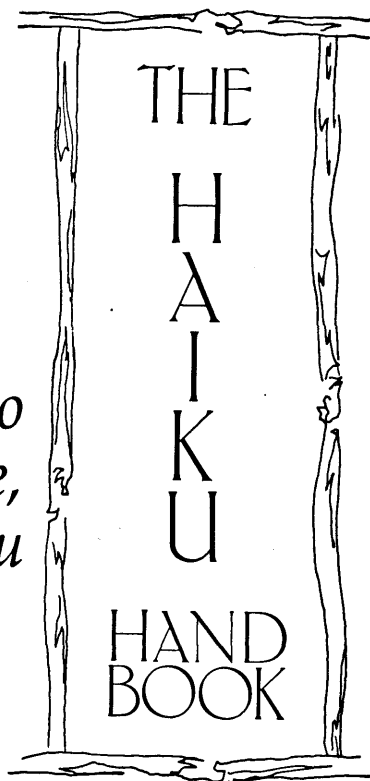


*How to
Write, Share,
and Teach Haiku*



WILLIAM J. HIGGINSON
WITH PENNY HARTER

MCGRAW-HILL BOOK COMPANY
New York St. Louis San Francisco Bogotá Guatemala
Hamburg Lisbon Madrid Mexico Montreal Panama
Paris San Juan São Paulo Tokyo Toronto

Copyright © 1985 by William J. Higginson

All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. Except as permitted under the Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a data base or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 FGR FGR 8 7 6 5

ISBN 0-07-028786-4

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Higginson, William J., 1938-
The haiku handbook.

Bibliography: p.

Includes indexes.

1. Haiku—History and criticism. 2. Haiku—Technique.

I. Harter, Penny. II. Title.

PL729.H48 1984 808.1 84-17174

ISBN 0-07-028786-4 (pbk.)

Book design by Patrice Fodero

A Note on the Translations and Some Words of Thanks

The primary purpose of reading and writing haiku is sharing moments of our lives that have moved us, pieces of experience and perception that we offer or receive as gifts. At the deepest level, this is the one great purpose of all art, and especially of literature. The writer invites the reader to share in the experience written about, and in the experience of the shared language itself.

In this handbook you will find haiku in ten different languages, from all inhabited continents of Earth. While I have made all the final versions of the translations unless stated otherwise in the text, a number of people have given of their time and expertise, that we might all share, as nearly as possible, the experiences and the languages of these poems. I am especially grateful to the following.

In Japanese, Emiko Sakurai was particularly helpful in identifying and translating poems that reflect the diversity and craft of Issa. Professor Kazuo Sato, head of the International Division of the Museum of Haiku Literature, Tokyo, lent valuable assistance in reviewing the haiku by modern Japanese poets, and spent many hours pursuing the owners of copyrights. Tadashi

Kondo has lent his insight and poetic sensitivity to a number of collaborative translations which we have done over the years, several of which appear here. Shortly before the manuscript went to press he reviewed all the translations from Japanese, offering many clarifications and suggestions.

In Spanish, Gary Brower and Mark Cramer first brought the variety and depth of continental and Hispanic haiku to my attention. Elizabeth Searle Lamb and Bruce Lamb critiqued some of my Spanish translations, and Maria Luisa Muñoz assisted me in my efforts on her own work. Merlin Marie dePauw provided help on some technical points, and assisted in obtaining permission from Spanish-language poets.

Denise Gordon and Penny Harter assisted with French, in some cases providing trots and in others helping to develop shades of meaning missing from my early versions. André Duhaime and Dorothy Howard gave me an advance opportunity to read the manuscript of their *Haiku: anthologie canadienne/Canadian Anthology*.

In German, Petra Engelbert made near-final translations for many of the poems of Imma von Bodmershof, and Volker Schubert assisted me in reviewing poems and criticism by German authors and in making translations. Sabine Sommerkamp helped keep me abreast of the current scene in Germany and also produced some preliminary translations.

Wanda Reumer provided information on haiku in Dutch, and reviewed my translations. Katarina von Bothmer checked my work on Hammarskjöld's Swedish. Nina Zivancevic reviewed my translations from Serbo-Croatian.

All the translations from the Greek of George Seferis were made especially for this book by Manya Bean.

In addition to help on translations, my work on *The Haiku Handbook* has been assisted by many over the years. Two of the earliest to offer encouragement leading to this book were Eric W. Amann, the first editor to publish my translations and criticism, and May D. Harding, a spirited teacher who insisted that I devote

the same concentration to writing essays that I did to writing poems and translations.

