

Twisting point: the evolution of haiku in the climate crisis

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Abstract

Eco-poetry must increasingly respond to the climate crisis, yet the subject is understudied in relation to nature haiku. This article therefore explores how the climate crisis is influencing English-language haiku (ELH), which are uniquely suited to exploring climate change. The temporality of haiku—a concern with the present moment—situates each poem in the present, circumventing the futurity of ecoanxiety, pinning writer and reader to the present environment of the poem. Contemporary haiku can therefore engender environmental awareness, while archival ones can transport the reader though time to vanished abundant worlds. By juxtaposing archival and contemporary nature ELH, this article explores the evolution of the haiku form and suggests what further evolutions might lie ahead in three sections: haiku as tools for depicting extinction and biodiversity loss; the editorial and authorial impacts of phenological breakdown in relation to kigo; and whether haiku writers might be complicit in Amitav Ghosh’s ‘great derangement’. Concluding that haiku have great potential as tools for documenting environmental change, this article is a call to arms for haiku writers worldwide to engage with the climate crisis.

We will start – as so much haiku criticism does – by examining what is often called ‘the most famous haiku on the planet’, Matsuo Bashō’s:

The old pond—
a frog jumps in,
sound of the water.¹

This haiku is renowned for many reasons, however our focus is that the haiku departs from the traditional depiction of frogs’ song, instead concentrating on the sound of the frog entering the water.² Bashō’s poem has survived the accidents of centuries and spread globally partly because it so deftly upends the reader’s preconceptions of nature: the frog has always splashed when jumping in the water, only now are we able to hear it.

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Let us compare it to Kaea Morris’ haiku from *TinyWords* on 15th July 2022, the summer of drought that seems infamous in the winter following, but in future will likely be remembered as part of a series of record-breaking heatwaves:

ashes
on the frog pond
wildfire moon³

The frog pond is central to both poems, but the implications are vastly different. While Bashō’s pond boasts of a fertile frog disturbing the waters on an otherwise still night, Morris’ frog pond hosts no evident inhabitants, only the ash of uncontrollable wildfires resting on its surface. In Bashō, the pond is filled with life which the world holds its breath to witness; in Morris, the pond is silent, bordered by roaring flames. In Bashō, the haiku’s ‘ah ha’ is that we humans are altering the way we see the world; in Morris, the world is altering because of humanity.

I posit this is the future of haiku: not to alter our perspective of the world through seeing its consistencies in a new light, but to twist ourselves around to face the weird disruptions of climate change that we might otherwise avoid. As Brian Tasker says, the mission of haiku is to watch ‘the edge of unfolding’⁴—the climate crisis is our unfolding. This article’s aim is therefore to begin exploring how and to what degree the climate crisis is influencing English-language haiku (ELH) and suggest what evolutions of the form this might invite.

We will begin by analysing a few ways in which haiku are uniquely suited to exploring climate change, then visit some of the current conundrums facing climate change haiku writers, editors, and critics, before closing with a look at the potential future evolutions of the form in the face of environmental crisis.

ELH in the ecopoetic landscape

The climate crisis is changing our world in ways eco-poetry must increasingly respond to.⁵ Nature-themed haiku, which can be construed as a form of nature writing, have potential in this regard,⁶ however it is not always fulfilled. To be an ecopoem, the haiku must be both *about the environment* and *environmentalist*. That is, it must implicitly or explicitly invest in unsettling anthropocentric perspectives in favour of ecocentric ones and be rhetorically urgent regarding the human threat to the wider ecological enmeshment.⁷ Therefore, just as all haiku are not nature haiku, all nature haiku are not necessarily ecopoetry—though as we shall see, when brought into juxtaposition with each other, nature ELH might form ecopoetics.

Whether these potentialities remain latent or emergent, the impacts of climate change are global and will therefore affect nature haiku worldwide. Still, formal alterations will differ based on language and culture: ELH, for example, emerge from different concepts of ‘wilderness’, ‘nature’, and ‘environment’ to Japanese haiku. Even within the English language, cultural concepts of wilderness vastly differ in the UK and US: though in both places all land has been impacted by human activity, the US’s sprawling National Parks traditionally give greater flight to creative conceptualisation of nature than the UK’s domesticated countryside.⁸ Thus, depending on location, language, and the author’s cultural conditioning, responses to climate change in haiku will likely vary.

Despite its ubiquity, however, climate change has thus far been comparatively rarely visited in haiku criticism: occasionally it is mentioned in essays and introductions on nature haiku,⁹ but it is not often the central occupation of longer haiku critique¹⁰—surprising, given the emergence of climate science at a similar time to ELH.

