This contributes to the forward movement of the poem—and the wheelbarrow.
The second is that the first line, “transplanting the sage,” and the third “from backyard to front,” have identical metrical patterns. This creates a unity in the poem that is much less obtrusive than if he had used rhyme to attempt the same effect.

When the poet has a feeling for the flow of the words, the result can be enchanting. It is with some sadness that I note that such artistry was more common in the early days of American haiku than it is today. Perhaps it is partly because the magical rhythms of the English-language King James Bible are no longer a part of our daily thought. One has only to compare a passage from a speech by Abraham Lincoln or Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with one by George W. Bush to get some idea of what we in America have lost.

While poets sometimes believe that the use of figurative language such as simile or metaphor makes haiku worth reading, this is often not the case. Like the King James Bible, haiku use concrete images to do their work on the deepest parts of our souls, as in this haiku by haiku pioneer James W. Hackett:

Deep within the stream
the huge fish lie motionless
facing the current

Of course, the images of haiku do not always consciously seek such depths. In this haiku by LeRoy Gorman, the images remain concrete but toy with our sense of reality in the hours after midnight:

last slow dance
winter flies
couple on the bar

In this haiku, we have an effective use of what Paul O. Williams calls "unresolved metaphor." On the surface, the haiku presents and credible and interesting scene. But this slice of life becomes a rich mixture of ambiguities as we dance with the different species of barflies in the poem.

Western poetry is often weighted down with heavy-handed figurative language. The sunset has little to do with an etherized patient, whatever T.S. Eliot might have thought. A device of Japanese haiku that we in the West can make use in place of figurative language is the pivot line. In this haiku the late Kiyoko Tokutomi, the second line acts as a swinging door that carries us back and forth between two worlds:

Chemotherapy
in a comfortable chair
two hours of winter

The chair becomes the center from which we watch the chemicals enter and in which we contemplate both the literal and figurative essence of winter.

America is a culture in love with machines and easy answers. For people who grow up in such a culture, it is a challenge to make the seasonal image a vital part of the poem. When I give workshops, I encourage every aspiring haiku poet to memorize and apply the following statement from *The Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* by Shigehisa Kuriyama concerning the use of seasons in haiku:

> In a poem where the seasonal theme fulfills its true evocative function, there must be a reciprocity between the season, which expands the scope of the haiku and creates the background of associations for the scene, and the

> specific scene which points out a characteristic yet often forgotten aspect of the season and thus enriches our understanding of it ("Haiku," *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*. Tokyo, Kodansha, 1983, p. 82.

At the Haiku Chicago conference in 1995, haiku Master Ishihara Yatsuka told poets to "present the truth as if it were fiction." This idea is of course not restricted to haiku. It is what every great novel does—presents in the costume of a story a truth that may be too difficult to tell directly. This allows the reader to embrace a hard truth without engaging in either defensiveness or self-righteousness. It allows the author to explore an issue without stridency, the reader, without self-consciousness. Fiction, like the poetry, doesn't *tell* us what is true, it *reveals* what is true. Great haiku have also this characteristic. Great haiku reveal, often through several levels of meaning, the truths we need to live by.

コメント : sentence fragment

Blyth said haiku was Japan's greatest gift to the world. I am not sure I am qualified to make such grand judgments, but to me as a poet, haiku of seasonal consciousness are Japanese haiku's greatest gift to world poetry.

Lee Gurga