

ERIC W. AMANN

THE  
WORDLESS  
POEM



A STUDY OF ZEN IN HAIKU



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## INTRODUCTION

We have watched with joy and surprise the growth and development of haiku in the western world. What many Japanese have thought impossible has come about in the past decade: thousands of haiku have been written in English, Spanish, German and other languages; haiku magazines appear regularly in Canada and the U.S.A.; collections of original haiku poetry in English are being published in increasing numbers; haiku contests are being held and haiku groups flourish. What is even more significant is that much of what is being produced in this field is of excellent quality. Far from being a temporary fad, the 'Way of Haiku' is exerting a profound influence on western thought and literature.

It is inevitable that in a literary form so different, so new to western culture, and in many ways so radically opposed to western literary traditions, a great deal of misunderstanding should arise and much that appears in the west under the name of haiku is actually only western-type poetry in haiku form. Unless a poem expresses some of the deeper spirit of haiku I see little point in calling it a haiku, no matter what its form.

It is this spirit and essence of haiku which are the subject of the present essay by Eric W. Amann, editor of 'Haiku Magazine', the oldest and largest magazine devoted entirely to English haiku.

America's foremost haiku poet, J.W. Hackett has called the haiku "existential rather than literary". What he means, I believe, is that haiku is not primarily written as poetry, but as an expression, in the fewest possible words, of an experience, an awareness of 'existence' that is immediate and intuitive.

In this sense haiku may be viewed as a manifestation of Zen, but it must be noted that it is only a manifestation, it is not Zen itself. A haiku is a haiku! It is 'the poetry of sensation', an expression of joy in the world as we find it, a joy that is not narrowly personal, not greedy and clinging, but non-possessive and detached, because it is free of illusion.

One other difference between haiku and western poetry which has not been mentioned in this book and may not be too well known in the west: it concerns the relation between reader and poet. In the west a minority of poets write for a large, passive, mainly anonymous audience which we might call the 'literary consumers'. Not so with haiku. Here poets and readers are identical, they are like the host and the guest taking alternate roles on different occasions. Most haiku are not written for the pub-

lic at large, but for a small group of associates and friends, who are themselves poets. The reason for this lies in the nature of haiku: it is only the beginning of a poem which the reader himself has to complete. The reading of haiku is therefore an art in itself. And he who has mastered the art of reading haiku is already a poet!

T. Kamiya  
Kyoto, Japan

INTRODUCTION

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It is inevitable that in a literary form so different, so new to western culture, and in many ways so radically opposed to western literary tradition, a great deal of misunderstanding should exist. What is haiku? What is the word under the name of haiku is actually only western-type poetry in haiku form. Unless a poem expresses some of the deeper spirit of haiku, we have little right to call it a haiku, no matter what its form.

It is this spirit and essence of haiku which are the subject of the present essay by Eric W. Anderson, editor of *Haibun Magazine*, the oldest and largest magazine devoted entirely to English haiku.

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One other difference between haiku and western poetry which has not been mentioned in this book and may not be too well known in the west: it concerns the relation between reader and poet. In the west a minority of poets write for a large, passive, mainly anonymous audience which we might call the literary community. Not so with haiku. Here poets and readers are identical, they are like the poet and the great talking shaman, rises on different occasions. Most haiku are not written for the pub-

CHAPTER ONE

THE WAY  
OF HAIKU



Old pond:  
frog jump-in  
water-sound

BASHO

The poem on the preceding page, translated into English as literally as possible, is a haiku. Indeed, it is one of the most famous of all haiku. Written in 1686 by Basho, a poet and Zen student, it is said to show his progress toward 'enlightenment', marking a turning point in his life and his art. . . . It is also the beginning of 'The Way of Haiku'.

For many Western readers, however, unfamiliar with Zen, this may not seem much of a beginning, and their reaction is more likely to be one of disappointment instead of enlightenment. As for poetry - what could be less poetic than the image of a frog leaping into water? And a reader accustomed to Wordsworth and Tennyson may well feel that Basho should have a little more to offer us than this dribble of unfinished prose and his translator might have done more than turn it into pidgin English. As it stands, the entire poem consists of less than a dozen words, the grammar is fragmentary, the language seems to be stripped down to the bare bones; aside from the single, naked image, the poet does not give us the slightest clue as to why he saw fit even to record such a trivial event, let alone present it to the world as poetry.

Clearly a haiku is not a poem in the Western sense of the word. The haiku poet neither uses the same techniques, nor strives for the same effect as the Western poet. As long as we approach haiku with our conventional ideas about poetry, it will never become any more than a very plain, oversimplified picture in words.

But if the haiku poet does not try to achieve a 'poetic effect', if the haiku is not primarily a 'poem', then what is it? R.H. Blyth, who devoted most of his life to the study of haiku, concluded that it was "a form of Zen" and that "haiku must be understood from the Zen point of view". Alan W. Watts, D.T. Suzuki and Eugen Herrigel, the three most widely known exponents of Zen in the West today, also treat haiku as primarily an expression of Zen in poetry.

The next logical question, therefore, should be: "What is Zen?". But to expect a sensible answer to this question already shows our misunderstanding of Zen, for Zen holds that something which has been put into words is already a falsification of reality.

Thus it is far easier to say what Zen is not: just as haiku is not poetry in the Western sense of the word, so Zen is not religion or philosophy as we understand them. Zen has no dogmas and no doctrine; there is no theory or theology; no concept of 'God' or 'soul' such as we are familiar with; in fact, Zen has no concepts of any kind. It is concerned only with life, not with words about life. It is for this reason that the Zen masters,



when they were confronted with such questions as "What is Zen?", invariably turned either to some non-verbal answers (such as hitting the questioner over the head), or gave such puzzling replies as:

"Three pounds of flax"

"The cypress-tree in the courtyard"

"Three meals a day and a good night's sleep"

These apparently meaningless sayings have nevertheless two things in common: 1. Refusal to answer the question in the terms in which it was posed (i.e. in intellectual terms); 2. Pointing instead to something perfectly plain and ordinary, some everyday thing or event in nature, thereby forcing the questioner's mind from the abstract to the concrete and from the intellectual to the actual.

And this is exactly how the masters of haiku handled questions about haiku. When asked what kind of training was necessary to become a poet, one master said: "The crescent moon over the moor." And when Onitsura was asked about the essence of haiku, he replied: "A camellia-tree is in bloom in the garden."

From all this we may draw our first conclusion about haiku: unlike most other types of poetry, haiku is not concerned with expressing Truth or Beauty or any other type of idea, concept or symbol; it has no deep or esoteric meaning; it deals entirely with the here-and-now, with nature, with intuition arising from immediate sense-experience, with the ordinary sights and sounds of this world. D.T. Suzuki has expressed this as follows: "A haiku does not express ideas, but puts forward images reflecting intuitions."

The problem for the Western reader, therefore, is not to find the hidden meaning, the 'symbolic significance' of a haiku, for there is none, but to re-convert the images of a haiku into his own intuitions. And the answer to that lies in the art of reading haiku. A haiku is not meant to be read like a longer poem. It is more of an object for contemplation. First we must empty our minds of all pre-conceived ideas and re-experience what the poet saw or heard or felt; we must allow the images to touch us, we must enter, for example, the stillness of the old pond, see/hear/feel the sudden leap of the frog, and allow the ripples to fade out slowly in our mind. Only if we thus put ourselves in the poet's place, only if we experience the images directly and without intellectualization, only then - if the haiku is a good one - will it achieve its effect, evoking moods and memories, echoes and ripples of associations, playing on the mind as though it were an instrument where all the sympathetic strings resonate when a single note is struck. And the totality of that experience is the 'meaning' of a haiku.

