

POEMS 9699

My Short 20th Century: Rômusha haiku (H 298-311)

Later Generations

Spacescape

Nan-de toshiyoru?

Question

"the masterly warbler"

kono kido ya

uramayashi

kozo hina

te wo hanatsu

"on the honour shelf "

"lotus pops open"

"carelessly "

Alas Bashô

asa yosa wo

Softly, softly

Alas Indeed!: Disputing Cao Ji

Odysseus Looks at Styx/ Lethe

Little Birdling Colibri

Deep Sleep

Using a Tower

Much Too Long: Rewriting Jang Yanghao

The Taboo

What i Read in Shôtetsu: 21 Tankas (T

More Reading in Shôtetsu: 15 Tankas (T

If Love Were Oil, i'd Be a Quart Low

Le Ceneri di Tito (Berlin Day, End of C20)

Looking at Var---i

Moderato flebile

MY SHORT 20TH CENTURY: RÔMUSHA HAIKU FROM OZ-LAND\*/

1. Later Generations

the trick is to see  
those who refuse affirm too:  
tombs of ancestors

2. Spacescape

Aussie slate-grey sky  
i'm cold in the solstice steppe--  
huge Moon on horizon

3. nan-de toshiyori

Winter yet in June:  
how to arrange the aging years?  
Ascending mountain road.

4. Question

when he was singing  
the nightingale of times past  
did he sing well?

when he was singing  
the nightingale of times past  
was his song heard?

5.

the canny warbler  
sings hanging down from the branch:  
long road ahead

6. kono kido ya

this fireproof door  
so now it's locked against me  
Winter howling winds

7. uramayashi

this tabby tomcat  
peaceful after the March fever --  
how i envy him

8. kozo hina

puppets of last year  
kicked out when New Year arrives:  
one child cries

9. te wo hanatsu

you let go my hand  
it was the rainy season  
Moon among clouds

10.

on the honour shelf  
in my bedroom, O sadness,  
Tito's young photo

11.

lotus pops open;  
calling his mate, the pheasant  
stretches his body.

12.

carelessly  
she gives herself over to love:  
the golden times

13. Alas Bashô

the etching years  
press into the monkey's face  
a monkey's mask

14. asa yosa wo  
evening, morning,  
who's there anyway, pray tell?  
empty dry steppes

24-27697

\*/ A rômusha is an old warrior. Oz-land is what Aussies call Australia, but the reader may use whatever associations happen.

SOFTLY, SOFTLY  
(WANG WEI, ONCE AGAIN)

On tree tips, red hibiscus glows  
Nobody sees the burst of brilliant calyxes.  
A quiet stream far off in mountain forest  
Flowers bloom & softly, softly fall.

191197

ALAS INDEED!: DISPUTING CAO JI

Alas indeed! -- the many rolling tumbleweeds  
In this only life-world how discarded  
A quarter of century uprooted into dying  
Day & night without rest or respite  
Eastward, westward, passing seven paths  
Northward, southward, crossing nine roads.  
The years look down from highrise loggias  
They wisely wave goodbye goodbye.

Young we met a rising whirlwind  
Propelling us up inside the clouds  
We thought, this is the end-reach of skies!  
Older we were cast down to the abyss  
The terrible storm carried us off  
The south-pointing needle now shows the north

We set sail for Cathay & the land was California  
All too soon Leningrad is not even Petrograd.  
Drift on, drift on, what may we lean on?  
Finally perish but finally be.

Floating up beyond the warm Adriatic  
Flying on over the North Atlantic  
Flowing, tumbling, no abiding dwelling.  
Should the future care for our bitter straits?  
I wish we might be grass amid the forest  
Where raging fires follow Fall & burn.  
The pains would be frightening, slash & pierce,  
But our ash would return to roots, connected  
In the mashing cycle that now wheels downward  
In the awesome cycle that will wheel upward.

1197

#### ODYSSEUS LOOKS AT STYX/ LETHE

A chill snake suddenly  
Slithers thru your spine:  
The clock strikes twelve, the door locks,  
The body lies bleeding white, no key  
In sight.

A long time since the hero  
Mounted Circe's surpassingly beautiful bed  
& they slept, beloved limbs entwined.  
Come to my bed and learn trusting, said  
She. Alas, you did.

