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TRANSCULTURAL CONVERGENCE? POLISH POETS AND ARTISTS AND THE ORIENTAL VERBO-VISUALITY

Abstract

The article concerns different aspects of convergence processes of the traditional Oriental genres in the Polish culture, focusing on haiku, *haiga* and *haibun*. It examines artists' books, visual arts and the artistic websites. The theoretical frame of the research is rooted in the concept of transculturality introduced by Wolfgang Welsch.

The author analyses Polish works of art employing different strategies of combining words and images, thereby showing unexpected similarities between cultures and revealing the artistic changes caused by the choice of different media. The investigation proves that the most interesting compositions uncover unexpected common elements between apparently contradictory traditions, the necessary condition is, however, at least the basic knowledge about the Other.

Key words: verbo-visuality, transculturality, convergence, haiku, haiga, haibun

The paper focuses on the concept of transculturality introduced by Wolfgang Welsch (cf. Welsch 1998, Welsch 2004), adapting it to the analyses of different fields of convergence in contemporary Polish culture: employing and transforming old Oriental genres into more hybrid forms appearing on the Internet, becoming parts of artistic exhibitions or being incorporated into artists' books. It is a convergence of a special kind – "transplanting" the genres into the new medial ground must have been preceded by their basic assimilation in the new culture.

The term 'convergence' is used to describe different technological, industrial, social and cultural processes (Jenkins 2007: 9, Jakubowicz 2011: 27).

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All of them prove important in the analyses concerning the "transplantation" of the foreign literary and artistic genres, which seem utterly incongruent with the Polish tradition. In the paper, however, I concentrate only on the cultural dimensions of the problem, believing they define an interesting field of research for comparative cultural studies. As Jenkins claims, convergence is not just a matter of sophisticated media devices but a process occurring in human minds and human communication (cf. Jenkins 2007: 9).

I am interested mainly in three genres: haiku, *haiga* and *haibun*. The common basis of the three is haiku: a poetic genre strongly related to visual arts (calligraphy, similarities of imagery in haiku and *sumi-e*, *nanga*, *ukiyo-e*, shared aesthetic and ethical beliefs of *haijins* and *Zen* painters – cf. Addiss 2005, Śniecikowska 2007: 243–251). In the new cultural environment haiku also tends to be close to visual arts, which is reflected on the level of typography and book illustration (cf. Śniecikowska 2007: 255–262) but also, less obviously, in artistic spatial arrangements (artists' books, haiku-based art exhibitions) and, last but not least, in different multisensory forms spread by means of the Internet.

First and foremost, verbo-visuality of haiku in the new culture manifests itself in strong connections between poems and their illustrations (paintings, photographs, films), which may be compared and at least partly derived from the Japanese art of haiga. Haiga is a type of sumi-e painting illustrating particular haikus or created in the spirit of this poetry (cf. Takeuchi 2005: 198, Addiss 2005: 204, Addiss 2006), usually accompanying the calligraphy of the poem on the same scroll, sheet of paper, screen or fan. Works of haiga tend to present one shape or figure (maximally several of them) on a monochrome background, sometimes getting close to abstract art (cf. http://www.japonia.org.pl/?q=node/75, http://www.brooksbookshaiku.com/LidiaRozmus/haiga.html). Some scholars use the term 'haiga' to describe the whole verbo-visual composition treating it as a kind of word-graphy (cf. Śniecikowska 2005: 79-84; 2013) which cannot be easily split into text and image (Addiss 2006, Watts 1988: 178). In my research I generally follow this path, being aware, however, of certain 'cracks' between the parts in contemporary Western haiga, especially ones created by two authors: a poet and a visual artist.

Traditional Japanese haikus were not only accompanied by *haiga* illustrations but they were also parts of *haibun* – a genre interweaving prose and poems, often an itinerary. The prose explained ambiguities of the poems, revealing in what circumstances given haiku was composed and thus suggesting its interpretation. Contemporary Western incarnations of *hai*-

bun, especially online ones, are frequently combined with haiga forming various hybrid (in terms of media and genres) verbo-visual compositions.

Originally, only *haiga* were verbo-visual in the strict sense. In case of haiku and *haibun* the relations with visual arts were important but not direct. The introduction of haiku and the related genres to the West¹ is also linked with the expansion of verbo-visuality.

In the paper I wish to trace different manifestations of transculturality in the mentioned spaces of convergence in Polish culture. One may argue that such examination of verbo-visuality of the haiku-related genres does not require implementing the Welsch's term as the well known notions of interculturality and multiculturality may easily suffice. I believe the concept of transculturality - though still possibly "risky and disputable" (Rewers 2007: 119) - enables broader analysis of the investigated phenomena: very remote in time and space and having different philosophical and artistic background. I do not want to treat cultures as isolated monoliths (cf. Welsch 1998, Welsch 2004, Wilkoszewska 2004: 14) as "sharp" opposition of East and West often obscures the actual picture. I am interested in "shading" cultural differences, showing fictitiousness of some seemingly impassable borders, revealing surprising cultural meeting points and describing "the interference of the values and standards of different cultures" (Rewers 2007: 128). Exploring the spaces of convergence of the old Oriental verbo-visual forms is a very good occasion for such a transcultural survey.

Beyond two dimensions

Haiku and artists' books

Some scholars claim haiku poets and publishers outside Japan generally mistreat the poems' layout (cf. Kotlarek 2009: 440), which is, moreover, in a way culturally justified (no comparable calligraphy tradition in the West). The statement is obviously too strong. Visuality of haiku in the West must be perceived first on the basic, typographical level. Roland Barthes rightly emphasizes the importance of the notation of haiku in Western volumes of poetry. He praises the practice of placing a single poem on an otherwise empty page (Barthes 2003: 57). Still, there are numerous typographic ways of publishing haiku. One extreme is the printing asceticism Barthes values

¹ The described phenomena are not restricted to Polish culture – analogical processes occur in other Western countries.

so much, the other – pesky, banal orientalisation (quasi-calligraphy, ornaments made of pseudo-ideograms etc. – cf. Śniecikowska 2007). The haiku layout, which we should allegedly forget about in the West, is a field of intensive exploration and experiments. Visuality related to haiku seems to burst from the pages in search for a three-dimensional materialisation. I focus on the process of moving haiku and haiku-related works beyond two dimensions and incorporating them into the field of visual arts.

Let me first examine some contemporary artists' books – artefacts inaccessible for wider public, made by hand in only a few copies². What happens with haiku in such works? What is the bicultural and/or transcultural background for such adaptations?

An assemblage by Katarzyna Szpilkowska *Haiku z plaży* ('Haiku from the beach', http://www.kolekcja.bookart.pl/info/viewpub/tid/4/pid/317) consists of a worn-out wooden box, round pebbles inscribed with single words and a small copy-book in a thick wooden cover. The copy-book contains 19 short poems written on single pages, under each text appears an irregular ink dot (similar ink-blots also appear on the pages without text). These expressive, fingerprint-like dots may be regarded as an Occidental reference to *ensō* – calligraphic Zen symbol of unity, entity, enlightment painted with one stroke of a brush. The blue colour of the ink is also telling: together with the blots and the majuscule handwriting it may be interpreted as referring to childhood, early education, school years and thus to an open, void mind of a child (fundamental Zen condition of self-development).

The relation between pebbles and poems is easy to uncover: texts consist of words written on the stones. Some lyrics are close to the prototypical Western haiku³: the perception of the world is full of certain tenderness, poems are filled with empathy to non-human beings and at the same time they are stylistically "fresh" and truly haiku-like⁴. Some poems are, how-

² The works I describe are parts of the collection of Muzeum Książki Artystycznej (Book Art Museum) in Łódź.