In summary, a haiku is more than a 'form' of poetry. The same spirit pervades the paintings of Sesshu, the tea ceremony of Rikyu and the haiku of Basho. A haiku is thus a manifestation of Zen and hence the expression of a particular state of consciousness: "Each true haiku is a swift record in words of one moment of 'satori', of the sudden flash of Enlightenment" (Harold Stewart). Each haiku is like the reply of a Zen master to a beginner's question about the meaning of life. And the ans-

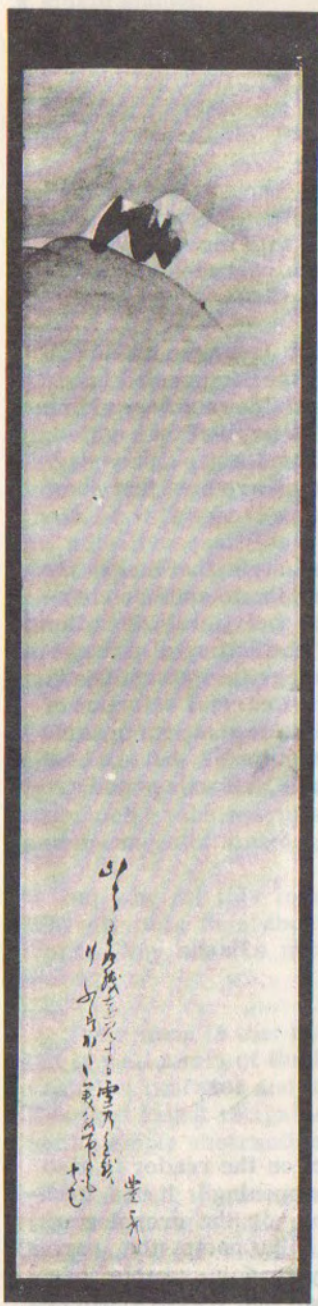
wers will be seen to lie not in the ninth circle of heaven, nor on the lips of preachers and prophets, but scattered all around us, in myriads of forms, in the falling of a leaf no less than in the sting of a gnat, in the sound of a frog no less than in the song of a nightingale - and whether we chart a rocket to the moon or sit quietly in our garden with Basho, the answers are the same. . . . the answers are everywhere. . . . listen:

Old pond:  
frog jump-in  
water-sound

Then, with a great deal of Western poetry is...  
a more or less logical progression of thought and feeling. The latter is a  
matter of habit and training. It is an art. It can be learned. It is a  
habit. It is a matter of habit. It can be learned. It is a habit.

CHAPTER TWO

WORDLESS



Not a word was said:  
the host, the guest  
and the white chrysanthemum

RYOTA

with... The first... words...

Alan Watts, in 'The Way of Zen', has called haiku "the wordless poem". Others have gone further and spoken of haiku as a "non-poem", or even an "anti-poem". Indeed, if we compare the haiku with most of Western poetry, we cannot escape the conclusion that the haiku poet seems to avoid words rather than display them.

A haiku is never a complete statement. Just as the Japanese ink-brush artist tosses a few light strokes in one corner of the picture and leaves all the rest in emptiness, so the haiku master puts down a few simple words and leaves all the rest in silence. More is implied than stated, more hidden than apparent. A haiku is no more than a hint, a bare suggestion of a poem. Basho himself said that those haiku are best that show less than half of their subject.

This utter brevity, this 'wordless', unfinished style that makes the haiku look more like a telegram than a poem, gives rise to another characteristic: sudden impact. While for Wordsworth poetry was "emotion recollected in tranquillity", for Basho it was like "the felling of a large tree, like the leaping on an enemy, like the slicing of a watermelon". There is no time for artifice or ornament, for the careful selection of choice phrases and all the literary trimmings. It is true that some haiku show the exacting craftsmanship of lacquered jewel boxes, but the best ones are those that appear totally without contrivance, effortless and artless as nature herself:

Midday nap:  
my feet against the wall,  
how cool it is !

Basho

The falling snow,  
and a 'To Let' sign  
that wasn't there yesterday !

Issa

Here the inspiration was sudden and the effect on the reader is also sudden. It is what Yasuda calls "a simultaneous happening". It has been compared to a slap in the face, a stroke of lightning, or the dropping of a pebble into a pond of unruffled water. Western haiku poets, too, have remarked on this. The English haiku poet Bill Wyatt, for example, has compared the effect of a haiku to "a blow on the head that leaves you dazed for a moment".

Thus, while most of Western poetry is sequential and linear, showing a more or less logical progression of thought and feeling, the haiku is sudden and instantaneous. It is so short it can be uttered in a single breath, it is so small on the page it can be absorbed by the eye with a single glance.

This quality of compression of language, this telegraphic brevity of the haiku is unfortunately lost in many of the earlier haiku translations. Here, for example, is how Peter Beilenson has translated Basho's most famous haiku (Peter Pauper Press: 'Japanese Haiku') :

Old dark sleepy pool . . .  
Quick unexpected  
Frog  
Goes plop ! Watersplash !

If we compare this with the literal translation of the same haiku as it appears on page one of this book, we note that Beilenson has added words like "dark", "sleepy", "quick", and "unexpected" - four words that do not appear at all in Basho's poem! Nor can it be claimed that these words were justified for grammatical reasons, since all four of them are adjectives. As it happens, adjectives are rarely used by Japanese haiku poets. An adjective qualifies a noun, that is, it limits the meaning of the noun. An "old dark sleepy pond" is a much more restricted image than "old pond". In haiku, therefore, any added adjective has the tendency to limit the total meaning of the poem. As Yasuda has said: "We want no adjective to blur the impression. We seek no metaphor or simile to make the picture clear." A haiku is "poetry of the noun" (Yasuda).

A translation such as the above by Beilenson, therefore, in which the translator has filled in with words those spaces which the poet deliberately left open, becomes a Western-style poem. It is no longer a real haiku, inasmuch as the essential qualities of haiku, namely its 'wordlessness' and openness of meaning, do not survive the translation.

But why all this insistence on remaining as 'wordless' as possible? Why all this fuss about saying everything with the minimum number of words, why all this mutilation of grammar for the sake of saving a few words?

The reason is that haiku, like Zen "is not necessarily against words but is well aware of the fact that they are always liable to detach themselves from realities and turn into conceptions. And this conception is what Zen [and haiku] is against. . . . Zen insists on handling the thing itself and not an empty abstraction." (D. T. Suzuki)

"Handling the thing itself and not an empty abstraction" - that is also the essence of haiku. A language is a graveyard of dead words that have long lost their relationship to reality, yet continue to be used as if they had flesh and blood. This is especially true in the West: "In the beginning was the Word. . . ." - thus begins Western man's fatal confusion of words with realities. The priest saves with words, the psychiatrist cures with words, contracts are sealed with words, and the general impression pre-

vails that all the evils of the world could be quickly solved if we could only get everybody to sit down and talk things over. Already in the last century Nietzsche warned that words can be illusory, that they give the impression that we have discovered something when we have only named it, that the existence of a word guarantees the existence of what it stands for: "Through words and concepts we are continually tempted to think of things as being simpler than they are, as separated from another, as indivisible, each existing in and for itself."

The whole purpose, therefore, of the technique of 'wordlessness' and 'direct pointing' as we find it in both Zen and haiku, is to avoid this confusion between words and realities and the consequent illusion of the separateness of things. Like the Buddha, who gave the first example of 'wordless poetry' when one day he astonished his disciples by holding up a flower without uttering a single word, so the haiku poet holds up something for the reader without a single unnecessary word, without comment, without explanation, without placing any obstacles between the reader and the thing itself. In this sense "a haiku is not literature inasmuch as it disposes with words as much as possible." (R. H. Blyth)

Of course this style of writing, in which the poet "disposes with words as much as possible", presents tremendous difficulties for the Western poet beginning to write haiku. Here are three examples of Western haiku where the poet has mastered the art of knowing where to stop:

Lily:

out of the water  
out of itself.

Nicholas A. Virgilio

Emerging hot and rosy  
from their skins —  
beets !

Anita Virgil

Here, using less than ten words each, two American poets have captured the 'wordless' quality of the haiku poem. Nothing stands between the reader and the thing; no causal relationship is stated or implied; the poems grow and emerge like the lily, like the beets - spontaneously, effortlessly and without artifice of any kind.

Listening . . .

After a while

I take up my axe again .

