
REVIEWED BY SUSAN ROWLAND

In Spring 71, the Orpheus edition, Robert Romanyshyn describes Orpheus as the kind of poet that Plato did not banish from the Polis. Descended from the shaman, Orpheus is the mythological figure in depth psychology who holds the tension between the heady beauty of Apollo and the bodily frenzy of Dionysus. His poetry is a painful process of anamnesis, a return from forgetting, and in his fateful decision to turn to look at Euridice, so losing her, is the choice that converts our fate into our vocation. As a figure for the mutuality of poetry and philosophy in the song of the soul, Orpheus needs to be liberated from the consulting room and into the world. The Healing Spirit of Haiku is one of his works.

A truly inspired book, The Healing Spirit of Haiku is a collection of poems and prose that work as a conversation between the authors

Susan Rowland is current Chair of the International Association for Jungian Studies and author of Jung as a Writer (Routledge, 2005). She is Reader in English and Jungian Studies at the University of Greenwich, UK, and has published two other books on Jung and gender and literary theory.
 Crucially both David Rosen and Joel Weishaus are longstanding friends and fellow poets whose involvement with haiku and Japanese culture has deep and sometimes very personal roots. For them, making haiku poetry is like Jungian active imagination in which an archetypal image blooms into a verse. Such psychic descent into the depths and return, choosing to look back in the conscious shaping that poetry also requires — such a process is an alchemy of the soul that mediates archetypal possession into the vocation of the poet. While not citing Orpheus, Rosen and Weishaus are Orphic poets of healing. For as Weishaus explains in the preface, healing originates in the notion of becoming whole and is shamanistic in its ethos. As poetry drawing on depths and wounds, "[c]ompounded of wholeness (healing) and emptiness (non-being/being), every haiku is a prescription for a larger life" (p. 5).

There are many paths into an-other world and one of the strengths of this book is its psychic journeys into other cultures. Where making the link to Jung may be important for western readers, the book begins in, and never strays from the richness of the cultural origin of haiku. Rosen explains that haiku evolved as a series of linked short poems as a sort of conversation between fellow poets and friends, the form of The Healing Spirit of Haiku itself. Generally considered to consist of seventeen syllables in a 5-7-5 sequence, haiku can vary in length while remaining attached to articulating something beyond ego consciousness. Significantly, the dialogue intrinsic to haiku is one that embraces nature. Often linked to one of the four seasons, haiku structures a healing relationship with nature and other people as a web in which the personal ego is displaced. Rosen describes traditional haiku as, “characterized by egolessness, aloneness, acceptance, universality, humor, silence, awakening, compassion and death” (p. 1). What is particularly remarkable about Rosen and Weishaus’s book, and gives it its potency for healing in the reader, is the delicate lightness of its dialogical quality between nature and human, the non-human in the human, between cultures (notably Japan, Italy, and the United States), between two longstanding friends, between these authors and their ghosts of parents, the deep encounters of family and beloveds, between dreams.
The seed of this potent form is in the book's origins in a series of synchronistic meetings in Japan and the US. It is important that Rosen first contemplated the book as a collaboration with a Japanese haiku poet, and that subsequently it evolved in dialogue with Weishaus as the two friends found their mutual pursuit of poetry turning round to pursue them into a joint project.

This review can go no further without mentioning the third in the book's creative relationships. Arthur Okamura's illustrations structure another stage in the alchemical work of transformation. Typically a chapter is announced by a thematic heading such as 'being alone' or 'setting birds free'. It consists of short sections of autobiographical prose by each writer accompanied by a haiku. Then comes the print with the text of one haiku attached. Such is the intensity of the collaboration that the dialogue of visual and verbal image seems to offer another instance of the transcendent function incarnating something out of a mystery. I think it is indicative that the image repeats the poems both by giving the text again and by its translation of it into another medium. There is a ritual quality to this structure, which encodes a repetition with transformation, even as it itself repeats throughout the book.

Of course as well as a tight circular form, The Healing Spirit of Haiku has an exploratory, outward going direction. The early chapters focus on the authors' immersion in Japanese culture, thereby performing a double function of introducing the reader to the philosophical resonance of haiku as they enter the work. With haiku a practice linked to the non-ego psyche, there is a huge cultural barrier between the western ego that has been built up by centuries of discursive strengthening and the basis of the Japanese mind. Weishaus points out that such long conditioning may constitute an insuperable barrier to the 'other' (p. 33).