³ In my research on the Oriental literary forms transferred to the West I use the prototypical genre models, which is useful especially in the description of works meeting only some of the central criteria of the genre. Cf. Śniecikowska (in print).

⁴ The examples read: "KAMIEŃ TRWA. / MORZE / ODDYCHA / NIEBIESKO" ('stone lasts. / the sea / breathes / bluely"), "SKÓRA / ŚMIEJE SIĘ / RYBIO" ('skin / is laughing / fishly'), "PTAK PLĄSA – / WIATR / PEŁZA / BEZTROSKO" ('bird is prancing – / wind / crawls / carelessly').

In case of works inaccessible on the Web I quote the original Polish version and give an English translation. Other literary texts appear only in the English translation.

ever, highly incoherent⁵ as if they were created with the slightly modified Dadaist method of pulling words (inscribed on pebbles) at random out of the post-avant-garde hat⁶.

The connection between texts and the assembled objects is not self-evident, some semantic links are clear enough though. The composition proves riveting as the artist manages to keep balance between the sensual and the intellectual. The assemblage corresponds with the haiku and Zen aesthetics (appreciation of the worn-out, the common, the ordinary; incorporating nature into the work of art). The haikus are visualised, concretised and "sensualised" (the role of touch!) by natural ready-mades (pebbles) and simple but defamiliarised human made objects? Szpilkowska manages to combine Oriental inspirations and the familiar if slightly outdated attributes of everyday life (blue ink, copy-book). Cultural diversity is also reflected in the stylistics of the poems: oscillating between genuine poetics of haiku and... delicate pure-nonsense.

Marek Gajewski chooses a totally different way of concretising haiku. His Haiku *III* (http://www.vebsoft.pl/mgajewski/display_gallery.php?SectionID=4&GalleryID=3&Lang=PL) is a composition created over 24 years (1985–2009) with utmost respect for the cultural and physical "material" of art. The composition resembles a portable altar – triptych. The sides of the "altar" were made of sheets of thick cream paper inscribed with two short Buddhist meditative texts and one haiku (presumably written by Gajewski himself⁸), accompanied by the engravings of the artist. The abstract and semi-abstract prints form lines of ornaments, which at first sight remind of a series of Oriental ink landscape paintings, Egyptian reliefs or... contemporary comics. Some engravings are outlined with regular black circles – such graphical tondos might again be treated as a Western version of *ensō*.

Some examples: "SZUMNIE PARSKA / UŚMIECH / RYBA TRWA / PIESZCZOTLIWIE" ('boisterously snorts / the smile / the fish lasts / caressingly'), "UŚMIECH / ODDYCHA / ZIARNIŚCIE / RYBA / TRWA / SZUMNIE" ('smile / breathes / grainily / fish / lasts / boisterously').

⁶ Another analogy may be a contemporary American game""Haikubes": a set of 63 dice (each engraved with a word or short phrase) for creating haiku. Cf. http://www.haikubytwo.com/review-haikubes/.

⁷ The wooden box (old suitcase?) and an old-fashioned copy-book (poetic travel diary?) may be related with the travelling aspect of haiku and *haibun*.

⁸ None of the literary texts employed by the artist is subscribed. The note attached to Gajewski's work provides us with the poets' and writers' names (Bashō – wrongly spelled as "Basko", Buson, Issa, Rajneesh (Osho), Seung Sahn, Gajewski) not attributing them to particular texts.

The middle part of *Haiku III* consists of a fan decorated with lines of engravings (element typical of both Oriental and Western cultures), one of the printing matrices used by an artist and 8 loose sheets of paper with the Polish translations of classical Japanese haiku. Gajewski used hand painted, cooked paper with slightly ragged edges. Its monochrome red surface with blurred patches of colour seems to hide misty landscapes waiting only for a clear shape to appear. And there are several shapes appearing indeed – not painted but written and printed. A text of a haiku is carefully written by hand in horizontal lines along the longer edge at the bottom of each page. A line of engraving – similar to the ones already described – decorates the upper part of the composition. The engravings this time seem close to incomprehensible calligraphy (linear notation makes the impression stronger⁹) or unintelligible abstract *haiga*.

The work is completed by a text hidden on the back side of the "altar", sounding Taoist or Zen, telling of a "Great Man" by the name "I Do Not Know".

At first sight the rich multipart artefact seems very far from simplicity and asceticism of haiku and traditional Japanese aesthetics. It also seems a far cry from what corresponds to them in Occidental cultures. The composition surely reflects the strong belief of Western artists that works inspired by Far Eastern masterpieces deserve rare, precious materials and remarkable layout. Still, Haiku *III* is a coherent, well-thought-out meditative composition. Texts chosen by Gajewski, coming from different times and different places, share the same philosophical background. The visual side of the work is more ecclectic, joining the forms and techniques familiar to Western art (triptych, tondo, composition in lines) with deep Oriental inspirations. The genre name haiku works as a synecdoche (*pars pro toto*) of a greater verbo-visual composition built on similar or corresponding aesthetic and philosophical foundations.

The already described examples of the artists' books show that moving haiku beyond two dimensions is often connected with its recontextualisation. The works are the authors' unique attempts at visual, sensual (the role of touch!) concretisation of poetry. The formula for success is careful blending of forms of Oriental origin and those known from the artists' own culture and own sensual experience. Some genre conventions must be therefore given up.

⁹ For the Polish reader the first, "classical" anthology of Japanese haiku (*Haiku* 1983), where the translations were taken from, may also be a visual intertext. The book had an eleborate typographical layout – calligraphies played a role of illustrations.

It seems worthwhile to confront the works of Szpilkowska and Gajewski with the book *Motyle* ('Butterflies', 2007, http://www.kolekcja.bookart. pl/info/viewpub/tid/4/pid/120) by Franciszek Bunsch, which is much simplier and at the same time less homogeneous. When the book is closed it looks like a small copy-book in hard back – when open it proves a long strip of paper folded as an accordion, printed and inscribed on one side. What makes the work more unusal are the geometrical paper shapes glued to the edges of the "pages" – the open book is in fact three-dimensional. It is decorated with multicoloured semi-abstract figures resembling butterflies and cob-webs, accompanying haiku poems. Such verbo-visual form seems to correspond to haiga and Japanese scrolls shi-ga-jiku (shinga jiku cf. Trzeciak 2002: 139) containing both literary texts and paintings. Still, apart from haiku there are also some other lyrical texts having nothing in common with these tiny meditative poems and, last but not least, the textual forms the author names "nowe ('new') gatunki". The polysemous word "gatunki" may be translated as "genres" or "species" – only the latter is the right choice here as "nowe gatunki" proves humorous coinages (resembling the names of insect species) for different human types. Abundance of visual and literary forms, graphical and genological incoherence strongly distract the readers' / viewers' attention not letting them concentrate on haiku themselves. There is no place for synergy of haiku and the alleged haiga. Still, looking for deep transcultural links was supposedly not the author's intention. This is clearly reflected in the title of the work, which is Butterflies (here: light, careless, small, multicoloured literary beings) and not Haiku.

