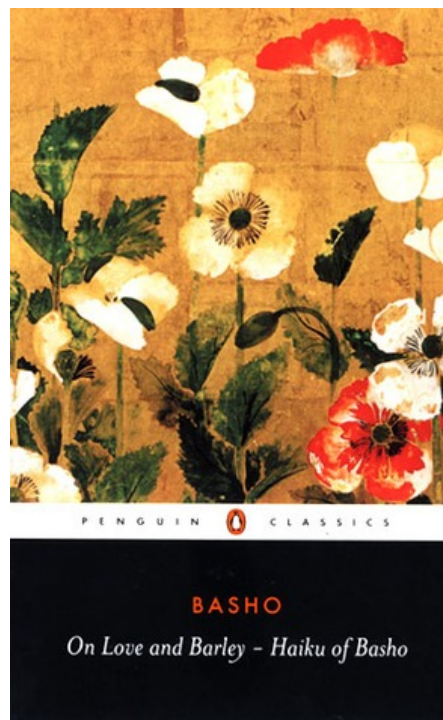




On Love and Barley: Haiku of Basho

Matsuo Basho? , Lucien Stryk (Translator)

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Basho, one of the greatest of Japanese poets and the master of haiku, was also a Buddhist monk and a life-long traveller. His poems combine 'karumi', or lightness of touch, with the Zen ideal of oneness with creation. Each poem evokes the natural world - the cherry blossom, the leaping frog, the summer moon or the winter snow - suggesting the smallness of human life in comparison to the vastness and drama of nature. Basho himself enjoyed solitude and a life free from possessions, and his haiku are the work of an observant eye and a meditative mind, uncluttered by materialism and alive to the beauty of the world around him.

On Love and Barley: Haiku of Basho Details

Date : Published 1985 by Penguin

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Author : Matsuo Basho? , Lucien Stryk (Translator)

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From Reader Review On Love and Barley: Haiku of Basho for online ebook

Chris says

I just picked this up from a display shelf in my library. It was a little after National Poetry Day and I needed to read one for Read Harder anyway. Yet I had not been a fan of the Haiku before, studying it in school it seemed like a restrictive and poorly defined mode of expression. This, however, totally changed my views. What Basho does here in short beautiful phrases, sums up life, nature and love. Sometimes funny, sometimes sad, sometimes meditative, all with a brilliant sense of brevity.

Laura says

A few of my favorites from this collection:

Spring night,
cherry-
blossom dawn.

~~~

Mountain path--  
sun rising  
through plum scent.

~~~

Sleeping willow --
soul of
the nightingale.

~~~

Yellow rose petals  
thunder --  
a waterfall.

~~~

Wake butterfly--
it's late, we've miles
to go together.

~~~

Has it returned,  
the snow  
we viewed together?

~~~

Summer grasses,
all that remains
of soldiers' dreams.

J. Watson (aka umberto) says

3.50 stars

I read this cute paperback with partial understanding as a sequel of my reading Basho's "The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches" (Penguin, 1966). My query is on its title itself since I could recall vaguely that 'love' might have been indirectly mentioned in some of those 253 haikus but how about 'barley', I'm not sure if it has been included anywhere so I would reread to verify the matter soon. Reading haiku is not always readily understandable but we sometime can find it inexplicably tough, that is, we simply don't know what it all means as we can see from the following three extracts as examples:

1

In my new robe
this morning -
someone else.

2

Fields, mountains
of Hubaku, in
nine days - spring.