Likewise, climate change-related haiku are relatively scarce in the nature ELH corpus, mainly falling into two categories. The first are ELH *consciously about climate change*. These include projects by climate change scientists, activists, and educators, the products of which often have poetic merit but do not necessarily constitute ‘haiku’ in the traditional sense, though they may be referred to by that name.¹¹ Within journals exist scant but penetrating direct references to climate change that conform to the traditional styles of ELH and its related forms, for instance this line from Sheila Windsor’s 2022 haibun: ‘global warming one or two worms drill through’.¹² Both within and outside journals, haiku consciously referring to climate change seem most likely to appear when prompted,¹³ for example 11-year-old Erick Harmon’s one-line ELH penned for The Haiku Registry in 2019: ‘cl(i)mate (change)’.¹⁴

The second group are haiku *unconsciously or obliquely about climate change*. These are more likely to be found within the pages of mainstream haiku journals, more closely resembling the traditional haiku form. These poems will be the locus of our attention, as we explore how the traditions of the haiku form might be uniquely suited to raise climate change awareness.¹⁵ Specifically, haiku’s temporality—a concern with the present moment—situates each poem in the here and now in a way that pins the writer and reader to the present environment of the poem. The haiku’s ‘twist’ furthers this effect by mimicking the surprise and suddenness of ecological change, which can be used to consciously manipulate the reader’s response to the environment around them. There is little crossover between these two categories in ELH, with the exception of the climate haiku-focussed journal *Trash Panda*, founded in 2021.¹⁶

Under the right circumstances, this lends contemporary haiku the capacity to engender environmental awareness, and archival ones an ability to transport the reader though time and compare their world with one now vanished. Thus, by juxtaposing old haiku against new we can illuminate the unconscious trackings of climate change. We will use these juxtapositions as springboards to ask difficult questions about why we write haiku and what we wish to witness in that process.

To undertake this investigation, we must set some boundaries for our exploration. First, for the impacts of climate change to occur through juxtaposing haiku from different time periods, they should come from similar geographic regions experiencing similar environmental change. This being an article written for a residency with The British Haiku Society, I have narrowed the region to the UK. So, though the proof of anthropogenic climate change was proved in the late-1950s, our earliest poems will come from ‘the earthshrinking 1990s’,¹⁷ when haiku really took off in the UK, the decades of ‘slow burn’ before The British Haiku Society’s foundation alas being subject to archival fog. If thirty years seems too short a time period to sufficiently explore environmental change, consider that in the UK during this time: flying insect populations have fallen by over 60%;¹⁸ 41% of wildlife species have decreased in abundance, leaving quarter of UK mammals and nearly half its birds at risk of extinction;¹⁹ frequency of heatwaves increased with record-breaking temperatures and an average warming of 0.8°C; and flood frequency and extreme weather events also increased, winter rainfall

averages rising in some areas by 400%.²⁰ This alarming list only scratches the surface of environmental shifts over the last thirty years, despite the UK being one of the lower risk zones for climate change.

When we enter the UK haiku scene in the 1990s, the climate change dialogue is already underway, as Sharon Lee Shafi's 1994 haiku shows:

furrowing
Aphrodite's face
acid rain²¹

The inclusion of technical climate terminology such as 'acid rain' in ELH has increased during the decades under exploration, mirroring the general population's growing awareness. These terms do not necessarily indicate haiku's capacity to track or illuminate climate change impacts, but do demonstrate an author's abstract awareness of them.

The US anthologies in the 60s and 70s contain motifs of 'thistles', 'butterflies', and similar natural abundance.²² Despite the environmental concern emerging from proof that greenhouse gasses warmed the atmosphere and pollution impacted the earth, waterways, and animals, alongside responses to the atom bomb, there is still a verdant overflow of the natural for haiku writers to attend to. As these anthologies continue through the decades to the 21st century, the regularity of humanmade objects interacting with and impacting the natural world increases. Though these haiku do 'bring our human world into a mysteriously tense relationship with the natural world',²³ as Burns says, 'haiku in recent years has witnessed a kind of anthropocentric creep that mirrors an accelerating alienation of humans from the natural world' embodying the unconscious alterations to what we consider 'nature' or 'natural'.²⁴ Therefore, though it does demonstrate the incursion of the human on the nonhuman, this exponential rise of humanmade objects featuring in nature haiku is not necessarily proof of *awareness* that nature is in diminishment. This raises two questions: first, to what degree is the writer complicit in these alienations and it that problematic? Second, can archival readings of the kind we are undertaking create environmental understandings that the author may not have intended?

Measuring the invisible: haiku as tools for depicting extinction and biodiversity loss

Human activities such as the destruction of natural habitats and pesticide usage have resulted in alarming and accelerating species decline across UK wildlife. Therefore, part of my initial proposal was to attempt to track species extinction and biodiversity loss linguistically in haiku. However, this proved troublesome.