An interesting counterpoint for the already described artists' books, which differently adapt the haiku and *haiga* tradition, is a composition by a *haijin* and *sumi-e* painter Lidia Rozmus. The book *My journey* (Rozmus 2004) / *W podróży* (Rozmus 2005)¹⁰ was published by a regular publishing house, still it may be regarded as an experimental artefact. Rozmus is an author both of the layout and the literary text. The volume is hidden in an elegant, orientalised paper slipcase of untypical shape and ascetic non-chromatic colouring. The main visual motif on the cover is, again, an expressive *ensō* – this time in its traditional form. Painting *ensō* in grey, not black ink may, however, suggest some subtle cultural changes. The book itself stops on the verge of three-dimensionality: accordion-like folded pages annex space, defamiliarising reading experience. You may turn the "pages" normally, still the most natural way of perceiving the whole work

¹⁰ The book was first published in English in 2004, a year later a Polish version followed.

is spreading it as a long scroll and reading / watching carefully its both sides. Visual and literary content of *My journey* form a harmonious entity.

The title of the volume refers to Master Bashō, poet-traveller, and his journey diaries. The book interweaves prose and haiku just as classical haibun: prose sheds light on the poems, poems illustrate prose. Literary communication is "supplemented" with black and white photographs appearing asymmetrically in the pages and a strip of expressive abstract sumi-e painting (resembling an ECG notation) along the "scroll". The photos themselves usually depict single natural shapes (cf. Śniecikowska 2012), just as the works of old Japanese masters of zenga or haiga (types of sumi-e), and semantically go with the literary text. Thus, Rozmus evidently combines the genres of haibun and haiga in an expressive form she calls haibun-ga (cf. Kreis 2002: 8, Walker 2005, Olson 2005).

The author generally follows old Japanese masters, her innovations are at the same time slight and significant. *Sumi-e* is accompanied by photographs, *haibun* and *haiga* are united¹¹, and a scroll is at the same time a set of pages. The haikus themselves seem very close to the genre prototype without just being uncreative English or Polish imitations of the Oriental texts (on the contrary, you may see traces of modern epiphany in these poems – cf. Śniecikowska (in print), Michałowski 2008).

My journey is an active continuation of the old Japanese genres (cf. Balbus 1983: 145); the books by Szpilkowska, Gajewski, Bunsch cannot be so unambiguously qualified. This does not automatically mean that full three-dimensionality equals formal or generic richness. It is, however, surely connected with greater heterogeneity (especially in case of an assemblage) and more polisensory perception. Three-dimensional works are in a way bolder, more unique and more exposed to incomprehension. They use genres as components but they do not function within genres nor form new ones. Motyle ('Butterflies') are a loose Occidental variation partly based on Oriental motifs. Haiku III is an attempt at gathering and uniting within one work different visual and textual components referring to haiku. Szpilkowska in a way turns haiku into material objects which she finally uses to form the poems. The ontic status of the three artists' books is to some extent parallel to classical *haiga* (verbo-visual works existing in one / few copies), which is, however, definitely not enough to talk about any traces of transculturality. A proof of transcultural links is, however, the possibilty of coherent and creative combination of textual and visual forms deriving from

¹¹ It is typical of many contemporary works inspired by Japanese culture, especially online ones.

different cultural universes. Still, the basis for such artistic activity must be undoubtedly knowledge about the Other (though in some aspects Similar) and... clear composition of the work (the work by Bunsch being negative example here). Under such conditions even strongly modified Oriental forms may help people of the West capture their own experience.

Art exhibitions entitled haiku

A phenomenon that deserves careful research is numerous art exhibitions employing the term 'haiku' in their titles¹². Undoubtedly artists and curators perceive the great visual potential of haiku. Some decisions, however, prove highly surprising; tracing transculturality in the presented visual and verbo-visual configurations seems unintelligible. Still, some reveal unexpected parallels between seemingly incomparable pieces of art.

In the recent years the greatest haiku-centred museum enterprise was the exhibition *Czy można przesadzać kwiaty rzepaku? Twórczość mistrzów haiku* ('Is It Possible to Replant Rape Flowers? Works of Haiku Masters') in the Museum of Literature (Muzeum Literatury) in Warsaw (15 Feb 2002 – 15 March 2002). The assumption of this unique project was not only to trace but also to create spaces of convergence and transculturality. From the point of view of the Welsch's theory it seems an ideal arrangement for further studies. The exhibition consisted of pieces of poetry (Polish translations of Japanese haiku, Polish haiku-inspired poetry by Stanisław Cichowicz, Janusz Stanisław Pasierb, Jerzy Harasymowicz, Hieronim

¹² The following is a selecton of exhibitions (not analysed in the paper):

[–] *Strumień żółtego piasku* ('Stream of Yellow Sand'), Centrum Sztuki i Techniki Japońskiej "Manggha", Sept 2001 (haiku, *sumi-e, bonsai*, cf. Kreis 2002: 7–10).

⁻ Paula Rettinger, Haiku, Cień Klub, Kraków 2003.

[–] Janina Kraupe, *Haiku*, Artidotuum Gallery, Kraków, May 2007 (cf. http://artidotuum.pl/wystawy/).

⁻ Wystawa Haiku ('Haiku Exhibition'), Ośrodek Języka i Kultury Japonii w Łodzi, 2010.

Haiku i Wachlarze ('Haikus and Fans'), Filia nr 29 Miejskiej Biblioteki Publicznej, Lublin, Oct / Nov 2010.

[–] Włodzimierz Witalis Tyc, *Podszepty monsunu albo haiku o zakochanych* ('Monsoon Whispers or Haiku on Lovers'), Galeria Chłodna 20, Suwałki, Nov 2010-I 2011.

It is worth noting the term 'haiku' is also used in the titles of some musical enterprises joining Oriental and European inspirations but not necessarily strongly connected with haiku poetry itself – cf. the following CDs: A. M. Jopek, M. Ozone, Haiku, Music 2011; Brzóska (D. Brzóskiewicz), Emce Kwadrat (M. Adamowicz), Sójka (S. Sojka), Samplaire (W. Chołaściński), Haiku fristajl, Polskie Radio 2006.

Stanisław Kreis) and paintings and installations by visual artists of Poland (about 160 works by Adam Bunsch, Jerzy Stajuda, Teresa Pągowska and Koji Kamoji). The works of the visual artists were arbitrarily attributed to different seasons, which may be regarded as an equivalent of the season word *kigo* in haiku.

The curator of the exhibition, Łukasz Kossowski, claims the perception of the world typical of haiku does not have to be deeply rooted in Oriental (Zen) philosophy (Kossowski 2002). Indeed, contemplation of the real, concentration on the sensual, certain empathy do characterise the output of Bunsch exploring "the microcosm of nature", Stajuda creating "tranquil landscapes", Pągowska and Kamoji artistically recording everyday events (Kossowski 2002: no page numbers). Let me add, such contemplative attitude to the observed seems a specific distinguishing mark of modernist art.

Kossowski is right to emphasize the role of the interdisciplinary parallels: silence and understatement in haiku comparable to empty spaces in visual compositions, simplicity and stylistic asceticism in poetry parallel to raw, simple materials used by visual artists (unprimed canvas in Pągowska's paintings, plywood in works of Kamoji, handmade paper in graphics by Bunsch) (Kossowski 2002). Other interdisciplinary links are: contemplative concentration on details of the perceived world, interest in regular, everyday objects and events, focus on material, the use of limited colour range (cf. Hniedziewicz 2001). Each artist subtly, in his or her own manner, finds similarities between Zen aesthetics, haiku and modern Polish art. It does not mean, however, that they always deliberately looked for such correspondences. The produced works may unintentionally dialogue with the seemingly absolutely incomparable tradition of the Orient. The verbo-visual arrangements of the exhibition truly revealed unexpected relations between arts and cultures.