3

Year by year,
the monkey's mask
reveals the monkey. (p. 25)

Now compare with these three randomly selected according to my view since each of them has given us some glimpses of light:

17

Sparrows in eaves,
mice in ceiling -
celestial music. (p. 27)

63

Winter downpour -
even the monkey
needs a raincoat. (p. 39)

88

Cuckoo -
sing, fly, sing,
then start again. (p. 43)

Gradually, we can see it's all right to achieve more and better understanding on a particular haiku, as for those obscure ones just leave them at that because we need to find ways to get ourselves well-equipped with more information and hopefully practical strategies. One of the reasons is that we simply can't fully understand like those who have studied for years and known Japanese; we are in the different track as English (not Japanese) readers interested in haiku. Therefore, its foundation involving Basho's life as well as haiku's mysterious nature is essential. For instance, a mystery is concerned with Zen since Basho has famously been acclaimed as a Zen itinerant who liked traveling alone and sometime with some accompanying friends; the information on him and others written on the topic "Zen and Haiku" in Daisetz T. Suzuki's *Zen and Japanese Culture* (Tuttle, 1988) should fulfill our haiku interest and background knowledge.

To continue . . .

Anima says

101

"Autumn winds –
look, the chestnut
never more green."

118

'Nothing more lonely –
heart-shaped
paulownia leaf.'

121

"Birth of art –
song of rice planters,
chorus from nowhere"

129

"Come, see real
flowers
of this painful world"

190

'Autumn eve – please
turn to me.
I, too, am stranger.'

Eris says

"Learn about a pine tree from a pine tree, and about a bamboo stalk from a bamboo stalk." Detaching mind from self and entering into an object (or experience, or partner, or child) and "sharing its delicate life and its feelings" is the Zennist (and generally Eastern) way of writing, of experiencing, of marriage, of parenting. The result is so simple it's mind-blowing-- a perception of life and its infinite beautiful agonies all connected and mirroring each other, like the facets of a crystal. How amazing that such a small poem (a mere taste, a whiff of scent, a pinprick) possesses the ability to tear a trained Western mind from the grand illusion--the Greatest Hoax of all!-- of isolation and separateness in nature and in life...

" Summer moon--
clapping hands,
I herald dawn. "

(Clap clap. Look around. You made this.)

Jan-Maat says

Collection of Basho poems, the title taken from one about a cat who had grown either sick or thin (I don't

recall which) *on love and barley*. I missed the framework of the journey that there is in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* and *Other Travel Sketches*. The selection ends with what is said to be Basho's death bed poem:

tabi ni yande / yume wa kareno wo / kake meguru

falling sick on a journey / my dream goes wandering / over a field of dried grass [1694]

still beautiful and softly moving.

Yasmin says

Beautiful! Basho reintroduces me to haiku, I have missed it and need it. Thank you Basho 370 years later.
Basho writes cool and
Beautifully as his tree
Keeps the shade.

It may not be very well done, but there it is. I haven't written my own haiku in ages. I am rusty.

Taymara Jagmohan says

Perfect
In its light
Which challenges
A dark soul.

I loved the essence of these poems, not only for their lightness, but for their remarkable depths and significances. Why do we live never realizing what's the art around? I miss mine sometimes, but I never accept the fact that I overindulge. Do I even? I think not. Poems are entertaining, and creative. On *Love and Barley* I ate the whip of a mixed emotion.

This Haiku will stay with me, if not for a few months; a few weeks:

"wake butterfly- it's late, we've miles to go together."

Who is my butterfly? What is it?

Perfection in its midst. Matsuo Basho, you're lovely.

Yours truly and ever blossoming,
Taymara. :)

Anna K?avi?a says

?????????????
????????????????
????????????????????

Kareeda ni
Karasu no tomarikeri
Aki no kure

#1 trans
On a bare branch
A crow is perched -
Autumn evening

#2
On the dead limb
squats a crow -
autumn night *

#3
On a bare branch
a crow has alighted
autumn evening.

#4
A crow
has settled on a bare branch
Autumn evening

#5
On a withered branch,
A crow has stopped
Autumn's eve

#6
A lone crow
sits on a dead branch
this autumn eve

* My copy ISBN13: 9780140444599 has this second translation.