Yet the recognition of something insoluble can itself be the stimulus to entering the mysteries of the psyche. To return to Orpheus for a moment, his visit to the underworld failed to entirely pierce the barrier, it failed to reverse the death of Euridice. On the other hand, Orpheus did visit another world and returned as the shaman, with the song of the earth. Likewise, David Rosen records a death of part of himself in Japan: "[b]eing alone also shows its dark side when part of my ego died" (p. 32). Such a loss does draw
him closer to the egoless goal of the haiku poet. Indeed the next few chapters record a kind of initiation for both men. In the following, ‘Learning to Bow,’ both reflect on the physical necessity for westerners to bow down to fit into Japanese houses. The mundane recognition is a bodily action that becomes a rite, once one recognizes the spiritual requirement to bow, to lower oneself before the mystery of the other.

In the very next chapter, ‘Wise Old Women,’ both men record the spiritual strengthening bestowed by friendship with women who could offer guidance, if only indirectly. After the encounter with the feminine guide comes a liberation of the spirit through ‘Walking in the Countryside’ that leads on to the important ‘Making Peace with One’s Father.’ Here the work of the soul reaches out to the blood ties of the kinship group and, particularly to how these are wrought raw by historical events. A note at the back of the book records that David’s Rosen’s father was traumatized by the war with Japan. So it is entirely in keeping with the powerful ritual quality of The Healing Spirit of Haiku that a stage in psychic transformation is reached when it is possible for him to pray for peace for his father’s soul. And in the chapter where Rosen joins a collective Buddhist ritual in Japan, Weishaus describes making a solitary journey to the mountains near Albuquerque to light a stick of incense for his parent.

Then from the personal dead the book moves to an even more enveloping encounter with death in the total extinguishing of life caused by nuclear bombs dropped on Japan. Again, Rosen visits Hiroshima while Weishaus meditates on the ravaged American landscape of the nuclear tests. They both come together in the next section, ‘Seeing the Mountain,’ in response to the Japanese heights that are simultaneously physical, psychological, and spiritual. They move out of the lowlands of death while remaining conscious of how the mountains are rooted in them. So in the following, ‘Basho’s Journey,’ on the life of the great haiku poet, there is a sense that the poets have achieved initiation into the panorama of Japanese haiku, rather than an over-simple adoption of its ethos. Indeed it is because of the profound exploration of cultural difference, including its darkest aspects, that the poets have plumbed such depths of unknowing in themselves. In so doing
they have taken the reader on a personal, cultural, philosophical, and spiritual pilgrimage that continues throughout the book.

The main other foreign place of the book is Italy and suggestively, its coming is heralded by a chapter on the feminine side of the male psyche. Chapters on Italian themes resonate with feminine images, from the Catholic (mother) Church continuation of the Coliseum's rite of blood sacrifice to the goatherd who learns to call all cities Cecilia, to the androgyny of St. Francis. Structurally, St Francis answers Basho as a western practitioner of spirit and the poetry of nature. The European pilgrimage functions as a near 'other' to the United States. It is possible to read the Italian motifs of landscape in Texas, a comparison not so directly attempted with Japan, where its fundamental otherness is stressed. In large terms I think the book enters Japan and the culture of the haiku as a rite of separation, a movement away from the habits and defenses of western ego-consciousness. Italy, on the other hand, performs for this book an anima role for American culture. Once the ego has been de-centered by initiation into Japan (with all its ancestral and historical pain), it can open itself to a more delicate weaving of differences and resemblances between the classical and Christian architecture of both the European and American soul. For what echoes in the later section of the book is the re-negotiation of origins both personal (with a chapter on mothers), and cultural, in images both common and radically different on both continents.

One chapter is headed by a date that has become so much more: 'September 11th 2001.' For an event that has so moved the collective psyche, so that we do not know its progeny, Rosen and Weishaus helpfully offer the simplest of perspectives. Both powerfully provide one of haiku's most valuable qualities: compassion. Rosen concentrates on the immediate victims, Weishaus on the ethical imperative to bring also the suffering world into the embrace. This chapter perhaps most starkly prompts the reader to continue the soul's journey. The Healing Spirit of Haiku is poetry at its most shamanistic and a philosophy carved on the psyche. It will delight, inspire comfort, and stimulate in equal measure.
NOTES

1. Robert Romanyszyn, “‘Anyway why did it have to be the death of the Poet?’: The Orphic Roots of Jung’s Psychology,” *Spring 71, Orpheus*, Fall 2004, 55-87.