The story is old  
the stories are new.

Cut your losses

Leave the warming entreasuring women  
All your slyness all your victorious defeats  
Opt for nirvana.

See: tall black poplars & fruit-perishing willows.

84-03

LITTLE BIRDLING COLIBRI  
(HOMAGE TO HEINE [C19] & LI SHANGYIN [C9])

Kleines Vogel Kolibri  
Führe uns nach Bimini

1.

Today i'll lie on my mattress in a red track-suit,  
For it's winter, the childhood island home far-off  
Looks at me dilapidated. Forlorn wishes, at odds  
With the world today, reading, the cold rain  
Watching me as i watch it across the balcony,  
A chink of the blinds, by my bright night-lamp. In the night  
A dream, it seems & seems not, jade earrings & nobody  
To whom to give them, how am i to touch her. Cloud-cap  
Of a thousand miles, a single goose wings it.

2.

Meeting time is hard. Leaving time is harder.  
East wind has lost strength. Flowers wither one by one.  
In Spring the silkworm spins thread. Then he ends.  
Candle burns down to wick's ash. Tears then dry out.  
Just bought a winter coat: who will inherit it?  
Memories of island home: i better sell it soon.  
Mirror in the morning: cloud-hair greys, sadness.  
Computer in the evening: snow falls, i try a new poem.  
Going to Island of the Blessed, not much road left.  
Little bird, O colibri, watch out, let's find Bimini.

191197

MUCH TOO LONG: REWRITING JIANG YANGHAO (C14)

Peaks loom above  
Waves threaten below  
Narrow pass between mountain & stream.  
I gaze West toward the capital  
My thots mesh:  
The Han-empire armies passed here  
The Mongol empire armies passed here  
The warlord armies passed here  
The yellow turbans & red stars passed here.

Ten thousand palaces up from the ground  
Rise  
The common people suffer  
Ten thousand palaces back to the ground  
Fall  
The common people suffer  
One hundred million TV sets in crowded rooms  
Lie  
The common people suffer

Much too long.

261197

DEEP SLEEP

Blasting wind pouring rain:  
I slept so profoundly in my cozy bed  
In the condo just below the top of a high-rise  
I missed the deluge raging last night.

Now at last i see: broken flowers

Fallen trees washed-away roads  
Water tables polluted for decades  
Cut telephone wires. The underground cables

Have survived, we trust. Summer, nevertheless,  
Is over. How many connexions have  
Irretrievably been cut, must now be reknit  
From the planet's festering wounds?

231197

### USING A TOWER

The Sun is cut off by massive mountain shapes,  
Carved up on top by hugely thrusting trees:  
You still know it by the light on peaks & trees.

Ascending the tower widens the ken:  
Not that you can look straight into the Sun  
But that the limits of trees & mountains show up clear.

231197

### THE TABOO

We were marching for sweaty days on end thru the jungle  
Yielding with sullen reluctance. The roots tripped us up, branches  
Snapped back with fury, each step was fought out with the machete  
Of the front man. Every ten minutes he had to be spelled.  
Mosquitoes stung thru the sweat at faces & hands, snakes  
Coiled on the trees' lower branches, scorpions scuttled off  
By our waterlogged footprints or threatened with raised dart-like backsides.  
Then we broke out & beheld the conical huts,

The beautiful women emerging unhurriedly to size us up as we passed by  
Looking for the men who just weren't there. Did i say beautiful? Not really

Perhaps, more than that, for the scrawniest had that sullen tug  
Of the lip-corners that bespeaks laughter, & surrender, & delight,  
The strong clasp of loving bodies. The beauty was in the curve of the thighs, proud  
Warm softness of the neck, high forehead, level questioning gaze, the aquiline  
Nose with thin fluttering nostrils, firm swell of small breasts  
Comfortably nestled under satin valleys that flanked the collar bones.

Many moons waxed & waned while we explored that country. & at the end  
I realized, shrivelling, what tribe this was, the only one there was:  
One whose women were to me taboo.