Due to the emphasis of specificity that emerged out of the US nature ELH of the 60s and 70s,²⁵ the singular in ELH is generally preferable to the plural. For instance, searching the Haiku Foundation Digital Library²⁶ indicates writers have consistently used 'butterfly' more than 'butterflies' over the past thirty years. This makes it difficult to track incidental depictions of population decline as we cannot reliably measure observations moving from the plural to the singular in haiku. Moreover, once something is gone, it can no longer be witnessed, thus severe population decline and extinction are again difficult to track through ELH.

However, though haiku cannot directly depict the void, as focussed conduits of ‘a nostalgia for that which we cannot grasp’²⁷ they are uniquely suited to implying it. Rather than tracking population declines in concrete terms, then, the language used around certain species has changed, giving rise to a poetics increasingly tinged with grief. As a case study, we might follow the decline of the curlew, with this 1997 haiku by Caroline Gourlay, penned seven years after the birds’ addition to the UK red list of Endangered Species in 1990:

daylight fading—
a curlew’s cry
lengthens the hill²⁸

Though the day fades and the curlew is makes a sound of upset, its cry is still powerful enough to lengthen the hill, wreaking change over the geological landscape despite the descent of planetary darkness.

In the ensuing 25 years, curlew numbers have halved in the UK and there are estimated to be only 250-300 breeding pairs left. Most likely, this haiku would simply not be written today. It is such absences, as much as presence, that the archival legacy of ELH illuminates. Those UK curlew haiku that do exist are mainly components in broader discussions about climate change or by birdwatching experts—they are prompted.²⁹ Nonetheless, I was able to find one or two spontaneous contemporary haiku about UK curlews, all of which imply some awareness of the birds’ fragility,³⁰ like this one composed and self-published by Lesley Scoble in 2022:

Curlew calling
Across the wintry mudflats
Is haunting the wind³¹

This haiku is notably less hopeful than Gourlay’s: the ‘wintry mudflats’ conjure a barren, cold Earth, frozen in place, while the curlew’s unanswered call, featured in the first line, is diminished by the final line to a ghost’s whisper, merely ‘haunting the wind’. Across three decades, the bird’s power has diminished, and along with it hope for species revival.

Similarly, we might contrast two haiku about butterflies. Our archival poem, by David Steele from 2000, speaks of comfort and abundance:

under buddleia
tired of butterflies
a curled up cat³²

Here, the butterflies are incidental, so abundant the cat has tired of playing with them and they need not be the subject of the poem, even if they are literally central to it. The buddleia is in bloom, the curled cat a cosy back-garden image. At this time, though the decline in butterfly populations was underway, rates were not so disturbing as in the present: 2001’s ‘The State of Britain’s Butterflies’ report showed that in the preceding 200 years, over half the UK’s resident species underwent a 20% or greater loss of range, including 15 species that declined by at least half and five that became extinct.³³

Disquieting figures, yet the Butterfly Conservation and the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH) have since undertaken further, significantly more unsettling studies,

showing that 72% of species declined in abundance over the ensuing decade and distributions of 54% of butterflies fell, many sharply.³⁴ Now, almost twenty years later, butterfly numbers in the UK are at an all-time low, with over half the UK’s butterfly species on the Extinction Red List.³⁵ No wonder then, that in 2018 Christine Eales penned this contrasting haiku:

butterflies in the wind pushing against time³⁶

These butterflies exist on the chill breeze without habitat, a scant single line indicating their scarcity, their fragile wings pushing a stronger wind, battling the existential arrow of time and extinction.

Here is haiku’s strength: because of the form’s emphasis on understatement and allusion, it can quietly indicate the path to solostalgic loss and leave the reader to find it within themselves. Bringing haiku from different eras into relationship with each other highlights the potentiality of the form to be a conduit for climate education and the discussion and processing of eco-anxieties.

First flowerings and seasonal shifts: the editorial impacts of haiku’s evolution

However, these archival comparisons were troublingly difficult to construct, in part because of haiku traditions that may need revisiting, but also because climate change is destabilising the form itself. The core of both these issues can be explored by looking at kigo, or season words, which are used in traditional haiku form to demonstrate the season a poem takes place during and allude to the feelings associated with that time of year.³⁷

As noted by David McMurray, kigo are altering as climate change progresses, as spring arrives earlier, frosts become tardy, and winter is squeezed into weeks.³⁸ We are at the very beginning of these changes and, though cultural concepts of seasonality differ based on location, like climate change itself they can be observed throughout the global community.³⁹

One of scientist’s methods for measuring seasonal alterations in the UK is to record first flowerings—particularly of the snowdrop, which pierces the darker months with its bright petals. It is to snowdrops that we look, then, for symptoms of these changes in the haiku form. 1990s editions of *Blithe Spirit* consistently feature snowdrop-related haiku in the spring seasonal category, for example:

song of a greenfinch;
a ray of sun on cold steps
and a few snowdrops...⁴⁰

These haiku match national data from their respective years, which indicate a regular growing season of early spring, taking spring from the traditional haiku date of 4th February.⁴¹