Rhian Pritchard says

Haiku, like all poetry, strike home with some people and mean nothing to others. There were a few gems in this book, but mostly Basho's observations of nature passed me by. I enjoy the form of Haiku and admire his ability to write, but I'm not really interested in reading much more.

Bishop says

Abuzz with haiku, I arrive at my office. I face the tree canopy of a Chinese elderberry outside my window. Past is the cry that stabbed my darkness. Cloud-waves break across their ocean. Transfigured, I observe berries awaiting new color with each season. Little visitors flock to its boughs to glut on its berries and bugs. I reach for Basho, whom I keep in my office in the hope that he might yield me a daily seed of wonder. I enter the Elderberry's orbit of birds and butterflies and float nectar-drunk across his haiku-flowers. Glutted, I will again meet this poet-priest-beggar-saint, and with him roam the roads in spring. I regret returning to work. But man (and cat) cannot live on Love and Barley.

The title of this collection comes from #152

*Girl, cat, so
thin on love
and barley.*

I can't help but think of Sting's "Fields of Gold"
*You'll remember me when the west wind moves
Upon the fields of barley
You'll forget the sun in his jealous sky
As we walk in fields of gold*

Penguin Says:(view spoiler)

My Favorite Haikus and images Condensed not spoiled(view spoiler)

Quick Introduction to the Life of Basho by TranslatorCondensed (view spoiler)

Al Bità says

Another wonderful Penguin Classic, this one dealing exclusively with Haiku from the master Matsuo Bashō. The Introduction and translation is by Lucien Stryk. The Introduction deals specifically with the art of haiku and its links with Zen Buddhism, and with how Bashō wanted his haiku to evoke the Zen qualities of lightness yet profoundness that is very difficult to achieve yet appears to be effortless. He wants to make his readers transcend the minutely observed details of a natural world, and to reveal something transcendent — all within the confines of three lines and seventeen syllables...

Haiku 250 speaks for me as a way in which one can interpret this spare yet resonant poetry:

*Dew drops —
how better wash away
world's dust?*

In a sense, then, these haiku can be seen as a collection of dew-drops which can clean up the world for us...

The trick, it seems to me, is to provide just enough information as to engage the mind of the reader and coax it into a co-creation with the author. When that happens, then indeed mere externals are transcended, and the real “poetry” becomes alive and vibrant. The images live on in the reader’s mind because the reader has been cajoled into being a kind of co-conspirator with the author. The mind is trapped within the sparseness of the lines, and yet feels the immense and infinite liberation of the personal creative imagination let loose...

Associated with this is the “problem” of translation. Here Stryk has cleverly managed to render every one of these haiku into three lines; but the seventeen syllables of the traditional Japanese form is probably impossible to achieve in English. Some might find this resulting in a kind of stilted style which doesn’t flow all that easily. My suggestion (apart from reading up on what the haiku poets attempt to do) is to try to write your own version, but still limiting yourself to the simple details presented. Sometimes you might be successful; but I would venture to suggest that in most cases a “better” rendition will not readily come to mind. What this process does make you do is meditate on the specific images, and if you are lucky, you might end up with several versions. Or you might end up with accepting the provided translation. Doing this, however, will have engaged your mind with the creation of poetry (albeit in a rather coarse way) and it will illustrate what I was trying to say when I was talking about co-creation above...

Another warning for the impatient reader: the shortness and “simplicity” of these poems might tempt you to read them quickly. This is compounded by the fact that this edition regularly places six of them on each page. There are 253 haiku in this collection, each one of which deserves individual attention. Some of these might require special digging, but most will be both readily accessible and yielding of their secrets. That way, may you be as happy as the bee in haiku 246, another of my very favourite pieces:

*From the heart
of the sweet peony,
a drunken bee.*

Dayla says

Basho (1644 - 1694) was a Zen Buddhist monk, best known as one of Japan's most prolific haiku poetry writers. Basho was also known for combining the ideals of "karumi"--lightness of touch and oneness with nature. He spent much of his life traveling and his beautiful compositions are inspired. Basho continually searches for the purest possible form.