Some liked me; i talked

Of countries they hadn't seen & wistful one or the other  
Imagined how she might be with me in that far-off place. But  
Sooner or later my tribal marks, inalienable, were found out  
& the women, smiling in cool ways, snapped around their bodies  
An invisible shield. We can always

Go watch a dance or exercise running together, one suggested.  
You talk so well, why can't we just talk, exclaimed  
More than one. I'm drawn to you, but you know this cannot be, said  
The friendliest. You are of the wandering kind who cannot have children,  
Settle down, hack at the jungle each day & come each evening back  
To my caring. & we are the witches whose only companions may be  
Those who swoop above the clouds & yet are also always here  
At our side, for we need an oak to lean on & not a macaw,

So they said.

17498

#### WHAT I READ IN SHÔTETSU: TWENTYONE TANKAS

How may we know how's  
Nature? Does water say  
"Will you live with me?"  
Does the Moon say, "May i have

A lodging in your guesthouse?"

\*\*\*

Taki River, see!

Waves rebound into ragged foam

& from river rocks

Fiery points come bursting forth:

Fireflies scattering.

\*\*\*

An evening tempest

All a-roar across the fields

Spreading destruction;

High up above the whirlwinds

O clouds! O coursing leaves!

\*\*\*

I pass on thin ice

Over perilous whirlpools.

From afar i see

Peaceful birds bobbing up &

Down, on the long swells, of the world-engirdling sea.

\*\*\*

Along the pathway

The wind, gathering its might

Gives voice to a moan.

The cuckoo was calling once

The cuckoo doesn't call again.

\*\*\*

The sound arrives first

A tearing into tatters

Of the clouds-and-birds

Silken pattern then showers

Thru trees in the mountain wind.

\*\*\*

Evening, suspended  
On the bells' far-reaching sound.  
A glow on the pines  
Against the still mountain peak  
Is wisteria, clinging.

\*\*\*

In this world of ours  
To have people praising you  
What good does it do?  
Blossoms meet the winds of Spring  
The Moon is obscured by clouds.

\*\*\*

No one remains now  
For me to drink white wine with.  
In the past i too  
Was known to flee the presence  
Of those whose heart had grown old.

\*\*\*

One small lump of coal  
In the fitful brazier fire.  
There are hands to warm  
& no point in resenting  
That my name will collapse soon.

\*\*\*

On the bridge above  
The ever-foaming waves.  
No wind.

The Moon seems to  
Hesitate, up or down,  
Against the huge mountain top.

\*\*\*

The Moon has risen  
On the rim of the mountain.  
My hair has grown white  
While i yearned for it to rise,  
Lamented when the Moon set.

\*\*\*

Even during my sleep  
I see dreams of this our world.  
The Moon has just risen.  
Can one awaken truly  
With no crimson in one's eyes?

\*\*\*

How did my life go?  
I need only to daydream  
To evoke it all  
The Moon flooding with clear light  
Zagreb Montreal Japan.

\*\*\*

The mountains quite clear  
The snow suspended in clouds  
Heavily looming.  
Above the gathering storm  
& the frozen racks, faint Moon.

\*\*\*

The lament of life  
Is that the Buddha is past  
& it's become clear  
There's no Buddha To Come  
For the rest of my lifetime.

\*\*\*

Will the Moon shine on?  
Will people still love & hate?  
Someone else will look  
On it. But when people rebel  
May some part of me be there!

\*\*\*

Huge Moon hanging  
Over the waiting hushed steppe.  
All seems for the nonce  
Possible, the pregnant grief  
Called things down to the hand's touch.

\*\*\*

On the mountain ridge  
Up high the trees have been touched  
By the cooling breeze.  
& against the night there's raised  
The fan of the rising Moon.

\*\*\*

Lately i've trouble  
To fall asleep. Bone-dry cold  
Outside, low snow skies.  
Let there be a storm, let birds  
Call thru it, beneath the Moon!

\*\*\*

Thirty years from now  
Across the epistemic  
Barrier, they will wait  
Again for the Moon to rise  
People of a disrespectful Spring.

281298

Note: in tanka 4, the last line is a monstrosity with a purpose; in tanka 6, "clouds-&-birds" is a pattern for high-class silk robes -- but here superimposed on clouds & birds

#### MORE READING IN SHÔTETSU: 14 TANKAS

Every single day  
I forget so many things.  
How does it happen  
That my dreams of past matters  
Visit me in such clear shapes?

\*\*\*

Every tree & grass  
Reminds me of you, every  
Coloured & lovely  
Thing,  
    on my road faint with dawn,  
Our jumbled bedsheets left behind.