Let me focus on some aspects of the output of the visual artists in question. Colour graphics by Adam Bunsch¹³, employing old Japanese technique of woodcut print *ukiyo-e*, present single natural objects, often changing types of paper, showing the same motif in different scenes, depicting different seasons (cf. Kossowski 2002). The "technical" affinity with Japanese culture is self-evident. Special contemplative attention paid to the tiny natural objects makes the graphics in a way similar to haiku¹⁴.

¹³ Bunsch is the oldest (born 1896) of the painters whose output was presented in the exhibition.

¹⁴ Bunsch was also a painter of Christian religious scenes and author of religious dramas. Such fusion of interests (Christianity and Orient) seems typical of many Western artists. It proves that contamplative art tends to be linked with religion(s).

Linking Bunsch's works with spring also does not seem controversial (especially if we bear in mind spring iconography of some graphics chosen by the curator).

The relations with haiku seem less evident in case of Pągowska's paintings. Lack of obvious links, however, does not preclude deeper similarities. Kossowski describes Pągowska's works as follows:

The atmosphere of her paintings is of utmost importance: it is intimate, full of erotic tension, allusive. Many of her works may be associated with the synthetic, disciplined and at the same impressive form of Japanese haiku. [...] Such poetics emanates not only from the painted objects. [...] Everything that is redundant is rejected: imitation of three-dimensional space, abundance of colours, intellectual speculation (Kossowski 2002: no page numbers).

Concentration emanating from the canvas, contemplation of the "silent life" of the nearly haptically depicted objects, defamiliarisation of the visual presentation of nevertheless mimetically shown objects may be reminiscent of good, refined haiku (extreme simplicity of the Oriental miniatures is a myth cf. e.g. Żuławska-Umeda 2007). Also the serenity of Pagowska's works resembles in some way the delicate affirmative humour of Japanese haikus (cf. Śniecikowska 2009). The very personal nature of the paintings can also be linked to haiku (cf. Hniedziewicz 2001). Finally, in her late works Pagowska makes use of unprimed canvas, on which, like a sumi-e painter, she draws "signs by means of only a couple of strokes of the brush" (Kitowska-Łysiak 2007). However, the practice of alienating the presented phenomena from the reality (e.g. without a natural background) is clearly very remote from the aesthetics of haiku. The same can be said of eroticism mentioned by Kossowski¹⁵. Let us recall that the purpose of the exhibition was not to show alleged equivalence of paintings and poems (which is anyway impossible), but to highlight certain not necessarily obvious parallels¹⁶. One last question: should Pagowska's works be associated with the summer? Apart from the iconography of the presented works, the versatility of the artist, multitude of topics which she explores support this metaphorical classification.

A more obvious choice seems to be Stajuda for the autumn. His works are subtle landscapes, which balance on the border of the external and the

¹⁵ "Reformed" 20th century Japanese haiku as well as Western haiku do not shun eroticism. The exhibition in the Museum of Literature was, however, definitely devoted to the classical canons of haiku (and works close to them).

¹⁶ Pagowska herself found the concept of the exhibition very positive (Ł. Kossowski pers. comm.), however, the quest for links with haiku was not her artistic intention.

internal. However, this association may also rise controversies. Haikus are clearly mimetic while Stajuda's works transform and deform the visible reality. Still, let us repeat, the point was not to show simple equivalences.

The last part of the exhibition, the winter, was organised visually by the works of Koji Kamoji, a Japanese living for decades in Poland, who is as it were automatically entitled to take a stand on elements of haiku aesthetics in painting. Kamoji is actually known for creating works that relate to haiku (*Haiku-Woda* – 'Haiku Water', *Haiku-Deszcz* – 'Haiku-Rain', cf. Gorządek 2009) and commenting on the genre himself (Kamoji 2006: 29).

Magdalena Hniedziewicz describes thus this part of the exhibition:

We enter a room where in front of our eyes on the black wall opens the metaphysical landscape of *Nocny deszcz* ('Rain in the Night') of straight forms with clear contours; they are abstract, but at the same time they define a certain [...] space, they are suggestive in drawing one's gaze into the depths of the blackness. In front of the painting, on the floor [...] there is an installation [...]: a sheet of silver-coloured metal with a glass of water standing in the middle. It is difficult to say how the artist succeeded in creating the tension between the dark picture with powerful forms and the elusive silvery-transparent installation; there is some inexpressible metaphysics to it [...]. On the side walls there are paintings. White surfaces seem to exist only thanks to the points and lines on them, which are delicate and barely noticeable from some distance. [...] The paintings of Koji Kamoji seem to realise what Agnieszka Żuławska-Umeda [...] said [...] about haiku: that the words seem to exist only for us to feel the space/silence stretching between them (Hniedziewicz 2001).

Kamoji's works seem to render the nature of winter perfectly, at the same time tangibly and inexpressibly. Emptiness, avoidance of artistic abundance, restricted selection of colours used, a specific hibernation – all this is perfectly in line with the winter haikus of the masters of the genre. Kamoji has obviously gone further than classical *haijins* in the process of abstracting and transferring meanings. Nevertheless, the aesthetic links remain very strong.

Interestingly, Kossowski, a specialist on symbolist painting, did not decide to compare haiku with the paintings of Wojciech Weiss or Jan Stanisławski, which undoubtedly correspond to Japanese aesthetics (cf. e.g. Kossowski 1999, Król 2011, Król 2007, *Ten krakowski Japończyk...*), or exactly that of haiku. The curator looked for more contemporary parallels, less obvious ones. Some of the chosen works are rather allusions to haiku, this relates both to the visual and the literary plane (use of modern haikus, which are far from simple imitation). An exhibition of this kind shows important links between Japanese aesthetics (even in its most aus-

tere incarnation) and widely understood modernism. In this way important, though sometimes surprising common areas can be found or created.

We may also wonder about the choice of the exhibition's subheading *The art of* haiku *masters*. The presented literary works are truly classical haikus or works oscillating around the haiku prototype. The visual works cannot be evaluated in this way. The title provokes the viewer to question well-known pieces of art about their potential transcultural connections. The arrangement of the exhibition actually makes one notice at least some parallels. We might consider the whole enterprise as debatable or at least daring, which is perhaps what researching and presenting artistic phenomena is all about.

An astonishing counterpoint for the described exposition is the exhibition of Sławomir Brzoska's works *Płynna tożsamość – haiku* ('Fluid identity – haiku'; 6th Jul – 27th Aug 2011, "Imaginarium" gallery in Łódź). The exhibition in the Museum of Literature featured the literary miniatures as an important element of the presentation, they entered into a consistent (albeit multimedial) dialogue with the 20th century paintings and graphics. The visitor to Brzoska's exhibition may wonder for a long time about the connection between the visual works presented and haiku. Without the author's explanations provided in the form of a leaflet they might not notice the slightest parallel at all.

The exhibition is divided into two parts complementing each other (according to the artist). The first room houses an installation made of three chairs and strands of red and blue wool. Red threads run radially upwards from two of the chairs and blue ones from the third chair. On the "red" chairs there are objects resembling stones wrapped in blue wool, on the "blue" one there is a cuboid (a large book?) covered in red wool. The whole work resembles the refined avant-garde spatial compositions by Naum Gabo. Its alleged relation to haiku seems to be a puzzle. The author explains in the description of the exhibition that the installation

will relate to the concept of journey through the rhythm of parallel lines. Creating, unwinding, and then after the exhibition coiling back the wool is a process in the course of which I try to be fully aware of every step and the tension of the lines. The process of emergence and destruction is in my understanding identical to breathing, by which I refer to the archaic intuitions of the existence of the Universe. (leaflet)

As we can see, the exhibition room has become the place of maximal meditative experience of the performed activity for the artist. The very meditativeness of the act of creation (not being a contemplation of the external reality) is too little to look for significant similarities to haiku.