Rod Willmot

In this poem by a Canadian haiku poet a more personal experience is conveyed, yet by avoiding any comment, any mention of subjective

feeling, the poem remains 'open', the poet allows the reader to take his place and respond directly to the experience. Is it the cracking of a twig or the sound of distant thunder, the beating of our own heart, or some mysterious 'something', that suddenly makes us drop our humdrum activities and listen?

In summary, a haiku, in comparison with other poetry, is said to be 'wordless' inasmuch as the poet restricts himself to merely naming a few objects or sensations and allows the reader to respond to them directly. By avoiding subjective comment and unnecessary words he leaves the poem 'open' to the reader's intuition: "brevity and terseness of form and the fullest implication is the essence of haiku art." (Kametarō Yagi)

What you see, what and all, and all  
I would know what God and man is.

... Takuma's poem with the  
looking at a simple flower, you will find  
the other with the spirit of Takuma writes a  
other a haiku.

... Takuma's haiku is "wordless" in the sense that  
what things: a simple flower blooms in  
this poem there is nothing in the haiku. The  
view of emotion, no formal commentary,  
being, but leaves it undisturbed.

... Takuma, on the other hand, not only  
flower from the soil and destroying it. His  
like one flower, his encounter with nature is  
subjective about "God", "man", and "all". The  
also of haiku-like things, but here they later  
intellectual manipulation. He moves on by  
hand and ends up trying empty words to

... Takuma avoids both subjective or objective  
subjectivity, thus the content of the haiku  
remains all sensation, all objective, all open  
this is that Takuma's poem is "wordless"  
(meaning long - addressed to the "all") whereas  
of the poem lies outside the poem, outside the  
frame of reference of the

... This relative ground of being the center  
personal life and will be shared with those  
is typical of haiku as a whole.

XXXX

CHAPTER THREE

SUCHNESS

秋深百子改容菊苑艳拒  
霜惟一枝更喜黄花十自持  
佳人隐逸号玉期

冲澹道人写  
癸酉年七月  
壬戌十二月十四日  
墨



Among the grasses  
an unknown flower  
blooming white . . .

SHIKI



Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies;  
Hold you, here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower - - - but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I would know what God and man is.

Tennyson

Let us compare Tennyson's poem with that of Shiki: two poets are here looking at a simple flower, one with the analytic eyes of Western man, the other with the spirit of Zen; one writes a typically Western poem, the other a haiku.

Shiki's haiku is 'wordless' in the sense that it consists of only a single visual image: a nameless flower blooms in a field of grass. Aside from this image there is nothing in the haiku. There are no ideas, no expression of emotion, no intellectual commentary. Shiki merely points to something, but leaves it undisturbed.

Tennyson, on the other hand, not only points, but picks, tearing the flower from its soil and destroying it. His concern, of course, is not with this one flower, his encounter with nature is merely an occasion for speculations about 'God', 'man', and 'all'. The poem begins with a simple almost haiku-like image, but four lines later the poet is lost in a maze of intellectual rumination. He starts out by holding something real in his hand and ends up juggling empty concepts in his brain.

Tennyson moves from sensation to ideation, from the objective to the subjective, from the concrete to the abstract. Shiki, on the other hand, remains all sensation, all objective, all concrete. Another way of saying this is that Tennyson's poem is 'ego-centered' and 'anthropo-centered' (meaning 'self-' and 'man-centered'), whereas in Shiki's haiku the center of the poem lies outside the poet, outside man, outside the limited human frame of reference.

This characteristic of placing the center of the poem beyond the poet's personal life and not to intrude with ideas and intellectual commentary is typical of haiku as a whole:

The willow is green, the flower is red:  
In haiku leave things just as they are !  
Going to Paradise is a good thing,  
But to fall into Hell is also a matter of congratulation !

Sonojo

"In haiku leave things just as they are" - in other words, keep your rationalizing, moralizing mind out of the poem, do not clutter up the poem with your own thoughts, feelings and explanations, but show all things in their uniqueness, their own particular state of being, their 'suchness'.

This state of consciousness in which we see reality without distortion has often been likened to a mirror:

"If a flower comes it reflects a flower, if a bird comes it reflects the bird . . . Everything is revealed just as it is. There is no discriminating mind or self-consciousness on the part of the mirror. "

Zenkei Shibayama

For the Western poet writing haiku, this need to show things "just as they are", to keep the mind like "an unclouded mirror" presents many difficulties, mainly because our customary Western poetic process demands the exact opposite. In the West the original poetic experience plus the poet's intellectual and emotional reactions equal the finished poem. But in haiku the original experience minus the poet's personal reaction equals the finished haiku.

The important difference lies in the fact that the Western poet tends to add, while the haiku poet subtracts or rather extracts. The Western poet talks about the experience, while the haiku poet gives us the experience itself. The Western poet leaves a lengthy record of words in which the original experience and his reaction to it are inextricably interwoven; the experience has already been 'pre-digested' for the reader who can then only react to the poet's reaction: "Our respect is not for the subject-matter, but for the creative power of the artist, for that which he is capable of adding to his subject from himself; or, in fact his capacity to dispense with external subjects altogether." (Ezra Pound) In haiku on the other hand, the poet only gives us the circumstances that evoked his reaction, not the reaction itself. Here the reader must supply his own reaction, relying on his own poetic resources.

Moreover, in the process of 'adding' to his original experience, the Western poet uses a whole range of so-called 'poetic devices' which are alien to the spirit of haiku. Because they are so ingrained in our poetic tradition that to us poetry without them seems almost unthinkable, we must examine them more carefully.

1. THE SIMILE. The simile is a poetic device in which one thing is compared directly with another:

Fluttering birds splash  
In fountains . . . like old ladies  
Preening silk dresses (Anna L. Butler)

This is very typical of the thousands of 'pseudo-haiku' that appear yearly in Western haiku magazines. On closer examination we see that it is not really a haiku at all, but merely a Western-type poem artificially sliced into 5/7/5 syllables. The first line records the original experience: the poet sees fluttering birds splash in fountains. This is valid enough and might well lead to a proper haiku. In the second part, however, the subject undergoes a typically Western poetic process: the poet adds something to the original experience, in this case an artificial and fanciful comparison. The center of the poem lies not in nature but in the poet's imagination. The reader can only admire her ingenuity or deplore her lack of taste, he can no longer participate in the original experience.

2. THE METAPHOR. A metaphor is an implied comparison in which a word or phrase usually and primarily used for one thing is applied to another:

On spring's green altar  
Yellow flames of candlelight  
Daffodils aglow (Edith McKay)

Here the original inspiration was the sight of daffodils shining in a field of spring. Left to themselves, these images might have become an excellent haiku. As it is, the images undergo elaborate changes in the poet's fantasy: the springfield becomes "spring's green altar" and the daffodils become converted into "yellow flames of candlelight". Instead of leaving the images alone, she mixes reality with fantasy and thereby destroys the poem as a haiku. When two things are compared in a haiku or placed side by side, it is never in the sense that one is real and the other imaginary. In haiku ". . . the two parts that make up the whole are compared to each other, not in simile or metaphor, but as two phenomena, each of which exists in its own right." (H. G. Henderson)

3. PERSONIFICATION. This is a very common Western poetic device in which some aspect of nature is endowed with human qualities or attributes. Although a few examples of personification can be found in haiku this poetic device usually ruins a haiku because it seeks to humanize nature instead of 'naturalizing' man.

4. SYMBOLISM. Very often Westerners are tempted to interpret haiku symbolically. One translator, for example, felt that in Basho's famous haiku the 'old pond' is meant to represent 'eternity', while the jump of the frog is regarded as a 'symbol of life'. This attempt to extract some symbolic significance from haiku is a typically Western effort to find the abstract behind the concrete, to discover the spiritual hiding in the physical. As we have already seen, however, this is quite foreign to the haiku poets themselves. As Shiki has said of Basho's poem: "The meaning is just what it says, it has no other, no special meaning!"

We may summarize this chapter by saying that the haiku poet presents things "just as they are" - the 'suchness' of things. He gives us only the circumstances of an event, and of these only the barest minimum. "Touch and let go" is the secret of haiku art. Poetic devices such as the simile, metaphor, personification and symbolism are rarely used in haiku, inasmuch as they change and distort the original sense - experience.