\*\*\*

In the falling snow  
Deep down in my memories  
Are faces i knew  
All there as grey cutouts in  
A unbelievable past.

\*\*\*

The Poetry Way  
Is long, i've far to go yet  
& daylight grows faint.  
If i now had the same body  
That i had when i set out!

\*\*\*

As darkness descends

Still i think fondly of it  
The sound of the bell  
That awakened me at dawn  
From the stumbling of my dream.

\*\*\*

Dusk is descending.  
The boat is all tethered up.  
No one is around.  
It is on this riverbank  
I'll find my travel pillow.

\*\*\*

Warmth is leaving me  
I'm chilled thru now, in deep Fall.  
I wish so fondly  
That i could feel as i shall  
When i get used to Winter.

\*\*\*

They accumulate  
But who'll be there to buy them  
These leaves of shaped words  
Piling up like old-fashioned wares  
Beneath Tito's fading picture.

\*\*\*

Who knows where she went  
Scattering her interest  
The promising one  
A noontime bird flying off  
While the dusk surely gathers.

\*\*\*

The dogs that once barked  
Have gotten used to your smell

So don't stay away  
From their owner  
                  he too whines  
In the evening, when dusk falls.

\*\*\*

If only i'd see  
No blossoms any longer!  
In my dreams i wouldn't  
Again be visited by  
Spring-faced you, feel your warm hands.

\*\*\*

Sudden flash from skies  
Under heavy clouds:  
                  weary

Why go on further?  
A horse not up to the race  
Slowly being left behind.

\*\*\*

It started to flame  
But the firewood of passion  
Proved too waterlogged,  
I wait in the dying dusk  
For the smoke to pine away.

After Saigyô

In the land of Tsu  
A big city in Summer  
Was it all a dream?  
Only fallen leaves on reeds  
Rustle in the passing wind-puffs.

28-311298

IF LOVE WERE OIL, I'D BE A QUART LOW  
(COUNTRY MUSIC)

The clock struck twelve, the cuckoo came out,  
You kicked me out of the upturned bedroom of your heart,  
Out of the silken hug of your palms;  
Happy your chuckle, strong your embrace,  
But you don't love as good as you look.

The clock struck three, the cuckoo stayed in,  
You banished me from the bubbling kitchen of your heart,  
Out of the warm oven of your desire;  
You left me when I wanted to come along,  
But you don't eat as warm as you cook.

The clock struck seven, the cuckoo broke down,  
You flushed me down the whirlpool toilet of your heart:  
Velcro arms, teflon heart  
Impermeable plastic coat of smiles,  
But you don't live in the room you book.

You shiver my timbers  
Into brittle snapping toothpicks.

Rather than a frontal lobotomy  
I have a bottle in front of me.

3399

Note: Some lines are authentic titles of US country songs (not clock, kitchen, & bedroom)



Smooth shaven gangsters from Washington upgrading armament  
technology

They are madly in love with the profits of arms industries  
Booms in Balkan skies booms on the stockmarkets  
Communicating slaughterhouse vessels

Oceans of blood oceans of profit  
Who is king of the world jungle must be made quite clear  
Sharks are not so clever except in fable

Now you can touch what we lost with Tito's brotherhood & unity  
Now you see how a people's revolution is eradicated  
One million & three quarters dead in the partizan war  
A ton of TNT to wipe out every dead partizan  
These dead are dangerous they must be killed again by bombs & lies

The grounds salted with durable uranium

Counter-revolution by the center against the periphery  
Blood on stone blood & stones  
Thou shalt not get out from under world banks fish mouth silently  
This is Moses & the prophets

293-2599

LOOKING AT VAR---I, LUCCA

On tree tips, red hibiscus glows.  
Nobody could see the burst of brilliant calyxes  
Except for an obese Etruscan, sound asleep  
On a shelf where oranges ripen. In a far off garden  
A tiger waits quietly: looking on a  
Perhaps open door.

26699

MODERATO FLEBILE

Do not presume too far  
You've had your share.  
You haven't had your fill?  
Greed leads you to the usual fall:  
Let go. Learn, like a lean jogger,  
The scarce pleasures of the beggar,  
The lone dog making do with the bone  
Luck allots him for a boon.

1899