However, by 2022, snowdrops may instead be associated with winter, as in this tanka by Ruth Parker:

Omicron triumphs
and sends Christmas packing—
but in the garden
the delicate white hope
of snowdrops⁴²

Note that the ‘Christmas’ allowed by the tanka’s length pins the poem concretely to deep winter. Further, it is not editorially compartmentalised by season, instead being packed in to a general ‘tanka’ section. This deep winter seasonal placement is accurate: in the three decades between these two poems, the UK’s spring has moved, commencing around a month earlier on average⁴³ and, though national snowdrop data has not yet been released, the spring of 2022 was particularly early.⁴⁴ McMurray’s thesis of kigo undergoing alterations are visible here, then, but not through conscious editorial selection and not via haiku specifically.

Indeed, tracking haiku with such temporal specificity is immensely difficult, because of inconsistencies introduced by editorial and authorial decisions. For example, in the 2019 *Blithe Spirit*, we find a snowdrop haiku settled amongst the spring section once again, in a year when snowdrops flowered on average 18 days early, in mid-January—which is traditionally not spring!⁴⁵ Such misalignments occur for two major reasons: first, the editor assigns the spring category because of longstanding associations between snowdrops and early spring; second, the author likely submitted the poem without a location or date. This latter issue might be further complicated as the author might have forgotten when the poem was penned by the time of submission and it may have been edited on the way. Finally, it may have been utterly imagined. What can we do, then, to keep editorial and authorial decisions—and indeed the authorial imagination—grounded in an increasingly volatile climatic reality?

In the past, it was possible to appreciate the haiku in isolation from its broader temporal context, as there was global relative environmental stability. That is no longer the case. Traditionally, haiku are specific to the moment but silent about the broader context. Yet, as Terry Eagleton points out ‘it is a mistake to equate concreteness with things. An individual object is the unique phenomenon it is because it is caught up in a mesh of relations with other objects. It is this web... which is ‘concrete’, while the object considered in isolation is purely abstract.’⁴⁶ Therefore, even when we do not say ‘spring’, the snowdrop traditionally and consistently implies ‘spring’. Haiku imply context, even if they may not state it.

So, what happens when the foundations of these implied contexts destabilise? Might that disruption require us to reassess our modes of taxonomy—the tags we include with our haiku—and publication?

Looking ahead, there are two options for the future of kigo in ELH: either authors and editors will hammer in the dates of the traditional seasons, and kigo will swing between them, snowdrops moving from spring to winter; or the seasons themselves will shift, that traditional 4th February date changing as kigo indicate altering seasonal boundaries. Either way, we need a functioning taxonomy to track these changes, one that will enable us to build a coherent ontology of nature haiku during these upheavals, which we can appreciate both in the moment and in looking back. Placing specific locations and dates on poems at the point of composition and submission, then featuring them in publications, would greatly assist writers, editors, and archivists in responsibly tracking and exploring how kigo are transfiguring in light of environmental crisis.

David Cobb and Martin Lucas would say there is a danger in seeing haiku as producing this kind of service, when they are for enjoyment.⁴⁷ Others will likely cringe at the idea of such extraneous clutter on the page. However, to ignore the passive services haiku are providing whether we wish it or not, would be a grave oversight. We cannot know what the future will

need, but it is a bold assumption that it will not be such taxonomies. Beyond creating archival coherence, these extra tags could also offer concrete specifics that lend irony to haiku, creating new methods of ‘twisting’ the poem. For instance, while I wrote this article, my neighbour’s cherry tree bloomed disturbingly early. The haiku I have penned about it is simply: ‘cherry blossom’. The twist exists in the taxonomic information: ‘Norwich, UK. 20.11.22’.

For the far fewer haiku that are imagined, the date and place still hold relevance, as does the fact they are fictional. Such tags would enable juxtaposition of the authorial perception of climate change with those haiku ‘sketched from life’.⁴⁸ The master Masaoki Shiki suggested haiku poets ‘attempt using imagination only after they had developed a sufficiently fine perception of the world and experience of truth’, composing haiku that contained a ‘poetic truth’ about the world. To Lee Gurga, finding this poetic truth is about balancing imagination against a grounded understanding of reality.⁴⁹ Comparing the ‘spring’ or ‘summer’ of poets’ imagination to those of haiku penned on reality might illustrate the gaps between what is and what we imagine; the nature we feel from our pasts and the climate changing rapidly around us in the present.

Moreover, this ontology might bring to light deeper threads of supra-cultural engagement with environmental change. Kigo do not just represent literal seasons but the intricate logopeia of ‘essential meaning’—emotions, habits, rituals—intertwined with them.⁵⁰ Kigo link seasons to periods of human life,⁵¹ patterns of human living that have persisted across time and space,⁵² thus their metamorphoses represent not only phenological breakdown and changes in poetic form, but the dissolution of coherent human life eras: children are given grownup responsibilities, while adults shirk their accountability to future generations. The young no longer know how to dream, while adults live in make believe. The snowdrop emerges prematurely, and the chestnut keeps its leaves too late.

