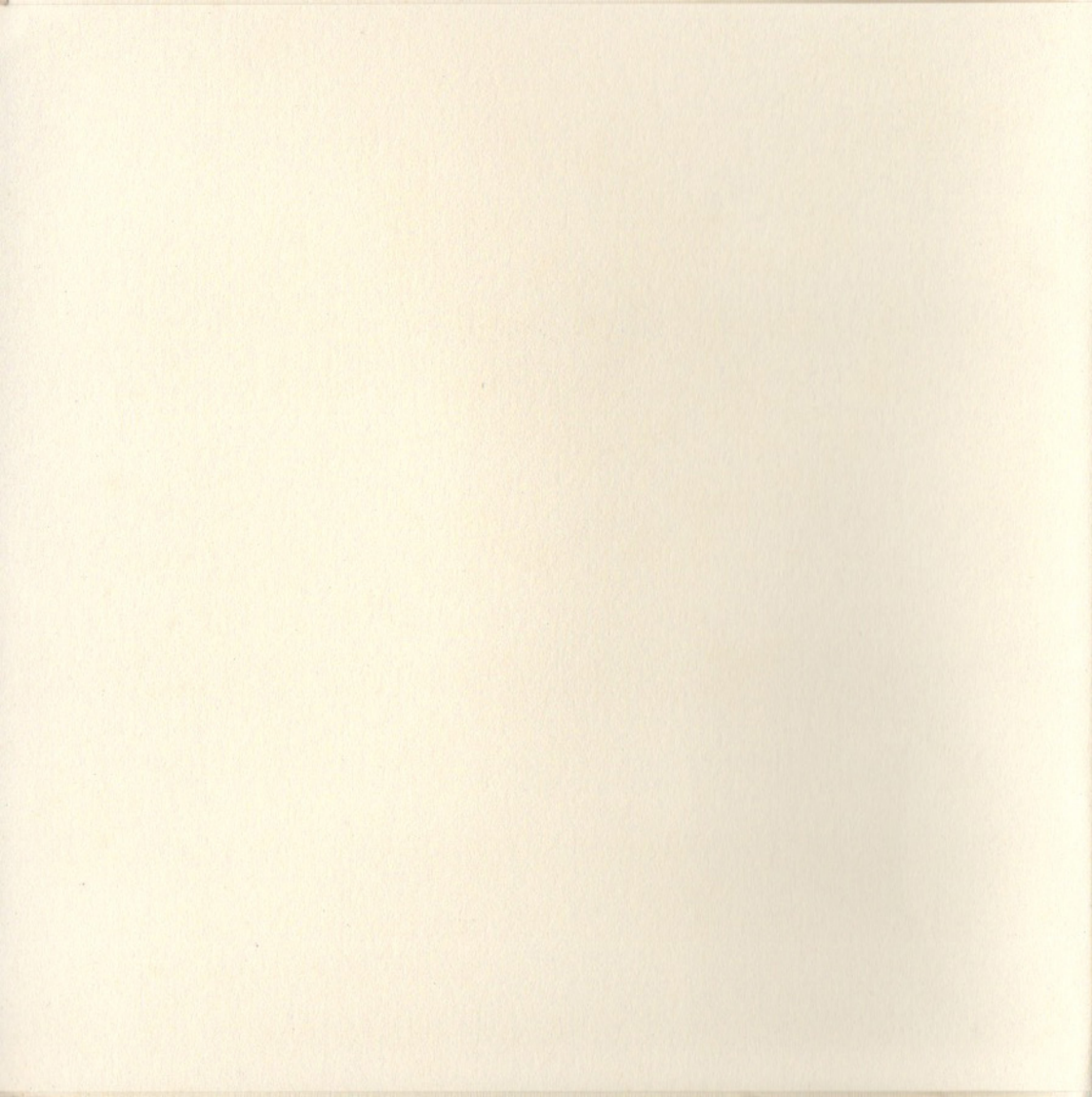


The Broken Iris

haiku / senryu

by

TOM SMITH



The Broken Iris

JOHN B. HARRIS
VOLUME 10, NUMBER 1, 1981

Other volumes by Tom Smith
SINGING THE MIDDLE AGES

TRAFFIC

SOME TRAFFIC, a chapbook

1976 New Books Award
Beyond Baroque
Foundation

11-17-81
Jim
PEACE & THANKSGIVING!
Tom Smith

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haiku / senryu

by

TOM SMITH

PERSEPHONE PRESS

Whispering Pines, North Carolina

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For Virginia

Introduction

Haiku strike me as “still shots” of the transient, clear lenses through which we view life’s ephemeral strands come together in one momentary vision of connection. Haiku are as brief and fleeting as what first set the web’s joined threads trembling – and as potent. Verbal miniatures, these small poems freeze an instant of conjoined time and place, matter and feeling, to set it in motion again with the reader. Economical in word and space, pared to the very core of experience, haiku glimmer on the page, clean as dew. Yet they evoke the world; their simple chords reverberate with cosmic mysteries.

The skilled writer of haiku is a master conjurer, one who crafts from the scraps of physical matter and the twigs of language – a few fragmentary images, a mere three lines of words – and by such craft reveals the power of the mundane. This is art, old magic that, in recreating the moment, sets us seeing and feeling and wondering anew.