The second part of the exhibition is completely incomprehensible in the context of the term appearing in the title. In a separate room on opposing white walls two films are screened and enter into a silent dialogue. The only sound in the room is the vibrating rhythmical music (it sounds much like breathing), which changes very little throughout the show. On the wall opposite the entrance there is a film showing scenes from the life of contemporary Papuans, the other film shows changes of the face of a white man in his forties (the author). The visitors quickly notice the interelation between the films.

At first, the white man has closed eyes and a plain leather necklace on a bare torso. The young Papuans observe him (or rather whatever they had in front of their eyes while the film was shot) intently. The white man's face starts to change, the boys get excited and point something out with their fingers. The man's face is darkening all the time, his features become sharper, and the simple necklace turns into a colourful tribal one. The change is viewed now by adult Papuans too. In the moment of the greatest tension, when the man becomes most similar to the local people, one of the Papuans plays a primitive instrument holding it in his mouth. The viewers, however, still hear the same vibrating music. The change starts to reverse. The Papuans are shown to perform their daily duties. At the end one of the "savages" takes an ancestor's mummy out of a hut and seats it at the table. The face of the man on the other wall is white again, his eyes are open and there is no decoration on his neck at all. Has everyone returned to their roots? Despite the fact that we are very similar? The "fluid identity" from the title is evident here. Yet, where is the haiku?

Nothing follows from the reference to the name of the Oriental genre, save perhaps irritation of the visitors. Haiku is probably supposed to function as a signal of a deep meditative experience, a journey understood as searching for links between cultures. Yet, the parallel between the Japanese short poems, the installation of wool and chairs and the films inspired by the life of the Papuans has a particularly weak basis. Neither will we find any traces of artistic provocation. The enormous cultural load of haiku had been completely missed. Is this due to lack of knowledge? Or was haiku meant as a fashionable catchy word used simply to lure visitors?

We will analyse yet another exhibition enterprise. Malwina Hryńczak entiled her exhibition *Wampiry | Haiku* ('Vampires | Haiku'; Galeria Twórców Galera, Piekarnia Cichej Kobiety, Zielona Góra, Oct-Nov 2010). The shocking combination in the title has the simplest possible explanation: *Vampires* and *Haiku* are two cycles of works presented together. They share the colour patterns (black and white), clear presentation and sen-

sual imagery (surprising cadres, the haptic details shown with the use of chiaroscuro) and the employment of the techniques of photo-montage in computer graphics. The first cycle deals with social exclusion, the different modern forms of "vampirism" (homosexuals, HIV carriers, the mentally ill, ethnic minorities etc.). The second cycle offers a more ambiguous, erudite game with cultural clichés and icons (the thematic incoherence of the exhibition is the first sign of its stylistic weaknesses.

Each of the works of the cycle *Haiku* is composed of three major elements: image, "ideogram" and words. We can see surprising sets or cadres of people, objects and animals. A complementation of this and a supposed "translation" of the strictly figurative parts into a different medium are quasi-ideograms made of bones, symbols, figures etc. Finally, there are texts, the alleged haikus, most of which prove to be epigrams in fact. They rely on puns, some are humorous, others reflexive but we also have provocative and distressing ones.

The first "haiku" is: "There is room / for the shadow..." with a signature: "The sun". The photo-montage shows a cat and a mouse and their shadows on the wall, swapped. This is accompanied by quasi-ideograms looking like abstract avant-garde photograms. Further poems are ascribed to particular figures. For example, Henry VIII "writes": "Women are like roses / – I like to cut them". This "haiku" is matched with a photo-montage of a woman's body divided into parts enclosed by a flower of a rose and two lines of "ideograms" made of a naked woman's silhouette in various poses. A photo-montage showing the smiling face of Princess Diana behind a car wheel is combined with the text: "Winding / are the Lord's paths / Diana" and "ideograms" made of road signs. The distressing couplet "In the sun of the noon / a house of cards" (next to it we can see a house made of cards on a desert and "ideograms" made of playing cards) is signed by Osama bin Laden. In another composition Hitler is looking at crowds of people and "saying": "Enchanted history... I recall these moments". The "Ideograms" are made of tanks, bullets, a helmet, a skull and a swastika. Finally, a rather trivial text: "I got lost... / On the paths of Life" is signed by Death. Next to it we find "ideograms" of bones and a photo-montage – a contour of Death with a photo of a street along which someone is walking.

In sum, we have verbo-visual compositions that are very attractive visually, inventive, sometimes shocking, sometimes transgressing the borders of good taste. In a way they resemble the old European form of emblems with allegorical depictions of people or phenomena combined with a lemma (inscription) explaining the meaning of the image and a sub-

script (usually an epigram) explaining the link between the image and the lemma¹⁷. In Hryńczak's work, the role of the lemma is performed by the "ideograms". The compositions prove to be interesting in many ways, intertextual, but very weakly related to haiku (or with haiga by extension). The artist seems to treat haiku as a synonym of a poetic miniature with a specific kind of humour to it (cf. her statement at http://cojestgrane.pl/ wydarzenie/66718/). The author does not obey any of the key features of the genre, save conciseness. Her humour is also very different from that of classical haijins (cf. Śniecikowska 2009). The strongest parallel to Oriental forms is the verbo-visuality of the composition itself. The closeness to European epigrams and emblems is much more evident though, even in the presence of the "ideograms" that feign Oriental signs. The Oriental inspiration without any deeper study has thus produced an enrichment of Occidental forms (epigram, emblem). The alleged convergence of haiku in a new artistic plane is a completely false trail, which does not denounce the value of the work as such, however.

I have described three very different exhibitions which referred to haiku in their titles. It proves, much like in the case of the analysed artists' books, that the most interesting, truly transcultural works obtain when the artist's or curator's activity is supported by knowledge and preceded by deep reflection. Only such output will show fascinating, non-trivial common spheres. However, even the superficial, stereotypical references reveal some parallels between the forms of the Oriental tradition and the searches of Polish modern and post-modern art. The vital element is the stress on presenting the materiality of the works and the striving for verbo-visuality itself.

The Orient in Polish – on the Internet

A particularly interesting domain for investigating the convergence of the Far Eastern verbo-visual genres is the Internet. While browsing through Polish-language websites on haiku, one can quickly encounter forms described as digital art haiga (or digital haiga), foto-haiga, foto-filmo haiga, haiku photography, digital haibun. The most important questions to be asked

¹⁷ Hryńczak's compositions are remotely related to work by Gajewski (or its part – manually dyed cards with texts of haikus and graphic compositions made of quasi-ideograms). Gajewski's work is deeply rooted in Buddhist aesthetics, graphical forms are absract or semi-abstract. Similarities to emblems will not be found in it.

about these works are related to their innovativeness. What changes with the use of a new medium in comparison to the work's basic model – the "analogue" Oriental form? How do the online compositions compare to earlier (and current) Polish works on paper? How much do the authors make use of the special properties of the Web: the interactivity, hypertextuality, widely understood mulitimediality? In other words – are we dealing with a significant modification of earlier patterns or are we just reading Orientalised "Internet paper"?