Harold G. Henderson offered a kindly ear to the brash young man I was when we met. He said that he hoped his students would surpass his work, and we had many a friendly argument as I tried to do that. I only hope that this handbook may be fit to stand on the foundation that he, R. H. Blyth, and Kenneth Yasuda, each in their different ways, built for my early studies in haiku.

Soon after I began actively publishing my translations I discovered Cid Corman's work on early and contemporary Japanese poetry, which helped me to formulate my own concerns as a translator. Cid's letters provided additional encouragement and direction; he was also responsible for putting Tadashi Kondo in touch with me, a service for which I remain very grateful.

In the last decade my increasing interest in twentieth century haiku in Japan has been fed by the excellent works of Makoto Ueda. Hiroaki Sato, that most prolific translator of modern Japanese poetry, has provided much new material for haiku enthusiasts to enjoy, and given me reason to re-examine some of my assumptions about form in Japanese poetry. He has also given me a good deal of personal help on one point or another.

Among my poet-colleagues in America, Anita Virgil, Cor van den Heuvel, and Michael McClintock have each stimulated my research and writing, and acted as sounding boards for ideas as I developed them. Cor also read through the entire first draft of this handbook and recommended improvements.

Thomas Rimer gave the near-final manuscript a thorough reading, and offered helpful suggestions, many of which were adopted.

Poets Bill Zavatsky and Ron Padgett, of Teachers & Writers Collaborative, Inc., encouraged and offered valuable criticism of my early writing on teaching haiku. Ron has also written on his own experience teaching haiku. Portions of a piece which he revised for this book at my request appear in Chapter 11.

For helping me find bits and pieces of information, and encouragement along the way, I am particularly indebted to L. A. Davidson, until recently the recording secretary of the Haiku Society of America; Elizabeth Searle Lamb, editor of *Frogpond*; Robert Spiess, editor of *Modern Haiku*; Hal Roth, editor of *Wind Chimes*; Étiemble, authority on haiku influence in modern European poetry; and Sonō Uchida, former Ambassador of Japan to Morocco.

C. H. Farr has been a patron of the arts through continued donations to this effort.

Bonnie Crown, agent extraordinaire, found me out and asked me to write a new book on haiku before she knew that I had already completed an outline. She then found me a publisher, and schooled me in patience—a quality which she exemplifies.

Tim McGinnis, my first editor at McGraw-Hill, had the patience and courage to demand my best, and wait for it; his suggestions substantially improved this handbook. Elisabeth Jakab, who became my editor during the last phase of manuscript preparation, pushed the work—and me—through to its conclusion. And Joan Eckerman, editorial assistant, provided steady encouragement throughout.

Penny Harter, whom I first knew as a poet and colleague in teaching students to write, has helped me see this project through in every way imaginable. She has been a sounding board, co-translator, typist of some early draft chapters, and critic. She has contributed an important chapter on teaching. She has also made our home as peaceful as possible in these three years, despite the many pressures on us as writers, workers, parents, and members of our community.

I am deeply grateful for all these assistances; remaining errors are mine alone.

W.J.H.

A Note on Japanese Pronunciations and Names

When space allows I include the originals of works quoted from languages other than English. Japanese originals are given in *romaji* ("Roman letter") transliteration.

Most readers probably have at least a slight acquaintance with the pronunciations of other Western languages. For some, this may be the first introduction to Japanese. Since a transliteration of one language into the phonetic symbols of another is never more than an approximation, I include here a rough guide to pronouncing Japanese words and names.

In *romaji* most consonants sound quite like their values in English. *G* is always as in "give" or as *ng* in "sing"; *n* at the end of a syllable is held longer than in English, and shifts toward *m* before *b*, *m*, and *p*. A double consonant (except *n*) indicates a vowel sound now lost, and yields a glottal stop.

The vowels of Japanese are all pronounced, with a few exceptions that do not concern traditional poetry. Each vowel represents a unit of duration, all roughly equal in length, unless a macron or doubling indicates twice the length. Vowels in *romaji* have approximately the same pronunciations as in Italian. The

following table gives some American-English equivalents for Japanese vowels.

SHORT VOWELS*

a = *a* in *fa*, *ha*
i = *ee* in *keep*
u = *o* in *who*
e = *e* in *bet*
o = *o* in *okay*

LONG VOWELS*

ā = *aa* in *aah*
ī = *ee* in *knee*
ū = *oo* in *balloon*
ē = *ey* in *fey* (no diphthong)
ō = *ow* in *blow*

*"Short" vowels are clipped, about half as long in duration as "long" vowels.

Eastern and Western ways of handling names differ. Some writers try to avoid confusion by dealing with all the names in their texts in the same way. The variety of names encountered in this book argued for another approach, summarized below.