The hyperobject incurs on the form: what we choose to see, what we need to witness

Still, the haiku form is destabilising, along with the rest of the world, in ways that exceed shifting kigo. Thus far what has made haiku so amenable to illustrating changes in nature is the juxtaposition of discrete moments in which generally ‘the image must be real’⁵³—one moment from the archive, the other from the now. While I would not suggest that we are going to or should lose this, a re-temporalisation of haiku is taking place that forces us to question the basis from which we compose nature haiku.

As in photography, ‘generally, haiku requires a greater awareness of concrete reality than does mainstream poetry’.⁵⁴ We must observe and exist in the present. This is not to the exclusion of the past and future, from whom isolation is impossible, rather they are concertinaed into an integrated moment; a piercing now that must be in harmony with past and future to quiet them. Yet, as authorial awareness of the climate change hyperobject grows, haiku’s emphasis on the ‘interconnectedness of things’⁵⁵ is causing a natural re-configuring this temporalisation. The moment of that piercing now is stretching, not outwards, but downwards, deepening into darker trans-temporal fears and hopes.

Thus, contemporary haiku consciously exploring climate change demonstrate an increasing consciousness of future losses. Take for example Geoffrey Winch’s 2019 haiku on the theme of ‘roots’:

another hedge
grubbed out – seeing
further into the future⁵⁶

Winch plays on the more distant view grubbing out a hedge leaves access to, turning it into a future horizon in which no hedges, or the wildlife they house, are left. Thus, the re-structuring of haiku’s temporality can be impactful. Imprinted with Buddhist influence and an emphasis on compassion for all living creatures, haiku lends itself to explorations of the human-nonhuman entanglement,⁵⁷ and this re-temporalisation, though untraditional, might contribute to that.

Yet, as mentioned earlier, these haiku are scarce, and it is hard to find haiku that contrast the environmental differences of the last three decades, in part because we are not writing about or publishing around climate change to a proportionate degree in nature ELH. The very first edition of *Blithe Spirit* in winter 1990 contained a collection of six haiku on the theme of ‘drought and oppressive heat’, presumably in light of that summer’s at the time record-breaking heatwave. Though the six poems selected for publication were indeed ‘worth the effort’, some (such as one mentioning lizards) were clearly not set in the UK and by the editor’s admission ‘not a lot came in’⁵⁸—this despite the extraordinary weather.

This suggests that left to their own devices, ELH writers are not prone to write about severe or unusual weather, even when prompted. Indeed, this trend continues: despite the increasing occurrence of improbable weather events, nature haiku remain for the most part almost pastoral. It is rare even now to find a haiku that cuts to the quick of the climate crisis without prompting, such as Earl Livings’ bi-lingual 2022 summer haiku for the Wales Haiku Journal:

back to normal
after lockdowns...
hazy night sky

yn ôl i normal
ar ôl y cyfnodau clo...
awyr niwlog y nos⁵⁹

Livings’ haiku frames ‘normality’ within the twin dysfunctions of the COVID-19 pandemic, an emblem of the imbalance of our relationship with nature, and ‘hazy night sky’, the result of day-to-day carbon emissions. This discovery was the result of much digging.

Given the increasing severity of extreme weather events and the acceleration of environmental loss, the rarity of such climate-haiku is curious. There are differences between the nature haiku of thirty years ago and those of today, but they are not nearly as numerous as I was hoping for when I set out on this research journey. There should be more difference than there is; not only strange silences but stark contrasts and cutting twists gesturing the ironies of the climate crisis. Amitav Ghosh speaks of a ‘great derangement’ in literature, in which by eliding climate change from their work, authors are complicit in the obfuscation of the climate crisis, accountable in the demise of our ecosystem. Such moral judgment is antithetical to the haiku spirit⁶⁰ of course, however there is cause for concern here on the basis of artistic form.

Haiku are about intense moments of perception, as R. H. Blyth says, in which ‘the vast is perceived in one thing’.⁶¹ But in addressing climate change so little, are ELH depicting ‘the vast’? Are ELH writers really paying attention, or are we performing the attention we think we *should* be paying? Are our eyes unfiltered, or are we seeing through a lens of what we expect to see? Do we compose haiku based on everyday experience, or based on the events that happen that would ‘make a good haiku’—snow in winter, the hum of bees in summer, blossom in spring? Are we engaging with what is, or watching for archetypes we recognise as being worthy of penmanship?