It is astonishing (at least at first) how many artists use the form of a blog. The choice seems to result from practical considerations: the ease of starting and running a blog and the possibility of communicating within the web millieu of *haijins* and *haiga* artists. Blogs on haiku usually have several functions (e.g. a diary, a filter; cf. e.g. Gumkowska 2009: 240–241). The posts with haiku or *haiga* are ordered chronologically, the readers can comment on the texts, they also can view the author's profile and, what is very important, follow the links to other Orient-inspired websites. This allows one to learn quickly the abundant Polish-language blogosphere centred on the notion of haiku¹⁸. This is very important for the literary life, but is in fact an extra-artistic use of the Web (cf. e.g. Cywińska-Milonas 2002: 96–97).

The blogs referred to here are often spacious virtual "open drawers", where the artists keep and at the same time publish literary texts as well as pictures (or photographs) related (or unrelated) to them. The blogs are places where they post their reflections, relations from poetic contests or meetings with the readers, book reviews or upload music or audiovisual files which do not necessarily belong to the category of *film-haiga* (cf. http://rozsypany-czas.blogspot.com/, http://eddie-ad.blogspot.com/, http://haiassneg.blogspot.com/, http://travellingbetweentheworlds.blox.pl/html, http://haikuworld.blox.pl/html/1310721,262146,14,15.html?3,2011, http://haiku2009-publikacje.blogspot.com/). The authors often resort to the mode of incomplete and unfinished message typical of the Web (cf. e.g. Szczęsna 2011: 200, Szczęsna 2009: 68). The poets put their works to scrutiny and quite often modify them according to the readers' comments or allow others to modify them. The Web also opens a plane of specific interpersonal intermedial acts – the internauts co-author *haiga* by combining someone

¹⁸ Surprisingly, nearly all comments on the blogs (as well as forums) devoted to haiku and haiga are very positive, any criticism that can be found there is always balanced. The poets form a kind of literary club whose unwritten rule is great kindness for other artists' work. They are readers, reviewers and authors at the same time. Thus, open criticism could probably lead to ostracism.

else's poems with visual works (e.g. photographs), which may strongly affect the interpretation of the texts.¹⁹

Some of the blogs can be considered as open works *in statu nascendi*. For obvious ontic reasons they are not a closed, fully composed artistic whole. Nor are they, however, completely random literary and artistic collections (cf. e.g. http://haiassneg.blogspot.com/, http://haikuofplanet.blogspot.com/). Are they then "most modern *silvae rerum*"²⁰ (Gumkowska 2009: 231)? Anna Gumkowska is right in her comment that "for the multimedial forms, which by their very nature belong to allogeneous semantic systems, the term *silva rerum* loses meaning" (Gumkowska 2009: 231–232). One must, however, emphasise that blogs on haiku are *silva*-like already at the level of their literary content – in many ways they are close to the old heterogeneous genre of *silva rerum*, as well as to some modern forms of it (cf. Szczepan-Wojnarska 2005: 76–77, Nycz 1984).

Marcin Składanek considers websites to be "domains of paratexts" (Składanek 2010: 399). However, I wish to treat the abundance (mainly to do with the widely understood navigation) of Internet sites relating to the Oriental verbo-visuality as more than just paratextuality. Despite their modest format (commonly that of a blog) the sites are treated by the authors as verbo-visual aesthetic artefacts or even as a kind of multimedial total works of art. This means obviously combining contradictory elements – a blog assumes constant variation; its existence also depends on conditions which are not artistic at all.

Let us also notice that the extent of the "blogginess" may differ. Some sites strive for a kind of formal and functional asceticism – the authors limit the number of external links, sometimes they block the possibility of commenting, pay attention to the visual coherence of the blog, thus making it close to a fully designed author's websites or even a paper publication. However, many Polish sites dealing with haiku are amorphous or downright aesthetically mediocre (cf. e.g. http://eddie-ad.blogspot.com/, http://orston.blogspot.com/). The multifunctionality of the blog allows aesthetic chaos, although it need not generate it.

¹⁹ For example, combining Magdalena Banaszkiewicz's poem: "late autumn / in the deserted garden / a flower is rusting" with a photograph by Joanna Lewandowska showing an old rusting balustrade with a flowery motive destroys the creative metaphor (the most interesting element in the quoted haiku). Cf. http://magdajasna.blogspot.com. See also http://joo-dailyhaiku.blogspot.com/search?updated-min=2011-01-01T00:00:00%2B01:00&updated-max=2012-01-01T00:00:00%2B01:00&max-results=50.

²⁰ Gumkowska refers to the concept of modern *silvae rerum* introduced by Ryszard Nycz (Nycz 1984). They are a type of 20th century heterogeneous literary texts joining different genres and traditions, often fragmentary and employing the technique of *collage*.

Orientalisation

A large portion of the websites presenting haiku, *haiga*, *haibun* are characterised by evident mimetic Orientalisation of the visual and verbal message. The authors try hard to recreate old means of communication with the use of the new egalitarian medium.

Let us now examine one of the most refined Polish verbo-visual compositions - the combination of poems and photographs by Waldemar Frackiewicz entitled *Krople słońca* ('Droplets of the sun'²¹; http://serwisy. umcs.lublin.pl/w.frackiewicz/KS.htm; the work has also appeared in print²²). This online volume of poetry or, to be precise, a kind of unfolding scroll with texts and photographs is at the same time close to haiku and haiga, but also fairly remote from the spirit of these arts. The composition seems very homogeneous and visually clear (it makes use of black, grey and white only). Moving, concise haikus correspond well with the photographs of nature although they are not simply illustrations to the texts. We encounter numerous understatements here – in the texts themselves and in the vague photographs set against blank spaces (cf. Barthes 2003: 57). The work strongly resembles old verbo-visual shi-qa-jiku although photography is a modern way of capturing the world. The digital "scroll" itself is technologically advanced all throughout. However, Frackiewicz's photo-haiga has the mood of Japanese graphic works closely corresponding with haiku (cf. Śniecikowska 2007). They are images of nature most of the time showing one or two shapes against a relatively homogeneous natural background. These are often rather unusual forms, which are based on conceits more than those shown by Japanese painters (which can possibly be attributed to the change of the medium - photography captures anything, making the message "artistic" requires some deautomatisation of perception).

The online volume by Frąckiewicz still has another hidden layer to it. By clicking on a photograph, we get a detailed personal description of it (which matters more considering that not all of them can be easily linked with the haikus), naming the circumstances in which it was taken and not

²¹ Frąckiewicz has also created other compositions of haiku and photographs, which are not, however, as refined and whose form is more remote from the aesthetics of the Far East. Cf. http://serwisy.umcs.lublin.pl/w.frackiewicz/haiku.htm. See also: http://serwisy.umcs.lublin.pl/w.frackiewicz/hieroglify.htm

²² 52 pages, size 20 cm x 20 cm (Frąckiewicz 2002). In this format we lose the impression of unfolding a scroll and the hidden exegeses.

infrequently providing a ready interpretation – sometimes lengthy and embedded in various currents of Oriental and Western philosophy. All the aesthetic clarity and understatement suddenly disappear, the range of interpretation or even co-creation of the work left to the reader shrinks drastically. Does this contradict the link to the genre of haiku itself?

The Japanese *haibun* once again proves an important point of reference. Frackiewicz's interpretations obviously differ from those known e.g. from Bashō's diaries – the Polish author's explications are closer to a treatise or learned exegesis. Nevertheless, the link remains discernible. We are thus confronted with an interesting literary and medial hybrid, a modern online equivalent of two forms related to haiku: firstly, the scroll with poems and pictures (*shi-ga-jiku*, *haiga*) and secondly, the text noting facts, impressions and interpretations related to particular photographs and by extension to the poems (akin to *haibun*)²³. The oscillation between the genres is enabled by the use of the Web.