FULL NAME	SHORT FORM	AS INDEXED
-----------	------------	------------

R. H. Blyth	Blyth	Blyth, R. H.
Li Po	Li Po	Li Po*
Matsuo Bashō	Bashō	Bashō**
Tanizaki Junichirō	Tanizaki	Tanizaki Junichirō
Makoto Ueda	Ueda	Ueda, Makoto

*With a cross-reference: Rihaku, see Li Po.

**With a cross-reference: Matsuo Bashō, see Bashō.

In the West given names usually precede family names, but family names are given first in indexes, followed by a comma. In Asia, however, family names usually appear first. Thus, in the

first four examples Blyth, Li, Matsuo, and Tanizaki are family names. In the West we usually use an author's family name for repeated reference, while in Japan those who write in traditional genres, such as most of those discussed in this book, are known almost exclusively by their personal names, which usually are pen names. Chinese names, such as Li Po, are so short that they are not generally abbreviated. To further confuse things, Japanese usually refer to classical Chinese poets by the Japanese pronunciations for the characters in their names, making one word out of family and personal names. Thus, Li Po becomes Rihaku.

The fourth and fifth examples represent modern developments. The novelist Tanizaki has become so well known here that his name often appears Western style, given name first. And writers of modern literature (i.e., in other than traditional genres) are usually called by their family names in both Western and Japanese texts. I retain the traditional Japanese order for these names. But I give the names of Japanese living in the West or writing in Western languages in the order they appear in on their own works, given names first, as in Makoto Ueda.

Japanese poets writing in traditional genres appear in the index under their pen names; a cross-reference will be found at their family names. In all other cases, the first name shown in the index is the family name, with a comma indicating a Western, or Westernized, full name.

Contents

A Note on the Translations and Some Words of Thanks	v
A Note on Japanese Pronunciations and Names	ix

Part One HAIKU OLD AND NEW

1 Why Haiku?	3
2 The Four Great Masters of Japanese Haiku	7
3 Modern Japanese Haiku	25
4 Early Haiku in the West	49
5 The Haiku Movement in English	63
6 Haiku Around the World	77

Part Two THE ART OF HAIKU

7 Nature and Haiku	87
8 The Form of Haiku	97
9 The Craft of Haiku	115
10 Sharing Haiku	139

Part Three TEACHING HAIKU

11	Haiku for Kids	151
12	A Lesson Plan That Works, by Penny Harter	165

Part Four BEFORE AND BEYOND HAIKU

13	Before Haiku	181
14	Haiku Prose	209
15	Beyond Haiku	223
16	The Uses of Haiku	243

REFERENCE SECTION

Season-Word List and Index	263
Glossary	287
Resources	296
Credits and Acknowledgments	314
General Index	325

Part One

HAIKU
OLD AND NEW



1

Why Haiku?

HAIKU HAPPEN

We often see or sense something that gives us a bit of a lift, or a moment's pure sadness. Perhaps it is the funnies flapping in the breeze before a newsstand on a sunny spring day. Or some scent on the wind catches us as we step from the bus, or bend to lift the groceries from the car. Something tickles our ankle and, looking down to see what it is, we see more:

a baby crab
climbs up my leg—
such clear water

Or we are lying awake, alone with our thoughts, and as we turn to look at the clock

at midnight
a distant door
pulled shut

and we find ourselves more alone, because of the being on the other side of that door, than when we had no thoughts for others anywhere in the world.

The first of these two short poems was written about three hundred years ago by the Japanese poet Matsuo Bashō. The second is by a twentieth century Japanese poet, Ozaki Hōsai. Both poems are haiku.

Moments that can give rise to haiku are not foreign to the Americas. Mark Cramer has translated the following poem, originally written in Spanish by the Mexican poet José Juan Tablada a few years before Hōsai wrote "at midnight":

Tender willow
almost gold, almost amber,
almost light . . .

And just recently New Jerseyan Penny Harter found

the old doll
her mama box broken
to half a cry

Haiku happen all the time, wherever there are people who are "in touch" with the world of their senses, and with their own feeling response to it.

WHAT HAIKU ARE FOR

The other day as my wife and I were going over the checkbook in the dining room one of our daughters, in the west-facing living room, called us to come look at the sky. She saw how the clouds' ragged edges took light from the sun, intensifying both the dark gray of the main body of the clouds and the pale blue of the late autumn sky. She was touched by the lovely picture it all made. She felt that we should see the sky for ourselves, should share directly the experience that triggered her feelings. So she called us.

As we looked at the sky, we saw what she saw. And at the

same time we thought back to other skies we had known. I felt the mixed feelings of time passing, the loss of the heat of summer and the beginning of the rush toward the winter holidays and the New Year. My wife spoke of the deeper colors that would come later, with the reddening of the sunset. As the three of us looked at the sky, almost wordlessly, we felt a sharing that goes far deeper than the words I have just used to describe the event can ever penetrate.

