

## Minutes of the Second 1997 HSA National Meeting

[as reported in the *HSA Newsletter*, Vol. XII, No. 3, summer 1997]

**Executive Committee Meeting.** This was held at Evanston Public Library on Saturday, June 14, 1997. Officers present were Lee Gurga, President, and Charles Trumbull, Newsletter Editor.

The search for a frogpond Editor for 1998 was discussed. A report was received from Randy Brooks to the effect that the 1996 HSA Members' Anthology was ready to go to the printer.

— *Dee Evetts*

**General Meeting.** Held in the large meeting room of the Evanston Public Library in Evanston, Ill., the presentations were attended by: Mark Bird, Sara Brant, MaryJo Cally, Lee Gurga, Harvey Hess, Doris Kampfe, Phyllis Lyons, John O'Connor, Lidia Rozmus, Robert Spiess, Charles Trumbull, and a few walk-ins. Brief introductions and a round reading were followed by Pres. Lee Gurga's report of the Executive Committee meeting.

Phyllis Lyons, Professor of Japanese Literature at Northwestern University and keynote speaker for the meeting, led off the program with her talk entitled "The Seven-Five Meter." She began by defining tradition and modernity using photographs and a comic-book version of the first known book in the Japanese language, *Record of Ancient Matters*. Building on the premise that the Japanese language fits naturally into blocks of five and seven syllables, Phyllis recounted the history of the emergence of poetry in Japan and recapped several of the most important milestones in the tradition. As poets moved from folksongs to waka (the first Japanese poems) and on to tanka and haiku, the original five- and seven-syllable "units" of Japanese poetry were retained—primarily because the original rhythm of the language remained unchanged. Phyllis also discussed how Japanese and European poets have interacted, and why each has felt liberated by the other's traditions. Her talk generated a lively discussion, and her informed questions about other presentations got the group talking several times throughout the day.

Lee Gurga gave an account of the life and contributions to Japanese poetry of Masaoka Shiki, the originator of modern haiku. He focused primarily on Shiki's theories of haiku composition, which have had a significant impact on haiku in the 20th century. Lee explained the three elements of Shiki's overall poetic theory, *shasei* (or close and correct observation), selective realism (the focus or frame), and truthfulness, which form the basis of the tools Shiki suggests haiku poets consider when they are composing. Lee also introduced the new Midwest Winter Anthology edited and produced by Phil Fass.

After a short break, the group heard conference papers submitted by Peggy Heinrich (read by Mary Jo Cally), Pat Gallagher (read by John O'Connor), and Mark Bird (read by Sara Brant). Charles Trumbull followed up Mark Bird's paper about haiku traditions with his piece "American Haiku and the Other Tradition," a suggestion that literature in

English and Western culture have much to offer haiku poets as sources of inspiration and referents for allusions.

Bob Spiess provided the group with a survey of American Haiku, the first magazine devoted to English-language haiku. Founded in 1963 by James Bull and Donald Eulert of the University of Wisconsin, Platteville, American Haiku was later edited by Bob, who provided a lively “insiders view” of the magazine and passed around several interesting issues.

Following the afternoon session, the conference concluded with a group dinner at a nearby Spanish tapas restaurant, followed by an open reading at Borders Books in Evanston, at which attendees were especially honored to hear the author reading selections from Bob Spiess’s new book, *Noddy*.

— *Sara Brant*