Frąckiewicz's work – and its *haiga-haibun* shape – has a paper equivalent. However, this is not the book version of *Krople słońca*, but the aforementioned volume by Lidia Rozmus (Rozmus 2004; 2005)²⁴. Thanks to the use of the Internet as the medium Frąckiewicz's composition – unlike Rozmus's book – preserves the aesthetic of *haiga* in pure form. *Haibun* is to an extent an optional element here.

Frackiewicz has proposed a total work, composed in each and every verbal and visual detail. He did not use the form of a blog, but created a closed self-referring composition, which is not connected by links to the vivid haiku-related blogosphere.

Many other Polish websites are products of the visual and literary Orientalisaton. Having discussed Frackiewicz's work, we are not surprised to find that the artistically most interesting and most refined sites either completely avoid the blog format or consciously reduce its interactive nature. The template is strongly personalised and the possibility to comment on the texts is blocked (cf. e.g. *foto-haiga* by Dorota Pyra http://rozsypany-czas.blogspot.com/search/label/haiga).

The references to the culture of the Far East in many online *haiga* can be, however, missed by the reader at first as the Oriental elements are

²³ The haikus and photographs keeping in line with the aesthetics of haiku can also be seen on the websites of Marek Szyryk (a poet and photographer) http://szyryk.art.pl/. However, in this case we are not dealing with a relation close to *haiga* or *haibun*.

²⁴ The character of the prose fragments makes Rozmus's work closer to the traditional *haibun*. Her *My journey / W podróży* and *Krople słońca* by Frąckiewicz are similar as active continuations of haiku (cf. Balbus 1983: 145).

modified in line with the author's own background. The colourful modern photographs do not show crooked twigs or mountain peaks known from the Japanese ink painting. The composition of the cadre (presenting certain objects on a monochromatic plane) and the focus on the detail make these Polish haiga somewhat close to the aesthetics of haiku and its associate visual arts (cf. e.g. Urszula Wielanowska's blog http://jasminum72. blox.pl/html). Another point to make is that it is hard to find truly distinguistished works among these. In the online flood of mediocre haiga where landscape photographs are accompanied by imitations of haiku (cf. Michałowski 2008) written in a wave-shaped lines, what attracts attention are works that are at least artistically decent. Foto-haiga by Grażyna Kaźmierczak is noteworthy thanks to mere variation of font depending on the semantics and stylistics of the individual haikus. These compositions illustrate a rather obvious fact unknown to Polish paper haiga: the choice of the image that accompanies the text (Kaźmierczak sometimes combines one poem with different photographs) clearly changes the reception of the whole verbo-visual work. Jadwiga Gala Miemus (http://poezja.com. pl/?q=node/625) is even more extreme in this respect – some of her poetic conceits are completely incomprehensible without the photographs (it is difficult, for example, to associate on one's own the phrase "rungs leading to eternity" with the shadows of tree trunks on a path to a cemetary).

The visual component might also be just an ornament of the haiku blogs. It sometimes is an interesting decoration of the poetic website (cf. http://zimowehaiku.blogspot.com/), but sometimes it irritatingly simplifies the message for example by the use of a multiplied quasi-Oriental motive (http://entuzjazm.blox.pl/html/1310721,262146,21.html?157645).

It proves again that the key to artistic success, regardless of the medium used, is simply the knowledge supporting the creative intuitions and allowing combinations of literary and visual parts that are in some way similar or complementary.

Naturalisation of the Other – "unity in multiplicity" or incoherent eclecticism?

What seems to be most interesting in the online works discussed here are the processes of strong naturalisation of the Oriental forms in the new cultural environment (cf. Johnson 2011: 130): the introduction of the elements of the Western culture to the works inspired by Japanese art, strong

integration of equally valued parts: foreign and native one, and finally indicating or even creating transcultural spaces. In case of *haiga* on the Web (and akin forms) this type of naturalisation concerns first of all the visual sphere. The texts usually have few innovations, they mimic the foreign models (known to the artists from the second hand) without offering deeper Occidental intrusions in the sphere of poetics.

One must consider whether the naturalisation leads to the accomplishment of "unity in multiplicity" (the more so because *haiga* or *film-haiga* combine ingredients of different media) or whether it stops at the level of incoherent eclecticism. It is not hard to guess that for different works this question will be answered differently.

Marek Domagała (Marek Haik) proposed on his blog http://haikuofplanet.blogspot.com an original and simple graphic composition: the individual haiga are like postcards that are displayed against an abstract background covered with watercolour stains. The "postcards" themselves imitate thick sepia handmade paper; clear straight lines (as if drawn with a pencil) mark the places of the illutrations to haikus. This means a subtle dialogue with the Oriental aesthetics related to haiku. The structure of the "paper" suggests great attention paid to the material, ideally straight lines in pencil are on the other hand very remote from the expressive brush strokes in the Zen painting and calligraphy²⁵. The digital pictures themselves balance between the figurative and the abstract, they use or imitate different techniques (digitally modified photograph, dry pastel, and watercolour). These are techniques typical of the Western art (like drawing in pencil mentioned before) although the works are clearly inspired by Far Eastern aesthetics (exposing the detail, the role of the monochrome background). Domagała succeeds in delicate and well thought-out naturalisation of haiga without blurring the origin of the form.

However, the most interesting artefact of the blog is the film (*film-hai-ga*), an etude with an excellent Orientalising and disturbing soundtrack. The work illustrates or rather construes the text of a haiku (the words appear in a non-random fashion on the screen): "neon snakes / dig in the moonlight / tunnel dreams". The work clearly refers to the tradition of the avant-garde film, the associations with the 1930's cinema of e.g. Len Lye are very strong. At the same time the light snakes flaring up on the screen can be associated with the expressive nearly abstract forms of *sumi-e* ink painting (e.g. *zenga*). The circle of the moon appearing in the film is also

²⁵ These compositions are in many ways close to the cards on which haikus are written in the artist's book by Gajewski.

reminiscent of the Far Eastern culture. The poem itself is the greatest literary experiment in the whole of the blog – it is most metaphorical and remote from the genre prototype. This is a very interesting and so far final point of the development of haiku and *haiga* on the Internet – a very creative work making considerable use of the possibilities of the Web and also proving the possibility of inspiring combination of cultures or, to use Welsch's terms, revealing transcultural shared places²⁶.

Usually, however, the naturalisation of haiku does not run so smoothly – the "seams" between the forms and traditions are clearly visible and the conspicuous incoherent eclecticism cannot be simply revalued in any post-modernist fashion (cf. Kazimierska-Jerzyk 2008: 94-140). Even in these incoherent compositions one can after all find interesting concepts of verbo-visual combinations, transcultural glimpses showing that different poetics can be reconciled without simple imitation. For example, Mariusz Ogryzko (who like many Polish haijins publishes his poems in English – http://haiga.pl/2.html) is able to combine surrealist aesthetics with haikus perfectly capturing Japanese sabi (lonelines, emotional distance, acceptance of the inevitable; cf. Watts 1988: 182, Kubiak Ho-Chi 2009: 84-85). A sepia photograph of chairs of various kinds that are placed chaotically on the snow (or sand?) is an illustration to the poem "winter cemetery / I sit near the smallest grave / the brightest". The other pole of the experiment is the creation of haiku ekphrases²⁷ of Western works of art (including older works). The dialogue of distant forms often proves to be only apparent, some works, however, seem to put each other in an interesting new light (the case of Memling's Last Judgement and its haiku ekphrasis – http://sehaikuan.blogspot.com/).

