

## A FEW WORDS ON "CONCENTRIC CIRCLES" BY BAN'YA NATSUIISHI

KONCENTRIČNI KRUGOVI / *Concentric Circles* / 同心円 published in 2009 by Punta in Niš of Serbia,  
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a collection of 66 haiku poems by Ban'ya Natsuishi.

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From Ban'ya Natsuishi's first appearance in the West –I met both the poet and his poetry for the first time in 1999 – to the present day he has been particularly notable for one recurring theme: the crossing of cultural borders. This theme is the basis of his medium, international haiku.

Cats in Rome

will sing about love

after my death too

The manner, philosophy and viewpoint of this poem is quite Japanese, but the subject and situation are Western. Similar cultural mosaics can be found in the work of some filmmakers: American Jim Jarmusch, for instance, directs Western characters using Japanese artistic method. Akira Kurosawa displayed Japanese characters directed by Western methods . . .

Along these lines, the purist ideas of the "haiku moment," created for and by English haiku, cannot serve as the true basis for international haiku unless one expands the haiku moment to encompass past time into the future and so into endlessness—that is, unless one annihilates the concept, and so refuses the politics of creating borders.

My haiku

a little cedar

nine hundred and ninety-nine years old

Inexperienced readers will consider the time appearing in the poem—"nine hundred and ninety-nine years"—an exaggeration but in fact it is a diminution: some Japanese cedars are 5000 years old. Ban'ya Natsuishi expresses the eternity of Japanese culture and patriotic feelings using the metaphor "nine hundred and ninety-nine years". It works like a *perpetuum mobile*, with an expansive intentionality to cross cultural borders.

The sun rises

behind the dragon's back:

Macedonia

The last dragon in the Balkans was killed by St. George: many icons pay witness to this successful manifestation of spiritual power within the tradition of Orthodox Christianity. Probably that is why no one in the Balkans can any longer see dragons except as the holy images of these that were killed in a kind of "dragon genocide". But the Japanese poet Ban'ya Natsuishi came to the Balkans and saw dragons. How unexpected. This dragon is a gift of international haiku to the poets of the Balkans, a gift that crosses cultural borders, and forces us again to learn our own mythology and consider the source of all things anew. It is like being born again.

English text adjusted by Jim KACIAN