This is the main lesson of haiku. When we compose a haiku we are saying, "It is hard to tell you how I am feeling. Perhaps if I share with you the event that made me aware of these feelings, you will have similar feelings of your own." Is this not one of the best ways to share feelings? When we want to "reach" another person with our feelings, do we just say "I feel sad"? Or "I'm happy"? Unless we tell them *what* it is that makes us feel sad or happy, how can they share our feelings? In fact, we automatically ask this very question when friends say they feel happiness or sadness, pain or joy: "What is it? What's the matter?" Or "What put that smile on your face?"

Haiku is the answer to this "what?"

We know that we cannot share our feelings with others unless we share the causes of those feelings with them. Also, we know that sharing the causes for joy and sadness builds a sense of community among our families, friends, co-workers, and organizations. Stating the feelings alone builds walls; stating the causes of the feelings builds paths.

Most haiku present dramatic moments the authors found in common, everyday occurrences—small dramas that play in our minds. If we but see, but taste, as in these two haiku by Virginia Brady Young and Robert Spiess, respectively:

On the first day of spring,
snow falling
from one bough to another

Snowing . . .
the dentist
polishes my teeth

Haiku work, as we read them, by giving us a moment to look at some thing, some event, and see it more clearly than we have perhaps seen it before. The author had to stop to take note of this object, this event, and to write it down. If we take the time to read the poem, perhaps we will find ourselves

pausing
halfway up the stair—
white chrysanthemums

with Elizabeth Searle Lamb, or

not seeing
the room is white
until that red apple

with Anita Virgil. Of course, we cannot see the same chrysanthemums that stopped Lamb on the stairs, or know just what sort of apple turned Virgil's room white. But the next time we encounter chrysanthemums perhaps we will look at them more closely, become a sort of Georgia O'Keeffe of chrysanthemums. And Virgil's white room almost makes us instinctively look up at the walls of the room we are in now, reading this.

Haiku not only give us moments from the writer's experience, but go on to give us moments of our own. The central act of haiku is letting an object or event touch us, and then sharing it with another. If we are the writer, we share it with the reader. If we read a haiku, we share that moment, or one like it, with the writer.

Being small, haiku lend themselves especially to sharing small, intimate things. By recognizing the intimate things that touch us we come to know and appreciate ourselves and our world more. By sharing these things with others we let them into our lives in a very special, personal way.

2

The Four Great Masters of Japanese Haiku

MATSUO BASHŌ

Haiku begins in the great age of *renga*, a type of poetry enjoyed by many kinds of people in seventeenth century Japan. Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694) was a master of the *renga*, and made his living traveling around the country, teaching people everywhere he went the art and craft of writing *renga*, or linked poems. (See Chapter 13, Before Haiku, for a description of *renga*.)

In Bashō's day *renga* belonged to everyone, and particularly to the middle class, the people who lived in the hustle and bustle of one or another town of varying size. Bashō was deeply influenced by the Chinese poets of the T'ang Dynasty (seventh to ninth centuries A.D.), particularly Tu Fu, Li Po, and Po Chū-i, who are called To Ho, Rihaku, and Hakurakuten, respectively, in Japanese and many Anglo-Japanese texts. Among Japanese influences, Bashō particularly admired the *tanka* (see Chapter 13) of a

Buddhist priest named Saigyō (1118–1190) and the renga of Iio Sōgi (1421–1502).

All of these poets wrote from an aesthetic of austerity. They often wrote about loneliness, or at least about being alone, usually with a touch of humor. For example:

Mid-Mountain Dialogue

you ask my purpose
 roosting in jade peaks
 smiling yet without reply
 heart at self ease
 peach blossoms running water
 sundown blazes away
 having another sky & earth
 not among humans

Li Po

<i>tō hito mo</i>	even visitors
<i>omoitaetaru</i>	have stopped thinking of
<i>yamazato no</i>	mountain village
<i>sabishisa nakuba</i>	loneliness without which
<i>sumiukaramashi</i>	living would be unpleasant

Saigyō

Saigyō's poem is ironic; he is a monk, striving to live "without attachments"—even to old, distant friends. It is easier for him to forget the world, to be "happy", without the pleasure of having visits from friends. At the same time, his poem jokes with the Chinese tradition, particularly prominent in the poetry of Li Po and his contemporaries, of writing poems as letters to far-away friends. Similarly, in the Chinese example Li Po seems to be making a serious statement about why he is living in the mountains. But he pokes fun at himself, first by describing himself as "roost-