Michael Dylan Welch calls for a ‘renewal of wonder’ in the haiku form,⁶² but perhaps instead we need a renewal of sensitisation: what can we wonder at now, except the diminishment of what used to be wonderful? Anita Virgil noted that the ‘ah ha’ moment should be an incision in which ‘all barriers break away for an instant, all culturally ingrained notions of ‘value’ alter, and there comes a sudden unity, a oneness between observer and observed which causes one to experience a sort of reverence... In a flash it is gone. Because it is so brief, this moment of truth, it is usually lost. By the standards of modern poetics, it is not enough to make a poem. But it is all one need capture to create a haiku.’⁶³ If we take haiku in a wholistic gulp, we should see a different kind of wonder, one that—as Richard Gilbert says—has the ability to ‘rapidly, shockingly irrupt habitual thought’⁶⁴ but it is uncertain that the nature haiku corpus currently provides this. Yes, haiku are a reserved, temporally-bounded form of poetry, but that does not mean they are not revolutionary. Indeed, it is hard baked into the form that they should make us uncomfortable, undressed, a little too seen.

The summer of 2022 will prove to be a test of for UK nature haiku. It broke multiple records, including shattering the previous hottest day with temperatures over 40°C. Described as ‘unprecedented’ in the media and exceeding climate scientists worst expectations, we would expect to find the heat, and the drought accompanying it, in the haiku penned this summer.⁶⁵ Thus, given the year-long editorial cycle, what emerges in next summer’s UK journals will be telling indeed about what we are and are not witnessing.

Conclusion

My proposal, then, is that haiku have excellent potential to be tools for documenting environmental change and creating climate awareness in writers and readers. By bringing to light the absences, destructions, and alterations of climate change, they might too engender the kinds of conversations around the topic that help provoke climate belief and positive adaptive tendencies.⁶⁶ In the long term, if accompanied with the correct information about place and time of composition, climate-haiku could provide a rich emotional and historic story of humankind’s relationship with nature during an enormous environmental upheaval.

However, following Bashō’s entreaty to ‘submit to nature, return to nature’,⁶⁷ requires haiku writers to challenge ourselves to look, not just for the traditional archetypes of haiku but, in order to preserve the true spirit of the form, beyond them into what is really before us, disconcerting as that might be.

The ash is on the frog pond, the unfolding is upon us, and we must write about it.

Notes

¹ Translation from Hass, Robert, *The Essential Haiku: Versions of Bashō, Busson, and Issa* (Ontario: The Ecco Press, 1994), p.18.

² As noted in Takiguchi, Susumu, ‘A Contrarian View on Bashō’s Frog Haiku’, *World Haiku Review*, Vol.5-1 (Summer 2005). There are many alternative interpretations.

³ Morris, Kaea, *Tinywords* 22.1 (July 2022).

⁴ Quoted by Marsh, George, ‘Profile of Brian Tasker’, *Blithe Spirit* 4.2 (1994), pp.7-11 (p.7).

⁵ As must all literature, pointed out in Ghosh, Amitav, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016). The influence on climate change on poetry in general can be seen most prominently in the dual movements of Geopoetics (founded in 1979 with the foundational Kenneth White, ‘Elements of Geopoetics’, *Edinburgh Review* Vol.88 (1992) pp. 163-178) and Ecopoetry (formally defined at the millennial turn with publications such as Scott Bryson, *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002)).

⁶ For the history of nature in ELH, see Allan Burns, ‘Introduction’, in *Where the River Goes: The Nature Tradition in English-Language Haiku*, Alan Burn ed. (Ormskirk: Snapshot Press, 2013), pp. 9-68.

⁷ See John Shoptaw (2016) ‘Why Ecopoetry?’ *Poetry* 207.4, pp.395-408 (pp.395ff).

⁸ See Burns (2013), p.15ff, and Martin Lucas, *Stepping Stones: a way into haiku*, (Ramsgate: The British Haiku Society, 2007), pp.5-10.

⁹ For instance: Burns (2013); and John Barlow and Matthew Paul, ‘Introduction’ in John Barlow and Matthew Paul (ed.) *Wing Beats: British Birds in Haiku*, (Ormskirk: Snapshot Press, 2008), pp. 13-19 (p.15). Similarly, some editors offer different terms for environmental concerns, for instance the reference to ‘natural history’ haiku as an indicator of environmental concern in Alan Summers (ed.) *Bloo Outlier Journal* Vol.3 (Summer 2022), (p.7).

¹⁰ Major exceptions include David McMurray, ‘Climate Change is Changing Haiku’ *The IUK Graduate School Journal*, Vol.7, (November 2015) pp.23-30; and Lorraine Kerslake and María Encarnación Carrillo-García, ‘Raising Environmental Awareness and Language Acquisition through Haiku’, in Rebecca L. Young (ed.) *Literature as a Lens for Climate Change: Using Narratives to Prepare the Next Generation*, (London: Lexington Books, 2022), pp. 171-193.