In conclusion, here are some poems by Western writers, which show the qualities of haiku we have discussed in this chapter:

On this still hot day,  
only the breaking of soft grass  
in the beaks of ducks.

Claire Pratt

First gray light of dawn:  
empty baskets upside down  
in the market stalls.

Joanne Borgesen

The fullness of the moon:  
into the icy well  
someone has thrown a coin.

Nancy McDowell

CHAPTER FOUR



NOTHING

SPECIAL

A one-foot waterfall:  
it, too, makes noises,  
and at night is cool . . .

ISSA

One of the objections many Western readers voice against haiku is that it deals with things which are not generally regarded as 'poetic' in Western literature. Indeed, haiku seems to overemphasize the apparently trivial, the most ordinary, everyday moments of life:

Melons:  
mud-spattered  
in the morning dew . . . Basho

Even here  
a little sunshine,  
and some socks drying . . . Ichirinsō

The old pond:  
a sandal sticks to the bottom  
the falling sleet . . . Buson

Dirty melons, socks drying in the sun, and old sandals - is this enough to make poetry? Issa and his hundreds of haiku about flies, mosquitoes and grasshoppers - what possible literary value could there be in these?

The answer, again, lies in the basic difference between the Western and the Eastern point of view. For Western man the realm of the intellect is of a higher order than the world of pure sensation, the mundane events of our everyday lives; we place the spiritual above the material, the metaphysical above the physical, things of the mind above things of the body. We put our highest values on what Nietzsche calls "the emptiest concepts, the last evaporating fumes of reality".

Precisely the opposite view is taken in Zen:

"Nothing can be compared with the wearing of clothes  
Nothing can be compared to the eating of food:  
Besides this, there is no god, no buddha. "

This same view of the world is reflected in haiku. A one-foot waterfall is as good as a roaring cataract. A crow digging for mudsnails, a caterpillar silently eating a rice-plant, a leaf sticking to a mushroom or

a man hoeing his field all have the same significance as a temple full of Buddhas or visions of the galaxies over the Island of Sado:

Freshly washed  
how chill they look  
the white leeks !

Basho

Behind the azalea pot:  
a woman tearing up  
dried codfish . . .

Basho

Frozen mackerel:  
the belly split open  
white foamy roes . . .

Mitsui Tamai

The haiku poet does not seek out the rare and precious moments of life, he does not go in pursuit of the True and the Beautiful, he does not discover God in a grain of sand, but looks at the grain of sand itself for its own sake. Sometimes, like a Zen master, he deliberately jolts us out of our intellectual pre-occupation and brings us back to earth where we belong:

Sneezing  
I lost sight  
of the skylark !

Yayu

Right to the end of life:  
I travel  
I cut my toenails !

Santoka

Haiku poems, therefore, are not a "thing of beauty" and "a joy forever", they are "not delicacies, not a feast, but poems that taste like our daily meals". (Takuboku) They deal with 'wu-shi' meaning: 'nothing special'.

But we must go even a step further. The "unclouded mirror" of the poet's mind reflects with equal detachment what we generally call the good and the evil, pleasure and pain, the ugly along with the beautiful. The poet does not strain his experiences through a moral or aesthetic sieve to filter out Truth and Beauty, but embraces with an undivided mind even those aspects of reality that are shunned in most of Western literature.

This usually comes as an unpleasant shock to those Western devotees whose idea of haiku is derived from greeting card verse, or the poetry section of *The Ladies Home Journal*. It is true, of course, that many haiku deal with still moments of beauty that seem as unreal, as far away from the everyday world as the traditional tea ceremony:

Evening moon:  
Cherry blossoms  
fall upon my lute . . .

Shiki

A pear-tree in bloom:  
and in the moonlight  
a woman reading a letter . . .

Buson

There is, however, another side to haiku which is less readily found in the more popular translations, just as there is another side to life, and the haiku poet draws no distinction between them:

Thrown out  
into the winter river:  
the dog's carcass !

Shiki

Fleas, lice  
and a horse pissing  
close to my pillow !

Basho

Lung hemorrhage:  
How vivid the family faces  
this autumn evening !

Shihaku

In Western poetics pear-trees, cherry-blossoms and moonlight are familiar and acceptable poetic images, but lung hemorrhages, dogs' carcasses, fleas and lice are decidedly not. Nineteen centuries of Judeo-Christian tradition have conditioned our minds to think in terms of good versus evil, heaven versus hell, truth against falsehood. This dualistic way of thinking, which divides the universe into opposing camps in irreconcilable conflict with each other, pervades most of Western religion, philosophy and literature. It reached its climax in the last century, when it obsessed even the most enlightened men of the age. Thoreau, for example wrote: "Our whole life is startlingly moral. There is never an instant's truce between virtue and vice. "

Now it is commonly held that the twentieth century has outgrown these traditions. This seems to me to be largely wishful thinking. By far the vast majority of the masses today, while manipulating twentieth-century apparatus, remain Victorian in outlook and mores. This is also reflected in literature. For example, a 'haiku' such as:

Rain pools are mirrors,  
reflecting proof of heaven,  
miracle on earth

D. J. Gibson



is pure Victoriana.

There is, of course, a reaction. Marshal McLuhan has said that the West is becoming increasingly "Orientalized". But already in the last century Nietzsche wrote:

"We are necessary, we are a piece of fate, we belong to the whole, we are the whole - there is nothing which could judge, measure, compare, condemn our being, for that would be to judge, measure, compare, condemn the whole . . . For nothing exists apart from the whole ! "

This is surprisingly close to the Zen point of view:

"If you want to get at the truth  
Do not be concerned with right and wrong:  
The conflict between right and wrong  
Is a sickness of the mind ! "

This, however, must not be understood to mean that there are no laws or rules of conduct. It means that laws and rules are relative to the human frame of reference, they are not reflected by the universe or nature as a whole. To deify them, to abstract them into 'principles' and 'absolutes' and to project these abstractions onto the universe as God or Satan, absolute Good and absolute Evil, this is, indeed a "sickness of the mind".

In Zen, what we call good and evil, beauty and ugliness, pure and impure are like the right and left hand of God, they are inseparable elements of the same unity. Their interplay is not the deadly combat between the forces of light and darkness, but like the ebb and tide, like night and day - interrelated, mutually interdependent, and ultimately harmonious.

Under one roof:  
prostitutes, too, lie sleeping,  
Bush clovers and the moon . . .                      Basho

There is no moral condemnation in this haiku. There is no distinction drawn between Basho the man of Zen and poetry, and the pleasure women of the 'floating world'. All are the same under the moon. Underlying their divergent lives there is a common unity that embraces them all.

It is obvious that the appreciation of haiku demands a radical transformation of consciousness on the part of the Western reader and poet who venture into this field. What is necessary is almost a reversal of our traditional value system, a complete change of perspective. Only when we have stopped looking for Truth and Beauty, only when we have stopped analyzing and moralizing, only when we have wiped the mirror clear will

we realize that beauty is everywhere:

Winter snow:  
a harlot  
scraping soot from her saucepan. Issa

Religion is everywhere:

My old home:  
The face of a snail  
is the face of Buddha ! Issa

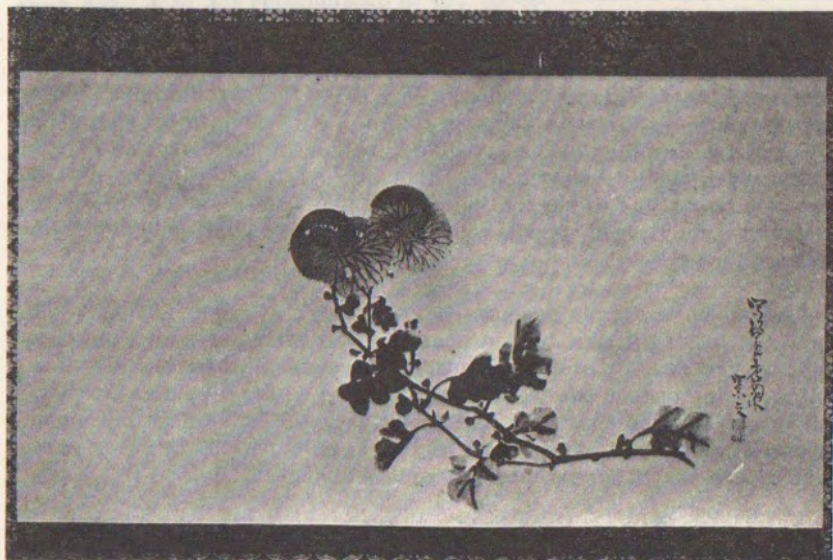
Poetry is everywhere:

