

## Hatano Sōha (波多野爽波): 1923-1991

By Hiroaki Sato

In the fall of 1968, Mishima Yukio (三島由紀夫) took time out to write an appreciation of the haiku of Hatano Sōha (波多野爽波; given name Yoshihide 敬栄) for the *Haiku* (俳句) magazine.<sup>1</sup> It was during that fall that he completed serializing his extended essay *Taiyō to tetsu* (太陽と鉄) that made unmistakably clear his plan to kill himself with a blade sooner or later—the essay that upon completion was published in book form. He also made official the formation of the Shield Society (楯の会), one member of which would help him in his *seppuku* (切腹). His life was as full and intense as ever.

Yet, when the *Haiku* magazine solicited an essay on Hatano, Mishima obliged. Even though Hatano had published just one book of haiku, *Michi no hana* (舗道の花), 1956, he was his upperclassman at the Peers School (学習院) who had distinguished himself in the students' haiku group; he was, in fact, the youngest member ever of the Hototogisu (ホトトギス) group when he was admitted to it. In addition, he had sent Mishima every issue of *Ao* (青) after starting it as the haiku

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<sup>1</sup> “*Hatano So ha: hito to sakuhin.*” Included in the complete works of Mishima Yukio, vol. 35, pp. 269-276.

magazine of the Kyoto University branch of *Hototogisu*, in 1953. Mishima may have also wanted to relive the genre he had given up nearly three decades earlier.

“A junior-high-school student, I tagged along with him,” Mishima remembered, “taking part in haiku sessions (句会) and going on haiku excursions (吟行). Mr. Kyōgoku Kiyō (京極杞陽), a Peers School alumnus and a haiku poet (俳人) of the Hototogisu School, greatly loved him for his talent, which may have been one reason he approached the school. The haiku sessions in Viscount Kyōgoku’s residence were elegant and classical, as they were held in the guestroom with its floor covered with a ceremonial scarlet cloth, even in wartime. Finding myself seated at the end of the honored guests, cowed by the atmosphere, I made myself small.”

Hatano, after Japan’s defeat an executive of Sanwa Bank transferred from place to place, as is customary in Japan, was not particularly productive. Mishima wrote his appreciation with the manuscript on hand of what was to be Hatano’s second book, but the book evidently had not been published in the second half of the 1970s when Rippū Shobō (立風書房) planned a set of six volumes of modern haiku and asked each of the poets to be included, Hatano among them, to make a selection of 400 pieces and comment on some.<sup>1</sup> Hatano’s *jikai* (自解) are, like most such self-explications, at once revealing and confusing, even as they remind you that reliance on them is a clear violation of the New Criticism’s “intentional fallacy.”

Hatano’s *jikai* reveal, for example, that the reading of the word 舗道 in the title of his first book is not the standard *hodō*, but *michi*. The title derives from the

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<sup>1</sup> Hatano is included in vol. 4 of the publisher’s *Gendai haiku zenshu* (現代俳句全集), issued in 1977.

following haiku, he said, casually adding that the last phrase is in five syllables, not six as you might have thought:<sup>1</sup>

金魚玉とり落とししなば舗道の花

This haiku reads: *Kingyodama toriotoshinaba michi no hana*, “Should I drop the goldfish bowl, [it would turn into] a flower on the pavement.” In the summer, goldfish vendors in street fairs used to sell ball-shaped glass bowls with a string attached at top to carry the goldfish you bought, before plastic bags replaced them. Hatano explains that, even though he wasn’t quite sure about the haiku when he submitted the manuscript to *Hototogisu*, the manuscript came back with a double-circle (A++) approval of the magazine’s founder Takahama Kyoshi (高浜虚子) on the haiku, so he decided to use the phrase as the title of his book. One consequence of this was the impression among the readers that this was his representative haiku, which prompted some to point out the structural weakness of the haiku.<sup>2</sup>

Hatano’s self-explications also make you wonder what *shasei* (写生)—recreating faithfully what you see, an approach Masaoka Shiki (正岡子規) advocated and Hatano, as a member of Kyoshi’s *Hototogisu* group, professes to have adhered to—actually meant to him. Take these two pieces.

