

What you say is what you are.

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An example: on a sunny day in late autumn you're walking on the dike along the Drongelen Canal near Drunen. The wind gusts over the water and makes the reed along the banks bend over and over again, without ever giving it a chance to straighten itself fully for even a moment. That's all.

You've got to admit, a thing like that can hardly be called an event, but still you remember that moment many months afterwards as something appreciable. And that's what you try to lay down in a haiku:

Before the reed
has straightend itself
it bends again.

Sometime later still, you weigh that this image might possibly be considered as a metaphor for one thing or another, even for 'life' itself, if you like. But you're no longer thinking that as the author of the poem, that's what you think as a reader, which is beside the question here.

That's the whole story and that story is as simple as clear, except for one thing: what renders a seemingly trifling observation so significant as to make you write a haiku about it?

In the end the answer to that question is quite simple. The point is that there is something to be observed and that there is something - an awareness - to make that observation and that the one without the other is nothing or even is not. To see the reed bend confirms your own existence and the being seen of the bending reed confirms the existence of the wind and the reed.

You create
what you observe.

What you observe
creates you.

That notion is often embedded in your haiku, even though it usually is not mentioned as such. Yet sometimes it is:

Just standing a while
and watching some clouds
and being with what is.

So a haiku describes, to affix a philosophical label to it, an existential experience. You are part of reality as much as reality is part of you and sometimes you witness that more emphatically than you normally do: in the call of a curlew, in a long forgotten memory, in light glistening in a drop, in a fleeting infatuation, in a sudden thought, in a vacuous longing, in the bending of reed. And however factual you put such an experience into words, however much you try to keep yourself as author

out of the picture you evoke, it's you who's framing the image, it's your experience in your words. Tat twam asi - thou art it:

What you say
is
what you are.

Many years afterwards. On a somewhat hazy day in July you're riding your bike over the dike along the Drongelen Canal in the neighbourhood of Cromvoirt. The reed, gently waving in a soft breeze, surprises you by carrying flowers.

The waving of
the tall reed, entwined by
flowering hedge-bells.

Oh yes, you're still around.

First published in october 1996 in the Dutch four-monthly magazine Korteids-halve, devoted to short poems. Slightly abridged and translated by the author.