Behind the market,  
searching through garbage cans:  
a face of sores. J.W. Hackett

In summary: a haiku poet describes 'ordinary things in ordinary words' (R.H. Blyth); or, as Basho said: "A haiku is simply what is happening in this particular place and at this particular time. "

CHAPTER FIVE

SEASON WORD



"The thoughts that fill my heart, of the beauty of things, that come and go with each season, are like endless songs, as numerous as grains of sand on the beach, and those that express such thoughts with compassion are the true sages of this world. "

BASHO

Another feature peculiar to haiku is the 'season-word'. It means that traditionally every haiku is related to one of the four seasons by means of the so-called 'season-word', and the haiku derives, in part, its mood from that seasonal reference. This reference may be either direct, e.g. "autumn moon" or "winter wind", or it may be merely implied: for example mention of butterflies and skylarks in a haiku indicates spring, while crickets and chrysanthemums suggest autumn. As certain brushstrokes in traditional ink-brush painting are fixed, named and codified, so in haiku the season-words have become standardized; many anthologies of haiku are arranged according to season-words and many thousands of haiku are yearly written about such popular season-words as "fallen leaves" or "the withered moor".

The season-word serves essentially as a poetic shorthand. Because of the brevity of haiku the poet has no space to gradually build up a mood or atmosphere. Instead, by merely mentioning a season-word, usually in a single line, using one or two words only, he can evoke a particular mood in readers who are familiar with haiku convention. Very often this mood of the season acts as a background feeling against which the other parts of the haiku are set either in harmony or in contrast.

On a withered branch  
a crow has settled:  
autumn nightfall . . .

Basho

In this haiku the season-word is "autumn nightfall". It creates an overall atmosphere of early darkness and cold, a feeling of the slow decline of the year, perhaps a tinge of sadness and gloom.

This general aura is enhanced and deepened by the more specific image of the solitary bird on a barren branch. Everything in the poem serves to heighten the mood of gloom, of solitude and desolation.

A sick monk  
sweeping the garden:  
blossoms of the plum-tree . . .

Sora

Here the season-word is "plum-tree", indicating spring. The general mood of the haiku, therefore, tends to be joyous and light-hearted. The image of the sick monk sweeping the garden does not enhance this mood but contrasts sharply with it. We find here a juxtaposition of images that is very common in haiku. Note that the poet makes no comment; he does not seek to relate the two contrasting images in any way, but leaves them suspended, as it were, in our mind. The sick monk, painfully doing his work, and the blossoms of the plum-tree at their peak of youth and beauty form a powerful paradox, yet are part of the same spring, the same world, the same moment of time.

This way of evoking a mood by merely mentioning a season-word often fails to affect the Western reader. For many of us the seasons themselves have lost all relationship to our lives. Industrialized and urbanized man does not experience the darkness of a winter day, the first warm sunshine of spring, the heat of mid-summer, or the autumn rain with the same intensity as these were felt by men of former ages. The rhythm of our lives is not the natural rhythm of the sun and moon, but the mechanical rhythm of clocks and calendars. For technological man the occurrence of an April shower, a November snowflurry or autumn haze, far from being poetic or bearing any relationship to his inner life, are merely hindrances to the smooth performance of his daily routine.

Yet in spite of this, many Western haiku poets have made good use of the season word, as the following examples show:

Gold of harvest moon  
white chrysanthemum in vase  
for the young mother.

Helen Chenoweth

The season-word here suggests autumn, yet the mood is quite different from Basho's autumn haiku. "Harvest moon" suggests light, radiance, ripeness and fulfilment. This mood is further amplified and enhanced by the delicate resonance of colors: gold moon, gold harvest; white chrysanthemum; white face; the slenderness of the vase suggests the slenderness and smoothness of the woman's body.

My fingers feel  
our baby move in your womb . . .  
this winter room

Julien Masseron

Here the season-word occurs, almost unexpectedly, in the third line. Yet it changes and enlarges the whole poem. A human event is related to a larger event in nature. We feel the stillness of the room, the darkness of the winter day. The whiteness of the woman's body suggests white slopes of snow outside. And in the very depth of winter there is a promise of spring and of new life.

In the winter of 1969 'Haiku Magazine' held the first haiku contest in the Western world with a specific seasonal theme, in this case: "New Year's Day". Over a thousand haiku were received from all over the English-speaking world. A few of the best are given below to illustrate how well Western haiku poets have made use of the season-word :

First morning . . .  
Over the snow, a washing  
steams on the line

Rod Willmot

The gnarled old bush  
with its burden of snow - -  
and now the New Year.

Cornelia Draves

The old year ends;  
a flight of starlings  
over the oak trees.

Lorraine Harr

Here in Central Park  
roasting the New Year's chestnuts  
still the same old man.

Edmund Miller

CHAPTER SIX



SELFLESS

The long night:  
the sound of the water  
says what I think !

GOCHIKU

The subject of the present chapter is the relationship of the poet's Self with his subject. In much of Western poetry the poet writes primarily about himself, his private thoughts, emotions, and ideas. The haiku poet, in comparison, remains very impersonal.

To understand this attitude we must again turn to Zen Buddhism. Here man is not viewed as the 'Lord of Creation', he stands neither apart nor above the rest of nature, but is an indivisible part of it. The individual is not regarded as an absolute entity endowed with an immortal soul, but as a cell in the body of the Great Self. A man is not born into the world, he grows out of it like a tree, like a flower he blossoms and blooms and passes away to be transformed into another manifestation of this greater reality. Our identity is a case of mistaken identity. Our subject-object relationships are only illusions, a kind of social game, although many of us play it with deadly seriousness. The dualism between reason and instinct, between Self and Other, is in part conditioned by the very structure of the language we speak: "European languages in general begin with a subject-noun whose action is expressed in an active verb. Some apparently permanent element is separated from the general process, treated as an entity, and endowed with active responsibility for a given occurrence." (L. L. White) The concept of continuity between the Self and the world around it is being re-discovered by modern man in the West, in part due to increasing contact with Oriental ideas and ways of life. When Freud wrote "The ego-feeling we are aware of now is only a shrunken vestige of a far more extensive feeling - a feeling which embraces the universe and expresses an inseparable connection of the ego with the external world", he only translated into analytic jargon what had been one of the basic beliefs of Mahayana Buddhism for many centuries. How close the speculations of Western psychology and philosophy come to Zen may be seen from Norman Brown's latest book: 'Love's Body': "Civilized objectivity is non-participating consciousness, consciousness as separation, as dualism, distance, definition; as property and prison . . . The distinction between self and external world is not an immutable fact but an artificial construction."

With this background of thought let us look at the following haiku:

Autumn stillness:  
a chestnut leaf  
sinks into clear water . . .

Shokaku



In the coolness  
of the empty boat:  
the shell of a crab !