¹¹ For example, Various Authors, ‘Climate Change’ in *The Sciku Project*, and Abby McSherry, *Haiku (Sciku) for COP26* (Newry: The CANN Project and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, 2022); or the tradition of distilling IPCC reports into haiku, exemplified by Andy Reisinger and Gregory C. Johnson (cited by Olivia Wannan (2021) ‘Distilling the essence of the global climate report into haiku poetry’ in *Stuff* and Anna Fahey (2018) ‘The Story of Climate Change Told in 19 Heartbreaking Haiku’ in *Sightline Institute*.

¹² Heila Windsor, ‘Equinox’ in *Blithe Spirit* 32.3 (2022), p.64.

¹³ An in, for instance, Peter E. Howard (ed.) (2016) ‘Your Haiku to the Environment’ in *University of Miami News: Climate Change Special Report*; or LuAnne Thompson (ed.) (2022) ‘Ocean 320 Coastal Ocean and Climate Change Haiku, Winter 2022’ in *The School of Oceanography, University of Washington*.

¹⁴ Erick Harmon quoted by Lori Zajkowski ‘HAIKU DIALOGUE – Social Issues – Climate Change & intro to Turn of the Decade’ in *The Haiku Foundation* 4.12.19.

¹⁵ Debate is ongoing about what exactly constitutes ‘English-language haiku’ and its relationship to the original, Japanese haiku form (for example, Lee Gurga (2000) ‘Toward an Aesthetic for English Language Haiku’ *New Zealand Poetry Society*). Nonetheless, this article embraces a generous definition of ‘haiku’ in English-language in order to engage with the broadest possible community of haiku writers working in English. Ultimately, however ELH evolves, climate change will be an important influencer and feature, and inclusivity at this stage may assist acknowledgement and integration of that fact. However, of course, the traditional Japanese haiku form remains the bedrock of or analysis, if limited by my understanding, which stems from an external language and culture.

¹⁶ Lisa Anne Johnson ed. *Trash Panda*.

¹⁷ David Cobb and Martin Lucas (ed.) (1998) *The Iron Book of British Haiku* (North Shields: Iron Press), p.2

¹⁸ James Ashworth (2022a) ‘UK’s flying insects have declined by 60% in 20 years’, *Natural History Museum News*, and Damian Carrington (2020) ‘Insect numbers down 25% since 1990, global study finds’, *The Guardian*.

¹⁹ Damian Carrington (2019) ‘Populations of UK’s most important wildlife have plummeted since 1970’, *The Guardian*.

²⁰ Press Office (2021) ‘Climate change continues to be evident across UK’, *Met Office News*.

²¹ Sharon Lee Shafi, *Blithe Spirit* 4.1 (1994), p.18.