From this book, I decided to copy Basho, who wrote on his deathbed the exact words I would like to be my last words on this earth:

Sick on a journey
Over parched fields
Dreams wander on

Feel free to use it too. Cheers!

Tisha says

Haiku was unknown to me until I read the Spring Moon and I simply fell for this particular form of poetry. So I wanted to read some more and found this classic haiku book by *Matsuo Basho*?. Although it's been translated from the original Japanese version and I was quite unsure that it would be able to convey the authentic essence of Basho's writing, it hasn't disappointed me.

Matsuo Basho?, originally known as *Matsuo Kinsaku* was the first great haiku poet. He was a wanderer, a lover of nature and solitude. His journey was more like a spiritual one and it helped him to understand the beauty of life. And this worked as the driving force for him to come up with these beautiful haikus. His works were focused on the beauty of nature as well as it highlighted the serenity that lies within solitude.

*"Spring night,
cherry-
blossom dawn."*

.....

*"Autumn winds --
look, the chestnut
never more green."*

.....

*"Sleeping willow --
soul of
the nightingale."*

.....

"On a leafless branch

*A crow comes to rest –
Autumn nightfall"*

Aren't these beautiful?

The book is divided into four chapters- Introduction, Acknowledgement, The Haiku, Notes.

The introduction and acknowledgment cover the analysis of the early life of Basho as well as his works. After that comes The Haiku and then Notes. There are some terms, some references used here which are quite common in Japanese culture but can be unfamiliar to others. So, The Notes part is smartly designed to help the readers who are foreign to these Japanese basics.

Overall it's a beautiful book with some soothing and thought-provoking haikus. I liked it!

Yana says

*2.5

*Sleeping willow –
soul of
the nightingale.*

—

I'm going to admit it, here and now, that I only read this for a challenge and that may or may not have affected my rating. *Okay*, it affected everything a whole lot. And by that, I mean like my eyelids were downright *forced* open with toothpicks so I had to read the book. So, uh, on with the review...

I've said it before and I'll say it again: poetry, especially ones like haiku, need the readers' participation, otherwise, it'll seem meaningless. I was bordering very close on the meaningless side. The fact that these were translations may have made it less poignant, because there's just something beautiful about words in their own unfiltered language. I just really didn't connect with the haikus at all, save maybe for a select few.

*If I'd the knack
I'd sing like
cherry flakes falling.*

What I *did* considerably enjoy was how the poems took me places just with the simplest of words. Matsuo Basho was a poet and a traveller, and you can see that really reflecting on his work. It felt like I was there on his travels, to Asakusa, Kiso, Futami, Yoshino, and to all the other places he's written about. It was very descriptive, the words painted the picture clearly and precisely.

*Mountain path –
sun rising
through plum scent.*

And on a less positive vibe...

*Faceless – bones
scattered in the field,
wind cuts my flesh.*

Throughout, the book had a zen perspective that I hadn't really expected to understand, but did. I was genuinely awed at how much zen had affected Basho's writing and his general outlook on life. It made me feel more connected with nature and the art of its philosophy. I'd be lying if I said it wasn't hard to understand, but that's what made it so much more interesting.

*On a leafless branch
A crow comes to rest –
Autumn nightfall*

What I *didn't* like was that most of the haikus were repetitive. They almost always are with poetry, but this was a little too much. It sounded like he was using synonyms to make the piece before a little different than

the next. One actually repeated itself, and I know that was on the publisher, but I was still dismayed. During the first quarter of the book, although informational, I had absolutely no idea what was happening. The writing style was something I wasn't fond of, either (understandable though, considering this writing was from *years* ago; the amount of dashes were too much for me). My main reason for this 2-it-wasn't-bad-stars was that I just really didn't connect with most of the haiku. Period.

*Sick on a journey –
over parched fields
dreams wander on*