Kikaku

Quiet afternoon:  
water shadows  
on the pine bark

Anita Virgil

Haiku such as these, taken both from the East and the West, seem strangely 'impersonal' to most Western readers. There is no trace of the poet's temporal self, of his personal 'ego'. The reason for this is that the poet's Self has been totally submerged in the object; in other words, the poet and the object have become one. This process is described by Basho as follows:

"Learn from the pine about the pine, from the bamboo about the bamboo. But always leave your old Self behind, otherwise it will get between you and the object. Poetry springs out of its own when you and the object have become one, when you have looked deep enough into nature to see the hidden gleam. No matter how well-worded your poems may be, if the feeling is not natural, if you and the object have not become one, your poems are not true haiku, but merely imitations of reality. "

It is obvious from this statement that Basho regarded haiku as much more than a form of poetry. He saw in it a special way of seeing, hearing and feeling, a special state of consciousness in which we grasp intuitively the identity of man and nature and the continuity between ourselves and the larger cosmos. This does not necessarily mean a retreat from society and the world of men; but rather a new perspective, in which we are aware of our social relationships as a kind of illusion, a game we are engaged in playing with each other, which ultimately is of no significance: "A hermit or an ascetic imposes seclusion or abstinence upon himself. Basho, on the other hand does not reject the things of the world; he only advises us to look at them from a distance, without committing ourselves. The haiku poet's attitude toward life is that of a bystander." (Makoto Ueda) The haiku, therefore, rarely deals with strong emotions or passionate concerns. It always reflects an awareness that transcends the game.

Winter sea,  
still waving in my body  
on the pier.

Masako Ombe

This haiku is by a contemporary Japanese poet, yet it records the same intuition of one-ness, of unity and continuity that Basho described. The rhythms and waves of the sea, its ebbs and tides, flow in us and in every living being. The haiku is a point of intersection between man and nature.

We have seen that the haiku tends to be impersonal and 'objective' and that, according to Basho, the poet must completely merge with the subject of his poem. This is true for the great majority of haiku. There are, however, a number of haiku, even by Basho himself, where the poet clearly expresses his personal emotion:

Released from pain,  
through the open screen  
I look at the roses . . .

Shiki

This autumn,  
how old I'm getting:  
the clouds ! the birds !

Basho

Not easy  
to be a man:  
autumn evening . . .

Issa

Offended  
I returned:  
the willow in the garden . . .

Ryota

In each of these four haiku an intense emotion is expressed. Yet in each case the third line brings about a sudden transformation. There is a shift, often quite unexpected, from the closed perspective of the poet's personal grief, or anguish, or anger to a larger and wider viewpoint in nature. The roses, the autumn evening, the clouds, the birds and the willow are not separate from the poet and his private feelings, they are part of them, not in human and metaphorical terms, but in terms of participation in the great cycles of birth and death, transformation and change. The third line of haiku such as these is of supreme importance, because it is never merely the continuation or logical conclusion of the first two lines, but the moment of awakening, a sudden transformation of consciousness, a flash of awareness that transforms a private emotion into a feeling of universal communion. The 'crustacean armor' of the ego breaks, the closed feeling of the individual dissolves in the impersonal, infinite being of the greater Self, where joy and grief, pleasure and pain, love and anger cancel each other out.

It is undoubtedly true that with increasing mechanization of life and the subjugation of the individual to technology this feeling of the continuity of man and nature will become more and more difficult to attain. More and more the ego becomes its own prisoner, cut off from participation in the greater universe. Hence contemporary man's increasing isolation, his depression, his boredom and desperate search for a way out.

Here haiku, like Zen, offers a 'Way of Liberation'. Each haiku is a finger pointing in the right direction, each haiku is a re-union with things from which we have been parted too long.

In conclusion here are a few examples of Western haiku that illustrate what we have discussed in this chapter. Haiku such as these, while quite Western in tone and imagery, yet express the spirit of Zen, which is not Chinese Zen or Japanese Zen, but Universal Zen:

Dakota landscape -  
even the evening sun  
the color of wheat.

John H. Wills

The year's last sunset:  
watching it - thinking only  
"the year's last sunset"

Robert Spiess

First thing heard:  
the snow-plow truck.  
A year of white.

William J. Higginson

Sunset dying  
at the end of a rusty  
beer can . . .

Gary Hotham

CHAPTER SEVEN

O N E N E S S



Heaven and earth and I are of one root  
The ten-thousand things and I are of one substance

sojo

We have already seen in an earlier chapter that the haiku poet often employs the juxtaposition of different images in the same poem—the small speck of a solitary crow is contrasted with the infinite horizon of an autumn evening, the sick monk is set against the plum-blossoms in bloom. The point, in each case, is to awaken the reader to the unity underlying all things. In the words of the Zen saying:

" Identity is difference - difference is identity "

It is this experience of the identity of things, of man and of nature, which is the core of haiku. Haiku seeks to arouse a type of 'cosmic consciousness' that knows nothing of separation, and in which the most divergent elements are part of the same unity.

Railroad tracks,  
and a flight of geese above them  
in the moonlit night . . . Shiki

A lonely  
railway station:  
lotus-flowers in bloom . . . Shiki

In each of these two haiku two worlds seem to meet head-on: the old and the new, the Industrial and the Aesthetic, the utilitarian and the artistic. This juxtaposition of strikingly different images gives the haiku 'polarity'. The two contrasting images are like the poles of a charged battery. A state of tension exists between them and this tension is not resolved in any way in the poem. Shiki draws no conclusion, asserts no personal preference, gives us no comment or connection, but merely sets the two things side by side. Haiku such as these, where two apparently unrelated images are placed side by side without their relationship being specified, are said to be in a state of 'unresolved tension'.

Here are two more examples in which this tension is even more pronounced:

Eventide:  
spikes of rhubarb  
and a whistling train !

Takako

Sound of a rat  
on the dishes:  
Ah, the cold !

Buson

What do the spikes of rhubarb have to do with the train-whistle? In what way is the sound of a rat on a plate related to the feeling of chill? There is no rational answer to these questions. Here the haiku becomes a 'collision of images'; it begins to resemble the 'koan'. A 'koan' is a statement or question that Zen masters give to their students to meditate on. The point is, however, that the koan has no logical answer or explanation, hence the student tries in vain to come to an understanding of it through the use of his reasoning powers. The koan is 'solved' only when, often after many years, the student abandons all attempt at reason or logic and grasps its meaning intuitively.

R.H. Blyth regarded every haiku as "a koan, a question in Zen, an open door that looks shut", and the American poet W.C. Cohen has called haiku simply "poetic adaptations of the koan." Harold Stewart, another translator of haiku, has expressed the same thought:

"Just as in the koan, the nonsensical and solutionless problem used in Zen meditation, the period of paradox and puzzlement leads to a rational impasse and a blockage in our free flow of existence; so, too, in the haiku: just when every-avenue of escape from the dead-ends of logic and individual will seems closed or shut off, quite suddenly the instantaneous lightning of Satori flashes forth - and we see our way out."

Thus the haiku resembles a koan in that we look in vain for a logical connection between the juxtaposed images. The 'explanation' lies in a deeper level of consciousness than the logical mind. It lies at a level where the discriminatory influences of our minds have ceased to function and things are perceived in their totality, where railroad tracks and wild geese, rhubarb and train-whistles, rats and cold strike a common chord and are part of the same continuum.

Now let us look at some examples of English haiku:

Resting in the grass,  
butterfly and bulldozer,  
yellow together.

Paul O. Williams

Here, too, we have a juxtaposition, a collision of ideas: the butterfly is set against the bulldozer and a state of unresolved tension exists between these two so different images. The last line, however, unfortunately has the effect of resolving the paradox and releasing the tension by connecting the two images. The poet has 'explained' the paradox to the reader instead of letting the reader experience the tension and attempt to resolve it within himself.

Here are a few haiku by the British haiku poet John Esam, where the poet has left the paradox unexplained and the tension unresolved:

In a letter  
she touches her grandmother's hair;  
flying crows call out.

A sunshower marches  
across the fields;  
two girls laughing somewhere.

Who am I? What  
am I? The sound of the woodcutter's  
axe.

I touch her back;  
a stone bell sounds  
somewhere.

In summary: a haiku is said to resemble the 'koan' in Zen teaching, inasmuch as it makes use of paradox, 'unresolved tension' and the juxtaposition of apparently unrelated images, forcing the reader into an intuitive rather than an intellectual perception of reality.