Tom Smith is such a conjurer; *The Broken Iris* such a meshed, magical web. A member of the Haiku Society of America

and the North Carolina Haiku Society, Tom Smith has been publishing haiku since 1979, especially in *Dragonfly* (with encouragement and direction from Lorraine Ellis Harr) and *Wind Chimes* (with similar encouragement and direction from Hal Roth). *The Broken Iris*, his first published collection of haiku, is a seasonal album of those still shots, frozen moments in which the little subject shimmers with large presences. From shadows of the water spider and the mushroom's silence, to a fender-crawling ladybug and orange peelings in the snow, here are the bits of matter which litter, color and define the landscape of one's life, bits we all too often fail to see or weave together. My thanks, then, to Tom Smith, for his craft, his sight and insight, these slivered images that shiver me; for *The Broken Iris*, as pure an experience of art and life as one could wish.

—Joyce Thomas, poet and author of *Inside the Wolf's Belly: Aspects of the Fairy Tale* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), Professor of Literature, Castleton State College, Castleton, VT.

The Broken Iris

blind road
a white horse
in the blizzard

new year's sun
finds one sparrow
on the white pine bough

Twelfth Night
fishermen on the ice
by moonlight

no moon no stars
light from a neighbor's window
snow on the pine bough

last night's rain
silvers this morning's pines
no birds

children board
the yellow bus leaves
orange peelings in the snow

last month
benjamin in earmuffs
today the pussy willow

april rain
weaves down the mountainside
I stand at the mailbox

morning dove calls
from the russian olive
we wake to rainfall

a gust
of bluejays through the pines
last evening's rain

at my feet
shattered robin's egg
cracked pavement

the white kite caught
in the budding maple
another mayday

full moon
and evening star
the bullfrog

hummingbird
in the flowering crab
cold sunlight

at graduation
I stand in a sudden shower
of apple blossoms

a red bird breaks
from the hedgerow the sun
from the clouds

crawling across the sky's
reflection in a fender
ladybug

columbine
garden snake sleeps
in the sun

if Ms Chafer
hadn't eaten my roses
I wouldn't know her name

I drive a nail
into the weathered beam
hurry, centipede

midsummer lightning
beneath the old apple tree
the mushroom ring

the full moon
rises from the sea
a boy's pierced ear

kittens
among the roadside
litter

where lightning
struck down the cottonwood
the dragonfly rests

rainfall
the broken
iris

seeking the haiku master
in the garden we find
the green mantis

swallowtail
comes to hear handel
hum of mowers

moonlit screen
so many insects want in
far rumble of cars

moth on the screen
moon in the sky on the lake
a knock at the door

eclipse of the moon
crackers and peanut butter
after midnight

sandhill road
a morning dove
rises with the dust

sagging house and barn
ragweed and hollyhock have taken
the rusting jalopy

I stand among ripe
tomatoes the hornet's nest
growing in the eaves

shadows
of the water spider
haunt the rocks

a clouded sulphur
sips the wild strawberry blossom
distant thunder

from the pine bough
water drips
a mushroom's silence

white jimsonweed
trumpets
the falling wall

leaves begin to turn
hopscotch ladders
chalked on blacktop

daddy longlegs
and leafshadow on the screen
first drops of rain

on the road
dead crow's blown wings
rowing

in cold rain
leapfrog crosses the highway
yellow line glistens

golden retriever
washes the cat's ears
drift of oak leaves

barn dance
in the cornfield
crickets

gnats swarm
the porch light a sky full
of stars

a cigarette
at midnight a mouse
in the fireplace

the wind
whispers across deep grasses
the cat yawns

the boys are gone now
still I rake a toy soldier
from among dead leaves

sudden breeze
in the pine tree shade
and the haiku's made

the monarch
on the stone wall frozen
all souls' day

up at five
cold stove and
morning star

black branches
score the oyster sky
white sun

the turning world
the snowflake melting
on my sleeve

suddenly everything
is quite simple the black crow
lights on new snow

The Broken Iris

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This first edition consists of 500 copies, available from the author at Box 223, Castleton, Vermont 05735. Fifty copies are signed by the poet, with 26 copies lettered and 24 copies *hors de commerce*, numbered I to XXIV.

This is copy:

A handwritten signature consisting of a large, stylized capital letter 'A' followed by the name 'Tom Swartz' in a cursive script.

THE PROBLEM

The first problem is to determine the nature of the problem. It is a problem of the type which is often called a "problem of the first kind".

The second problem is to determine the nature of the problem. It is a problem of the type which is often called a "problem of the second kind".

The third problem is to determine the nature of the problem. It is a problem of the type which is often called a "problem of the third kind".

The fourth problem is to determine the nature of the problem. It is a problem of the type which is often called a "problem of the fourth kind".

THE SOLUTION

The solution is to determine the nature of the problem. It is a problem of the type which is often called a "problem of the first kind".

The solution is to determine the nature of the problem. It is a problem of the type which is often called a "problem of the second kind".

The Broken Iris

Tom Smith's heritage of an oral literature carried on the lips of his mother and his Irish grandfather enlightens these disarmingly simple, yet mysterious poems. Written in the Japanese tradition, which we of the West transpose into seventeen or fewer syllables and three rhythmic lines, these fifty haiku and lighter senryu cut across cultural boundaries. Yet they sing out of the same spirit, capturing the essence of our earth and of the East, expressing the oneness of us all confronted by nature.

Born in Schenectady, NY, Tom Smith has lived in Castleton, VT, since 1964. He is now Professor of English at Castleton State College, where he teaches Lyric Poetry, Poetry for Children, Nineteenth Century Children's Literature, Irony and Satire and Modern American Poetry. He and his actress-singer wife Virginia have two grown sons and occasionally perform in community and college events.

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