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- ²² For example, Leroy Kanterman (ed.), *Haiku West* 2.1 (July 1968).
- ²³ George Marsh, ‘Tsunehiko Hoshino Masterclass’, *Blithe Spirit* 4.4 (November 1994), pp.25-27 (p.27).
- ²⁴ Burns 2013, pp.13-15.
- ²⁵ Burns 2013, p.56.
- ²⁶ The Haiku Foundation (2008-2022) *The Haiku Foundation Digital Library*.
- ²⁷ Marsh 1994, p.9.
- ²⁸ Caroline Gourlay (1997) ‘daylight fading’, Jim Kacian (ed.) *The Red Moon Anthology 1997* (Winchester, Red Moon Press), p.24.
- ²⁹ For example, Greenbirdingmendo (2015) ‘Haiku for the Curlew’, *Green Birding–Mendocino County*.
- ³⁰ Not to be confused with those about curlew beyond the UK (for example, Lorraine Haig, ‘village green’, *Blithe Spirit* 32:3 (July 2022), p.16. is about the Australian bush stone-curlew, which is significantly less endangered).
- ³¹ Lesley Scoble (2022) ‘#World Curlew Day 2022: 1,000 year old curlew poem and my new ones’, *Lesley Scoble Artist*.
- ³² David Steele (2000) ‘under buddleia’, Lucien Stryk and Kevin Bailey (ed.) *the acorn book of contemporary haiku* (Ashurst, acorn book company), p.139.
- ³³ Butterfly Conservation, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, and Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (2001) *The State of Britain’s Butterflies* (Wareham, Butterfly Conservation).
- ³⁴ UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (2011) ‘Decades of decline for UK butterflies revealed in new report’, *UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology News*.
- ³⁵ James Ashworth (2022b) ‘Half of British butterflies placed on extinction Red List’, *Natural History Museum News*, and Miranda Bryant (2021) ‘Number of butterflies in the UK at a record low, survey finds’, *The Guardian*.
- ³⁶ Christine Eales, ‘Butterflies’, *Blithe Spirit* 28:1 (February 2018), p.17.
- ³⁷ Season words are not *always* included in haiku – both in Japanese and other languages – but they are *usually* included in nature haiku, consciously or not. See William J. Higginson (1996) *The Haiku Seasons: Poetry of the Nature World* (New York: Kodansha America, Inc.), pp.93-118. Kigo are traditionally listed in saijiki, Japanese seasonal almanacs, however with the internationalisation of haiku, adaptations to other geographies and climates have been suggested (ibid. pp.119-150). We might see a parallel adaptive process occurring in light of climate change.
- ³⁸ McMurray (2015).
- ³⁹ Lucas (2007) p.6; Shugyo Takaha (1997) ‘The Heart of Seasons’, Jim Kacian (ed.) *The Red Moon Anthology 1997* (Winchester: Red Moon Press), p.127-130.
- ⁴⁰ Martin Lucas, ‘song of a greenfinch’, *Blithe Spirit* 3:3 (July 1993), p.6.
- ⁴¹ Higginson 1996, p.104; John Barlow (2020) ‘Spring Begins: On Seasonality in English-Language Haiku’, *Snapshot Press*.
- ⁴² Ruth Parker, ‘Omicron triumphs’, *Blithe Spirit* 32.1 (February 2022), p.28.
- ⁴³ Chelsea Harvey (2022) ‘Spring arrives in U.K. a month earlier than it did in 1980s’, *ClimateWire*.
- ⁴⁴ Miranda Bryant (2022) ‘Blooming flowers, fledgling birds... the UK’s spring is early – and always will be’, *The Guardian*.
- ⁴⁵ For example, Paul Beech, ‘snowdrops’, *Blithe Spirit* 29:2 (May 2019), p.5; data from Judith Garforth and Lorienne Whittle, *Highlights of Spring 2019*, (Grantham: Woodland Trust).
- ⁴⁶ Terry Eagleton cited by Philip Rowland (2009) ‘From haiku to the Short Poem: Bridging the Divide’, Jim Kacian (ed.), *White Lies: Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku 2008*, (Winchester: Red Moon Press), pp.137-162 (p.149).
- ⁴⁷ Cobb and Lucas (1998), p.4.
- ⁴⁸ Masaoka Shiki, quoted by Higginson (1996), p.75.
- ⁴⁹ Gurga (2000).
- ⁵⁰ Higginson (1996), p.93ff.
- ⁵¹ Ludmila Balbanova (2009) ‘Metaphor and Haiku’, Jim Kacian (ed.), *White Lies: Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku 2008*, (Winchester: Red Moon Press), pp.99-110 (p.104).
- ⁵² Higginson (1996), p.107.
- ⁵³ Balbanova (2009), p.106.
- ⁵⁴ Balbanova (2008), p.106.
- ⁵⁵ Lucas (2007), p.8.
- ⁵⁶ Geoffrey Winch (2019) ‘another hedge’, Kate B. Hall (ed.), *Root: The British Haiku Society Members’ Anthology 2019*, (Barking: The British Haiku Society), p.18.
- ⁵⁷ Burns (2013), pp.33, 53.
- ⁵⁸ David Cobb (ed.), ‘Workshop Corner’, *Blithe Spirit* 1.1 (Winter 1990), p. 8-9.
- ⁵⁹ Earl Livings, ‘back to normal’, *Wales Haiku Journal* (Summer 2022).

⁶⁰ Susan Lee Kerr, 'Characteristics of the state of mind which the creation and appreciation of haiku demand', *Blithe Spirit* 28:2 (May 2018), p.82. Such might also be true of ecopoetry more generally, Shoptaw (2016).

⁶¹ Quoted by Anita Virgil, 'When Is A Haiku', Jim Kacian (ed.) *The Red Moon Anthology 1997* (Winchester: Red Moon Press), pp.135-146 (p.136).

⁶² Paraphrased by Peter Yovu (2009) 'Do Something Different', Jim Kacian (ed.), *White Lies: Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku 2008*, (Winchester: Red Moon Press), pp.163-174 (pp.163-164).

⁶³ Virgil (2009), p.136.

⁶⁴ Quoted by Yovu (2009), p.163-164.

⁶⁵ Ayesha Tandon (2022) 'Climate change made 2022's UK heatwave "at least 10 times more likely"', *Carbon Brief*.

⁶⁶ Matthew Schneider-Mayerson, 'The Influence of Climate Fiction: An Empirical Survey of Readers', *Environmental Humanities* 10:2 (2018), pp.473–500 (pp.478-480, 495). See also Schneider-Mayerson, Matthew, Abel Gustafson, Anthony Leiserowitz, Matthew H. Goldberg, Seth A. Rosenthal, and Matthew Ballew, 'Environmental Literature as Persuasion: An Experimental Test of the Effects of Reading Climate Fiction', *Environmental Communication* (September 2020).

⁶⁷ As quoted by Higginson (1996).