## CONCLUSION

"Zen naturally finds its readiest expression in poetry rather than in philosophy because it has more affinity with feeling than with intellect; its poetic predilection is inevitable." (D.T. Suzuki) The main point of this essay has been to show that haiku is not to be regarded primarily as a 'form' of poetry, as is commonly assumed in the West, but as an expression of Zen in poetry, a living 'Way', similar to the 'Way of the Brush' and other manifestations of Zen in the arts and in literature. It touches, therefore, upon much more than poetry in the limited Western sense of the word, it touches upon philosophy, religion, psychology and many other subjects. It touches above all upon life itself. I have taken examples both from classical and modern haiku poets, from East and West, to show that this 'Way of Haiku' is not exclusive to any one place or any one time, but is ageless and universal.

There are many poets in the West today who use haiku as only a form, pouring into it whatever they like. This is like using the utensils for the traditional tea ceremony to have an afternoon coffee and donut session.

Basho said that there are two styles of haiku: there is one that lasts a thousand years and one that lasts only a little while, yet both are the same essentially as long as the 'poetic spirit' of the haiku comes through. This 'poetic spirit', as I have attempted to show, demands a little more than syllable counting and admiring nature in the form of a friendly neighborhood chipmunk. The 'Way of Haiku' demands a new view of poetry, of the world, of nature, of society and of our relationship to them:

"A haiku is not a poem, it is not literature: it is a hand beckoning, a door half-opened, a mirror wiped clean. It is a way of returning to nature, to our moon nature, our cherry blossom nature, our falling leaf nature, in short, our Buddha nature. It is a way in which cold winter rain, the swallows of evening, even the very day in its hotness, and the length of the night become truly alive, share in our humanity and speak their own silent and expressive language. "

R.H. Blyth



Unless the poets in the Western world writing haiku today appreciate this wider perspective and are willing to express some of this true 'spirit of haiku', not by way of imitation, but as a spontaneous and genuine experience of life, haiku poetry will fail to have any rejuvenating effects on the impoverished literature of our age, and the 'Way of Haiku' will become no more than a 'Cult of Haiku', one of the infinite, constantly changing superficial diversions of a bourgeois consumer culture.

# FORM IN HAIKU

The classical Japanese haiku usually consists of 17 Japanese 'syllables', arranged in 5/7/5 form:

Furu-ike ya  
kawazu tobi-komu  
mizu-no-oto

Old pond:  
Frog jump-in  
Water-sound

When haiku was first written in English, it was natural for poets to think that the English haiku, too, should consist of 17 syllables, arranged in the same pattern. One poet, for example, translated Basho's haiku into exactly 17 English syllables as follows:

Into the old pond  
Suddenly jumps a green frog  
And a splash is heard

But when we compare this with the original, we find that the 17 English syllables are much longer, both in time and in space, than the 17 Japanese syllables. Moreover, in order to get 17 English syllables out of the 17 Japanese 'syllables', the translator was forced to 'pad' the translation with extra words that are not part of the original. For example 'suddenly' and 'green' do not appear at all in Basho's haiku. Thus, while trying to preserve the structure of the original, the translator has distorted the content. The utter brevity, the freshness, suddenness and immediacy of Basho's haiku have been lost in the translation. Instead of three explosive images hitting the reader like blows on the head from a Zen master, we get a neat and tidy English sentence with all the trimmings of grammar and literary invention. Many English haiku, written in strict 17 English syllables, suffer from exactly the same defect: they are overstuffed with words!

The reason for this is simply, as Blyth, Henderson and others have long pointed out, that 17 Japanese syllables are not the equivalent of 17 English syllables. In fact the Japanese 'syllable' is not a syllable at all in the Western sense of the word, but rather a unit of sound duration.

Let us look at the 'syllables' in Basho's haiku:

Fu-ru-i-ke-ya-ka-wa-zu-to-bi-ko-mu-mi-zu-no-o-to

Each 'syllable' consists of only one vowel or one vowel and a consonant. (Long vowels count as two 'syllables'). It follows that all Japanese syllables are of about equal sound duration.

Not so in English: our syllables have nothing to do with sound duration or time, and vary greatly in length, both visually and aurally. Take the following English syllables from the 'translation' above:

a - old - frog - splash

Each of these is one syllable - yet the last one is almost three times as long in sound and space as the first. We can now understand why it is almost impossible to reproduce 17 Japanese syllables with 17 English syllables: "It seems impossible to use the Japanese 'syllable' or 'duration unit' count in English." (Harold G. Henderson)

Since we cannot rely on syllable-counting to give us a poetic form equivalent to the Japanese haiku, then what form should the English haiku take?

The answer is that there is no general agreement on this point among the English haiku poets themselves. The following possibilities have so far been explored:

I. ONE-LINERS. All Japanese haiku are 'one-liners' in the sense that every Japanese haiku is written in a single vertical line without any form of punctuation or division. This, of course, is impossible to reproduce in a European language. The closest equivalent would be to write English haiku in a single line, divided into short-long-short sections, demarcated by punctuation marks or some other equivalent of the Japanese 'cutting-words':

Pleasure-boats bob up and down: the autumn sea

While this is undoubtedly the closest way an English haiku can look like a Japanese one, this form has, to my knowledge, hardly been used at all by Western haiku poets.

II. TWO-LINERS. Both Miyamori and Harold Stewart use two-liners for their translation of Japanese haiku. The main objection to the two-liner is that the asymmetry of the short-long-short form which characterizes the original haiku, is lost. The two lines balance each other, tending to 'close' the poem. This defect is even worsened when the lines rhyme, as in Harold Stewart's rhyming couplets:

The old green pond is silent; here the hop  
Of a frog plumbs the evening stillness: plo!

It should be noted, however, that even Japanese haiku poets occasionally wrote very short haiku in which the last five 'syllables' are omitted and the haiku thus becomes the equivalent of a 'two-liner':

Shigururu ya  
shinanaide iru

Cold winter rain:  
I am still alive!

Santoka

III. THREE-LINERS. This is by far the most popular way of translating Japanese haiku as well as writing English haiku. There are several possibilities:

1. Three lines in strict 5/7/5 English syllable pattern. As we have already seen, this tends to make the English haiku too wordy. There are, however, some advantages in using this form:

- a. It preserves the asymmetry of the Japanese haiku.
  - b. It preserves the short-long-short pattern of the classical Japanese haiku.
  - c. It provides a fairly rigid framework for the poet to work in.
- At any rate, some excellent haiku have been produced in this form:

Softly on a leaf  
expanding and contracting . . .  
silent butterfly

Leroy Kanterman

2. Three lines without syllabic restriction but still retaining the classical short-long-short form.

Pheasant  
at the town dump  
this winter day . . .

Gary Hotham

Tying  
the naked oaks together . . .  
squirrels . . .

John H. Wills

The advantage of this form is that it allows much greater compression of language and therefore it comes closer to the 'wordless' quality of haiku in Japanese. It is also the form advocated by R. H. Blyth for English haiku.

3. FOUR-LINERS. The disastrous results of trying to stretch the haiku out into four lines have already been discussed on page seven. Yusa, too, in his translations of Basho and Issa, uses four lines. His version

of Basho's haiku is even worse than Beilenson's and Stewart's:

Breaking the silence,  
Of an ancient pond,  
A frog jumped into water -  
A deep resonance.

This is no longer haiku. No trace of the original brevity and compression of language remains.

IV. OTHER FORMS. Experiments in new ways of translating haiku and writing original haiku in English continue. Paul Repts, in his 'Zen Telegrams' has achieved an effect similar to the 'haiga', a kind of word-picture, where the written and the pictorial effects are expertly interwoven. The influence of Concrete Poetry has led to the creation of some 'Concrete Haiku' with interesting results.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## A. HAIKU AND ZEN

1. THE WORLD OF ZEN: AN EAST-WEST ANTHOLOGY by Nancy Wilson Ross. Paperback. 1960. Random House. New York. The single most enlightening book on Zen that is available in the West. It has a chapter on haiku that sums up everything that has been said in this book. It shows Zen as a universal experience, manifesting itself in the art and literature of both East and West.
2. THE WAY OF ZEN by Alan W. Watts. Paperback. In England and Canada available in the Pelican Series; in the U.S.A. in Vintage Paperbacks. Beginners may find Part One dealing with the historical background difficult and tedious going. In this case start with Part Two. The chapter on 'Zen in the Arts' deals with haiku and other expressions of Zen in art and literature.
3. AN INTRODUCTION TO ZEN BUDDHISM by D.T. Suzuki. Paperback. Grove Press. The books of D.T. Suzuki are a bit more difficult than the above.
4. ZEN AND JAPANESE CULTURE by D.T. Suzuki. Hardcover. Bonington Series LXIV. 1959. Chapter VII is entitled 'Zen and Haiku' and devotes about 60 pages to this subject. The introductory chapter on 'What is Zen' is also of interest.
5. ZEN by Eugen Herrigel. Paperback. McGraw-Hill Co. Deals mainly with 'Zen and the Art of Archery' but has a short chapter on 'Satori in Poetry', dealing with haiku.