We must also mention as works worth of notice the photographs and computer graphics by Aleksander Litowczak (http://haiga-budzenie.blog-spot.com²⁸) drawing from differing inspirations, keeping traces of Zen aesthetics (presentation of a detail against a homogeneous background),

²⁶ The experimental character of Domagała's works is clear in comparison with the anachronistic works of Jadwiga Gala Miemus called by the author *filmo-foto haiga* (or *foto-filmo haiga*) http://poezja.com.pl/?cat=10 (a series of films and photographs of nature with a featureless soundtrack, simple imitative haikus approaching the viewer, lack of intriguing tension between the image and the text).

²⁷ Classical haikus were quite often ekphrastic and intertextual, which is usually forgotten in the West.

²⁸ I believe the more homogeneous graphics by Litowczak made as illustrations to the haikus of Magdalena Banaszkiewicz (http://budzenie-jasna.blogspot.com/) are much less interesting.

yet lacking its asceticism, far from stylistic refinement (ostensible use of wavy text lines, loud colours). The most interesting of his works are the simple geometric abstractions which do not imitate Oriental works but at the same time fit well into the clear image schemata of *haiga* and haiku. The simple imagery decidedly suffers from ostensible use of fonts and, first of all, the literalness that destroys the poetic message²⁹. The combination of geometric abstraction and haiku in itself seems successful (at least potentially). Another interesting feature we find in Litowczak's works is the striving to render graphically the texture of the described materials³⁰, which is yet another incarnation of the interest in the materiality that we can observe in many of the discussed works. It is also a specific, modernist, link between different aesthetics.

The online output of Polish haiku, haiga, haibun authors should be to a large extent treated as poetry on... paper. The artists try to make their works as similar as possible to what can be seen in printed volumes. There is usually a two-degree mimesis (however different these degrees are) – the digital medium mimics the traditional paper one, while the stylistics of the texts and graphic compositions is strongly reminiscent of the Oriental (or what haiku and haiga authors deem as such). Still, nearly all digital haiga and haibun are medial hybrids – the authors refuse to resign from the simple functionalities of the Web, which modify the perception of the work. It appears that the haijins and haiga authors are not, however, particularly interested in exploring the potential of the multimedial, interactive

²⁹ For example, the poem "a table in the garden / into a plate with porridge / a plum petal fell" is illustrated by Litowczak in the following way: on a green background there is a white belt with a red grid (most likely a tablecloth). On the belt there is a yellow circle with a clear edge (the plate) and a small white blot inside (the petal). In another *haiga* the artist chooses more restrained imagery. A fragment of a rhombus touching a horizontal line symbolises a tram ("five o'clock in the morning – / in the blizzard vanishes / a cracking tram"). The ascetic imagery and its suspense are spoilt by the blunt use of stars in the place where the rhombus touches the line.

For example, we can see a nearly tangible blow-up of a sheepskin coat ("a crowd at the bus stop – / the wind pushes in under my coat / together with the frost") or fishnet tights in chiaroscuro ("the bar's nearly empty – / some strange woman / on a seat nearby"), we feel the delicacy of long woolen fibres in nearly abstract coils of thread in a scarf ("the cap and the scarf / the calendar spring / has just come"), we recognize the gust of the wind in the multiplanar, monochromatic computer graphic in chiaroscuro ("six in the morning – / the wind gets on the tram / before a bunch of people").

and hypertextual nature of the Internet. Only few of them are creative in the combination of the media. Is this the craving for reduction of the stimuli, stylistic asceticism or rather a kind of carelessness, application of easy solutions, and simple use of the Web as an ad hoc diary? The second answer seems closer to the truth.

Still, we must admit that many of the blogs to an extent resemble Oriental *haibun* with an addition of the visual component (thus being a type of *haibun-ga*). This makes clear some similarities between the practices of haiku authors creating in different places and epochs. If we reverse the direction of analysis, we might conclude that *haibun* of the Japanese *haijins* (of Bashō's line – cf. Issa 1997) is in a way situated between the form of diary, old heterogenous genre of *silva rerum* and... contemporary heterogeneous literary texts (modern *silvae rerum*)³¹.

Transcultural convergence?

In the paper I have described various spaces of convergence of Oriental verbo-visuality, showing more and less successful attempts to implant foreign genres in new cultural and medial areas. We must decide in the end to what extent the convergence is here linked with transculturality. Welsch has observed that for the Japanese, the actual origin of an artefact does not matter. The important criterion is closeness, the ability to "fit in" the Japanese culture. Such works might be nominally foreign, but will be deemed Japanese. (Welsch 2004: 42).

Could this description be applied to the works analysed here? In other words, have haiku, *haiga*, *haibun* become Polish? I believe the answer is to some extent positive, even more so because the Japanese genres re-profiled in the process of genological transplantation prove surprisingly close to the forms of the Occident: diaries, epigrams, aphorisms, emblems, *silvae rerum* and finally (and obviously) illustrations. The most interesting, however, are those compositions that consciously expose various relations between the East and the West. These works have the potential to produce active continuations of the Oriental genres with the Far Eastern schemata complemented with ingredients from the Western culture. Surprising planes of understanding, agreement, similar thinking of art and feeling it can be revealed even by works that combine elements

³¹ For an account of the links between traditional Japanese aesthetics and the ideas of modernism see Śniecikowska (in print).

which seem completely incompatible, for example, haiku and the poetics of surrealism or the tradition of abstract avant-garde film. Naturally, this is not to say that surrealism or the cinema of the 1930s had much in common with the stylistics and the way of presenting the world in the discussed Oriental genres. Yet, an artist open to diverse stimuli can make use of very heterogeneous inspirations in their creation, for which a common denominator may be found, as it turns out. Still, a necessary condition seems to be the knowledge of the Other in some non-trivial degree (cf. e.g. Said 1978).

Let us recount again that an important link (also in the perspective of transculturality) between the different traditions is the strong striving to unify the word and the image, to transgress the borders between arts and to fuse them. This is very entrenched in the Oriental culture and supported by centuries of e.g. calligraphy or *haiga* painting, in the culture of the West it rose in prominence in modernist times³². Its intensity is proven e.g. by the fact of inclusion within the visual arts of forms that were originally only related to them but not strictly verbo-visual (as hai-ku or *haibun*).

The described phenomena of Polish art of the end of the 20th and the turn of the 21st century undoubtedly derive from the spirit of modernism, in the majority of cases not turning into post-modernism. The technological development enabled their existence in the context of new media without obscuring their pedigree. This perspective allows one to notice numerous common points between modern art of the West and the Orient (cf. e.g. Michałowski 2008: 129–133, 142–144; Johnson 2011; Hokenson 2007, Hakutani 2009), which can be perceived as a specific widely understood transcultural space. Barring the amount of striving to combine different arts, let us enumerate just the following: fragmentariness, specific framing of the presentation, interest in everyday details and the sensual experience of an individual, "sparing" poetics, artistically processed catching of glimpses of epiphany. Last but not least, the very openness to other cultures, which under closer scrutiny may prove surprisingly familiar.

Translated by Jerzy Gaszewski, Beata Śniecikowska

The common artistic aims are revealed by the parallels between avant-garde word-graphy and some Oriental (old) and Polish (new) haiga compositions. Another noteworthy context is the contemporary movement of liberature. All of these were obviously preceded by the 19th century striving for correspondance des arts.

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