

# **The Tree As It Is**



Bernard Lionel Einbond

## **The Tree As It Is**

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A Soffietto Edition

Some of the poems in this collection  
first appeared in the following publications:

*Modern Haiku; Frogpond; Mainichi  
Daily News; Timepieces: Haiku  
Week-at-a-Glance 1994; Haiku  
Moment (1993); Iga-Ueno Basho  
Festival Anthology (1993); An  
Anthology of Haiku by People of the  
United States and Canada (1988).*



## **Bernard Lionel Einbond: An Appreciation**

“Sadly, I part from you;  
Like a clam torn from its shell,  
I go, and autumn too.

He would have liked it to be brief, the appreciation. Bernard was a “maker,” in the true sense that poets are makers. As Robert Frost said, poets get their knowledge “cavalierly,” they “let what will stick to them like burrs where they walk in the fields.” The haiku was a form natural to Bernard, with his keen perception and delicate insight. It was also natural to him because of its brevity, its ability to say much succinctly, just as he did in conversation.

In the trim structural space of the haiku, he was innovative, playing on Basho’s famous poem of the frog and the old pond, turning it into something fresh and unique, as well as paying a tribute. And he was original, using his knowledge of musical composition and refrain to do new and exciting things with the English haiku. One clear example is the recurring refrain in haiku 5, 44, and 61 of his daughter’s “plain brown hair in morning sunshine,” all three poems similar yet

slightly different. This ability to blend an imagist sensibility with variation in a minimalist pattern sets him apart. And there is always the call to tradition, not only to his direct forebears, as in the translations and in haiku 21, “the tree as it is,” but to other artists as well.

But I have already said too much. I can almost see Bernard smiling at my “scholarly” attempt to capture the essence of his genius. No paraphrase or explication does it justice. The best thing is to enjoy the poems for what they are, “the tree as it is.”

—George Braman  
*January 1999*  
*New York City*



in memory of

**Anna Einbund Feldman** (1891- 1876)  
and **Joseph Feldman** (1891- 1990)

aunt and uncle of the author  
and of American composer

**Morton Feldman** (1926- 1987)



# **The Tree As It Is**





**silences**



frog pond—  
a leaf falls in  
without a sound

silence  
of the leaves's shadows  
even in wind

still life—  
apples and pears  
as they appear



high straight sky  
between twin towers—  
day receding

the same tonight  
eyes open or closed—  
so dark

first drops  
on parched earth—  
rain

rain forest—  
only the shadows  
move silently

wings  
in fog

lifting



the thousand colors  
in her plain brown hair—  
morning sunshine

from a budding branch,  
a lark arises—  
spring dawn

Pittsburgh—  
the green of the rivers,  
the green of the hills



for miles and miles  
and miles the sameness of  
fields of dry grass

how noisy  
it must be up close—  
the sun

twin high towers  
against straight sky—  
night advancing

still roving  
over parched fields—  
wanderers' dreams

by the casket,  
no words—  
two silences



the silence between  
the lightning and the thunder—  
everything waits



**centuries**  
**ago**



in the early mist  
visiting Asakusa  
centuries ago

at Asakusa  
a centuries- old stall where  
we chose one small doll

Haruno tells me  
as she serves me a sliced pear  
her name means spring field



at Asakusa  
the view from the temple steps—  
snow falling in June

over a barren branch,  
a clock drooping—  
memory persists

Broadway in the forties—  
knowing I was seeing things  
a child should not see

in the New York rain,  
the pavement darkens its grey—  
yellow taxicabs

after the rainfall,  
following an ice-cream stick  
in the gutter stream



Coney Island—  
the boardwalk and the ocean  
as they were

bootprints in fresh snow—  
a young boy looking backward  
at where he has been

long corridors  
of the school I attended  
still haunting my dreams



far away summer—  
at my bedtime still daylight—  
wanting to go home

hands to his ears—  
covering, uncovering—  
noise of the subway

old master portrait—  
whichever way I go  
its eyes follow me

in the museum,  
this three- thousand- year- old comb,  
so clearly a comb

waiting for the end—  
in the stationmaster's hut  
at Astapovo



leaves frayed on its boughs—  
not for fruit or for blossom—  
the tree as it is



**translations**



# **Twelve Haiku**

adapted from the Japanese of

**Matsuo Basho (1644-1694)**



cooling, so cooling  
with a wall against my feet,  
midday sleep—behold

*hiyahiya to kabe wo fumaete hirune kana*

no one viewing  
this spring: the back of the mirror's  
plum blossoms

*hito mo minu haru ya kagami no ura no ume*

shortly to die—  
revealing no sign of it  
the cicada's cry

*yagate shinu keshiki wa miezu semi no koe*

no bells ringing  
how does this village greet  
spring dusk?

