

Speculations

by Robert Speiss

Haiku in Low Places is delighted to offer the *Speculations* of Robert Spiess, the long-time editor of *Modern Haiku*. In a letter dated 7 July 1999, Mr. Spiess writes "Yes, you may quote my *Speculations*, but I believe it would be beneficial to mention that they are not to be construed as facts or 'haiku laws' but merely as one person's considerations about haiku that others can reject or [accept] as they see fit."

The entries below have been gleaned from back issues of *Modern Haiku*, numbered in chronological sequence. As it represents a significant body of wisdom and experience, it might take some time to gather a representative sample of an undertaking that has lasted for decades. The reader is asked to kindly be patient while this page remains under construction.

589

The realities with which haiku are concerned are not so much to be *com*prehended as *app*rehended.

596

The relation of the poet to a now-moment of awareness that will be the basis of a haiku should be like water pouring into water.

597

Haiku poets seem intuitively to realize that in nature's and the universe's economy nothing is wasted.

598

Haiku is expression informed by the universe's aesthetic continuum.

601

Haiku poets generally are in agreement with Thoreau when he remarked, "You must live in the present, launch yourself on any wave, find your eternity in each moment."

602

Perhaps one reason why nature always has been vital to haiku is that nature confirms the human self, not that the self confirms nature.

604

Haiku reanimate our diminishing power of intuition.

605

Western haiku cannot be something merely super-added to the traditional, classical Japanese haiku, for then it would be only peripheral in relation to the aesthetic attributes, and consequent effectiveness of genuine haiku. The qualities of classical Japanese haiku are the quintessential basis of all haiku.

608

A genuine haiku is the 'testament' of an aspect of the world process itself, apart from any intervention of human ego.

609

In a now-moment of awareness (the basis of most haiku) the event-experience is perceived, felt, comprehended and intuited as a whole, the parts only subsequently assuming their places within this whole.

612

A haiku is the 'physical' form that the essence, the spirit, of a now-moment may take.

618

Common sense is adequate for ordinary life, but uncommon sense is necessary

for the extraordinary life - and perhaps we may place the creation and appreciation of haiku as belonging with the extraordinary life.

619

Although nothing in haiku should be unrealistic, realism is of a relative nature in its function of assisting in transmission of the spirit of the event-experience portrayed by the haiku.

621

Poets, and perhaps haiku poets especially, should realize and perceive that there are physical feelings to and in words.

625

In haiku the act of receiving and expressing is the same - which, of course, does not mean that the completed haiku must have been written 'on the spot' with no revision of the immediate, first articulation of the even-experience. It simply signifies that the resultant haiku should manifest no differences, no caesura, between the now-moment experience and its creative expression.

626

A genuine haiku is transcendant immanence.

627

As human nature tends to be deflected from its original unity and simplicity by ego and its constrictive and seductive illusions, haiku are salutary in mitigating this tendency, and to bring our nature back to its original mode.

629

Genuine haiku have lustre, not brilliance.

630

Haiku poets discover the unknown within the familiar.

634

Haiku poets should be aware of the difference between mere sensation induced by a stimulus and an aesthetic experience of a now-moment of awareness.

637

In genuine haiku each thing, each event, is a surge of experience, that includes the actual universe in its purview.

638

A haiku is its own evidence.

640

Haiku moments of now-awareness are totally free, they are simply given to us with no questions asked. And from them we create aesthetic truth, and the creative principle is one of the foremost marvels in the universe.

641

Haiku poets may wish to consider the view of Philo (b. 20-10 B.C.E.) who, in effect, said that the now-moment is boundless and inexhaustible eternity.

Millenia, centuries, days, hours, are all intellectual concepts of persons who love to gauge everything by numbers. True eternity is the now-moment. And it is the now-moment from which haiku are created.

643

Although haiku are of necessity the crystallization of a split-second of the eternal flux and movement in the cosmos, they nonetheless are the poetry of transformation, for they intuit and present now-moments of the interplay between entities in their continual change.

646

Juxtaposition in haiku creates an energy field that balances the polarity of the juxtaposed entities.

647

Authentic haiku evoke in us manifestations of existence that thinking cannot determine.

648

As haiku poets we are capable of the highest, creative, intuition when we are free from the dichotomy of subject and object.

651

A haiku's coherence lies in its being aesthetic, not intellective.

653

The haiku poet does not need ego in order to be self-aware.

662

Generally the depth that genuine haiku have is not a depth created by force (as by emotion) but a depth created by suggestion, nuance, intuition, which are those of feeling.

663

A haiku is experience; its expression in words is not a declaration but an aesthetic exclamation.

664

A haiku is a small fish easily swallowing a large fish.

666

A true haiku poet does not perceive the world as a subject viewing various entities, but perceives by being *in* the world as part of its organic unity.

671

A seeming paradox: When haiku poets transcend their individual identity their haiku are marked by a special individuality.

672

This ancient saying is applicable to our creation of haiku: "Why look far away for what is close at hand?"

674

Haiku inform us, or perhaps more correctly, let us feel that creation is taking place at every moment.

713

A genuine haiku cannot be fully explained and needs no explanation.

714

Haiku is a matter of becoming aware of that which is perceived.

715

The best haiku are barefoot; next, the sandaled; and least, those with shoes.

716

Grasping a now-moment of awareness is like trying to grasp a handful of rushing water - and yet, this is what haiku is all about.

717

Haiku poets should be aware of the tyranny of the ego, for it clings to its obsession with being special.

718

"Perfection" in haiku, or as close to it as we flawed haiku poets can get, is achieved not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing else to be eliminated.

722

One's haiku should not result from idiosyncracies but from inner genuineness.

723

In haiku the words should be so exact that the reader forgets them and only the intuition remains.

725

These words of Blake's aptly apply to haiku: "To generalize is to be an Idiot. To particularize is the alone distinction of merit."

726

By forgetting one's ego, the haiku poet's true being is confirmed by all things.

727

Simile, metaphor, personification, anthropomorphism, seldom are necessary, especially in the best haiku, for a genuine haiku poet is aware that every entity has to be the way it is and could not possibly be any other way.

728

A true haiku is an experience experiencing itself.

730

Haiku exemplify the possibilities inherent in limitations.

731

In haiku it is always the same time: now; and it is always in the same place: here.

732

For haiku poets these words of Thoreau's [apply]: "...live in the present ...find your eternity in each moment."

733

Haiku are to be appreciated not by "knowing" but through understanding, for knowing (knowledge) comes about by reasoning, by the intellect, whereas understanding is a function of intuition.

734

One of the several intriguing qualities or aspects of haiku is paradox. Paradox in haiku results from the melding of, usually, two different entities. These different entities paradoxically unite while each still retains its own individuality.

735

Haiku is not in the business of trying to discover totally new things (that is the province of science) but in perceiving things in a totally new way (which is poetry).