## B. TRANSLATIONS OF JAPANESE HAIKU

1. AN INTRODUCTION TO HAIKU by H.G. Henderson. Paperback. Doubleday Anchor. This has been and remains the best introduction to haiku. Of special value are the literal translations of the Japanese at the bottom of the pages which provide the reader unable to read Japanese with a flavor of the 'wordless' quality of Japanese haiku.

2. R.H. BLYTH: HAIKU. Hardcover. Hokuseido Press. There are 6 volumes in this series. They are: 'History of Haiku' Vols. I and II  
'Eastern Culture'  
'Spring'  
'Summer-Autumn'  
'Autumn-Winter'

These six volumes contain the largest collection of haiku translated into English. Anyone seriously interested in reading and/or writing haiku should have them all. Blyth, who also studied Zen, stresses the Zen experience in haiku; his translations are very plain and less 'poetic' than Henderson's. Some readers find his rambling comments irritating. In this case it is best to just stick to the haiku; you will not find them anywhere else. Available in larger bookstores or can be ordered. Imported and distributed by Japan Publications Trading Company, Rutland, Vermont. Cost about \$7.00 each.

3. ANTHOLOGY OF HAIKU by A. Miyamori. An enormous volume which costs about \$40.00 (Tokyo: Maruzen Co.). The translations, which stem from pre-World War II days, are all in two lines and sound strangely old-fashioned and stilted. Nice looking at but hardly worth the price.
4. HAIKAI AND HAIKU published by the Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkikai, Tokyo, 1958. Hardcover. About \$6.00. A relatively small selection of haiku by the classical haiku writers. Good 3-line translations. Interesting chapter on the aesthetic principles of 'Yugen', 'Sabi', etc. for the advanced student. Worth having, but may be hard to get.
5. NOBUYUKI YUASA translated several 'haibun' (mixed haiku & prose):
  - a) Basho's: Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Sketches. (Penguin Classics Series);
  - b) Issa's: The Year of My Life. (University of California Press. Paperback).

In both books Yuasa uses four lines to translate each haiku, losing completely the 'wordless' quality of haiku. If you read it, realize you are reading Yuasa's paraphrase, not a literal translation.

6. BACK ROADS TO FAR TOWNS translated by Cid Corman and Kamaike Susume. Hardbound. Grossman Publications, 125A East 19th Street New York City. \$8.50. The best and most authentic translation of Basho's famous haibun. Strong, compressed, it comes as close to the feeling or the original as any translation ever can. Read any line of this and compare it with Yuasa's prosaic translation of the same 'haibun' to see the difference!
7. PETER PAUPER PRESS books of Japanese haiku:
  - 'Haiku'
  - 'Haiku Harvest'
  - 'Cherry Blossom'
  - 'The Four Seasons'
  - 'Haiku Garland'

Mostly four-line translations, Westernized versions (see p. 7).

8. NET OF FIREFLIES by Harold Stewart. Charles E. Tuttle Company. Hardcover. \$ 6.00. Stewart translates haiku into rhyming couplets with titles!! Long essay in back of book has some interesting points.
9. TWENTY - FIVE PIECES OF NOW by W.J. Higginson. 1968. 25 cents. 25 excellent translations from the Japanese in this original little booklet.

#### C. HAIKU ON RECORDS

HAIKU, ZEN & SENRYU . Two LP records. \$ 12.50. Address: MEA, P.O. Box 303, Sausalito, Calif. 94965. Excellent! Best introduction to haiku and Zen available anywhere. Alan Watts, Sumire Hasegawa and Vincent Delgado.

The same company has an extensive list of tape recordings by Alan Watts speaking on various aspects of Zen.

#### D. CRITICAL STUDIES OF HAIKU.

1. THE JAPANESE HAIKU. By Kenneth Yasuda. Hardcover. Charles E. Tuttle Co. 1957. The first few chapters are interesting. The author's own "Experiments in English" in the back of the book are disappointing and unoriginal.
2. HAIKU IN ENGLISH. By Harold G. Henderson. Soft-cover. Charles E. Tuttle Co. 1967. A very basic introduction to English haiku, with examples drawn mainly from early American haiku poets.
3. LITERARY AND ART THEORIES IN JAPAN. By Makoto Ueda. The Press of Western Reserve University. Hardcover. Chapter 10 deals with Basho and haiku. Well-written and interesting. (1967)
4. ZEAMI, BASHO, YEATS, POUND. By Makato Ueda. Paperback. Mouton & Co., London. \$ 6.25. The chapter dealing with Basho is of particular interest.

#### E. COLLECTIONS OF ENGLISH HAIKU.

Books and booklets of original English haiku appear in ever increasing numbers. Most are printed at the author's expense and thus cut off from a larger market. Their quality is extremely variable. The best haiku books that have appeared in any form are in my view by the following poets:

In Canada: Claire Pratt and Rod Willmot.

In England: Bill Wyatt, John Esam, 'Cricket'.

In U.S.A.: J.W. Hackett, Foster Jewell, John Wills, Robert Spiess.



"Learn from the pine" - p. 27

# HAIKU MAGAZINES

The following magazines appear regularly and are devoted entirely to haiku poetry:

1. HAIKU MAGAZINE, Editor: Eric W. Aram, Quarterly.  
Subscription: \$ 2.00. Single copies: \$ 1.00. Address: Box 528  
Station 7, Toronto 8, Ontario, Canada.
2. HAIKU WEST, Editor: Larry Kanamaru. Appears twice a year.  
Subscription: \$ 1.00. Address: c/o Japan Book, 320 12th Ave.  
New York, N.Y. 10017, U.S.A.
3. HAIKU SPOTLIGHT, Editor: Nobuyuki Takahashi, Weekly.  
Printed on the back of a post-card. English haiku by Japanese  
and Western haiku poets. Subscription: \$ 1.00. Address:  
9-6-22 Takahashi-Chu, Matsuyama 882, Japan.
4. MODERN HAIKU, Editor: Ray Tims Morrison, Quarterly.  
Subscription: \$ 2.00. Address: 84 NorthOrange Dr., Los  
Angeles, Calif. 90028, U.S.A.

Books and booklets of English haiku and poetry are available from the publisher of the above magazines. The publisher is interested in receiving material for publication. The publisher is interested in receiving material for publication. The publisher is interested in receiving material for publication.

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The following magazines appear regularly and are devoted entirely to haiku poetry:

1. HAIKU MAGAZINE. Editor: Eric W. Amann. Quarterly.  
Subscription: \$ 3.00. Single copies: \$ 1.00. Address: Box 866  
Station F, Toronto 5, Ontario, Canada.
2. HAIKU WEST. Editor: Leroy Kanterman. Appears twice a year.  
Subscription: \$ 2.00. Address: c/o Japan Soc. , 250 Park Ave.  
New York, N. Y. 10017, U.S.A.
3. HAIKU SPOTLIGHT. Editor: Nobuyuki Takahashi. Weekly.  
Printed on the back of a post-card. English haiku by Japanese  
and Western haiku poets. Subscription: \$ 1.00. Address:  
3-9-38 Tachibana-Cho, Matsuyama-Shi, 790, Japan.
4. MODERN HAIKU. Editor: Kay Titus Mormino. Quarterly.  
Subscription: \$ 3.00. Address: 414 North Orange Dr., Los  
Angeles, Calif. 90036, U.S.A.

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