*kane tsukanu sato wa nani wo ka haru no kure*

first snow:  
daffodil leaves  
just tipping

*hatsuyuki ya suisen no ha no tawamu made*

first winter showers—  
monkey, too, for a small straw coat  
must be yearning

*hatsushigure saru mo komino wo hoshigenari*

the moon clear—  
a fox startles a boy  
I accompany

*tsuki sumu ya kitsune kowagaru chigo no tomo*

on my travels, stricken—  
my dreams over the barren earth  
go on roving

*tabi ni yande yume wa kareno wo kake meguru*

an old pond—  
a frog tumbles in—  
the water's sound

*furuike ya kawazu tobikomu mizu no oto*

the summer grasses:  
of mighty war-lord's visions  
all that they have left

*natsugusa ya tsuwamono domo ga yume no ato*

clouds now and again  
give a soul some respite from  
moon-gazing—behold

*kumo ori-ori hito ni yasumuru tsukimi kana*

refinement's origin:  
the remote north country's  
rice-planting song

*furyu no hajime ya oku no taue uta*

**changing  
direction**



another season—  
pausing at a halfway house—  
changing direction

dream interrupted—  
trying to recapture it—  
unsuccessfully

in mid-November,  
a day that has strayed here from  
another season



the village children  
ask if they may feel again  
the soles of my feet

empty soda cans—  
of the storm in the desert  
all that they have left

the locomotive  
of the train I am riding  
as it makes a turn

home from a business trip  
everything as it was  
except the children

walks down to the sea  
and with a sudden movement  
bends to wet her wrists

morning sunshine—  
in her plain brown hair  
a thousand colors



subway car—  
choosing the seat too small for  
someone to have slept on

still recognizing  
a classmate from high school who  
certainly has changed

he hears her complaint  
with politeness—but I catch  
his mischievous glance



improper to ask  
how he acquired the scar  
half across his neck

as I step outdoors  
the brightness of the daytime  
causes me to sneeze

a campus squirrel  
nibbling a peppermint patty  
with practiced ease

the curtains drawn closed  
a sliver of light admits  
a bit of Monday



on the wet sidewalk  
a fallen brown leaf regains  
a green shape



**seeking  
the  
moment**



seeking the moment—  
knowing it must come to me—  
much time spent waiting

my favorite name—  
my mother's, now my daughter's—  
Julia

in the gutter where  
a truck leaked oil, the children  
find rainbows



its edges curled up  
a leaf falls to the water  
circling as it floats

as the train pulls out  
a child flattening her nose  
against the window

tossing from the deck  
crumbs to be caught  
by gulls in mid-air

there in the distance  
the Statue of Liberty—  
on deck my eyes moist

my dreams run about—  
getting up to capture them  
with pad and pencil



blue water—  
each drop of it  
colorless

the old violin  
even when not being played  
a thing of beauty

this doll from Kyoto  
my daughter—my son, too—loves  
its delicacy



giggling in the dark—  
three sisters in one bedroom—  
close all their lives

a movie seen last  
when I was five—never since  
remembering it

first meeting of class  
matching the names with faces—  
each face different

anniversary—  
over Strawberry Fields,  
a kaleidoscope of stars

people here as one—  
thenews of John Lennon's death—  
above us only sky



the thousand colors  
of my daughter's plain brown hair  
in morning sunshine



## notes

*In the early mist* (p. xx)

Asakusa has been a shopping district of Tokyo for over three hundred years.

*At Asakusa* (p. xx)

In the famous print by Hiroshige of the view from the temple steps, it is snowing.

*Over a barren branch* (p. xx)

After Dali's painting "The Persistence of Memory."

*Waiting for the end* (p. xx)

Tolstoy died in the stationmaster's hut at Astapova.

*Leaves frayed on its boughs* (p. xx)

The tree from which Basho took his name bears no fruit.

"A day that has strayed here [from] another season," (p. xx)

Marcel Proust, *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*.

"Above us only sky." (p. xx)

"Imagine," John Lennon

*First drafts for this book written spring, 1997 were misplaced. The author's wife and children have added seven haiku from these manuscripts to "Seeking the Moment."*



## colophon

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