桜貝長き翼の海の星

*Sakuragai nagaki tubasa no umi no hoshi*

Cherry clam: its long wings among the stars of the sea

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<sup>1</sup> There are, I know, elaborate arguments on whether or not a single Japanese on (音) corresponds to a “syllable,” but I see no harm in using “syllable.” Here, *hodo* is the equivalent of *ho-do-o*, hence three syllables.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

夜の湖の暗きを流れ桐一葉

*Yo no umi no kuraki o nagare kiri hitoha*

Flowing in the dark of the night lake a paulownia leaf

Hatano says he wrote the first by the sea and the second by the lake, both at night, but he also flatly tells you that there was no way of seeing a “cherry clam,” a small pink bivalve (*Nitidotellina hokkaidoensis*<sup>1</sup>), moving about in the sea, or a paulownia leaf afloat on the lake. The first was a fanciful description of a particularly bright star, and the second was a description of what he imagined might be afloat on the lake off the beach.

In writing his appreciation, at any rate, Mishima set up four categories for Hatano’s haiku: (1) refreshing pieces that had initially impressed Mishima as a member of the students’ haiku group at the Peers School; (2) those representing a kind of “symbolism” Mishima discerned Hatano gained; (3) those that are demonic or scary; and (4) those expressing the bleakness of life. Let us look at one haiku from each of Mishima’s groupings.

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<sup>1</sup> Since this essay appears online, those interested can see “cherry clams” here: [http://shell.kwansei.ac.jp/~shell/pic\\_book/data53/r005288.html](http://shell.kwansei.ac.jp/~shell/pic_book/data53/r005288.html)

*Refreshing haiku*

ドレスの背につきまとふ蚊よ遠い月

*Doresu no se ni tukimatou ka yo tōi tsuki*

On the back of her dress a mosquito persists: distant moon

This is definitely 6-7-5, though syntactically the first 13 syllables form one unit. Hatano wrote hypersyllabic haiku often enough.

*Haiku containing “symbolism”*

竹葉降り子犬も固き糞をする

*Takeha furi koinu mo kataki mari o suru*

Bamboo leaves falling a puppy too issues firm shit

How to read Chinese characters when used in Japanese is often problematic. 竹葉 is here read *takeha* simply because *take no ha chiru* 竹の葉散る is a kigo; otherwise, it can easily be read *chikuha* or even *chikuyō*. In the original *mari*, meaning “shit,” is the reading (ruby) Sōha gave; otherwise, 糞 is likely to be read *kuso*. Etymologically, *mari* originally referred to the Japanese equivalent of “potty.” It is an euphemism, and some may argue that Sōha made a cute picture even cuter by specifying the reading for shit. What kind of symbolism Mishima saw in this haiku is anyone’s guess.

*Demonic or scary*

蟹歩き亡き人宛にまだくる文

*Kani aruki nakihito ate ni mada kuru fumi*

A crab walks and letters still come to the one deceased

This is in a 5-7-6 formation.

*Bleakness of life*

雨の鴟書信の濡れをかなしめば

*Ame no mozu shoshin no nure o kanashimeba*

A rainy shrike as I sorrow over an epistle that's wet

The shrike, the butcher bird, is a kigo of autumn. In writing this, was Sōha echoing the following haiku by Katō Shūson (加藤楸邨)?

かなしめば鴟金色の日を負ひ来

*Kanashimeba mozu konjiki no hi o oi ku*

As I sorrow a shrike flies in against the golden sun

Shūson's piece reminds me: Mishima famously associated the moment of death, a violent death, with the word *kakuyaku* (*kakueki*) 赫奕, "brilliantly," "glitteringly," as when he described the moment of disembowelment of the young terrorist Iinuma Isao at the end of *Runaway Horses* (奔馬). In that, Mishima's imagination may have been closer to Shūson's than to Sōha's.

