



Basho's Haiku: Selected Poems of Matsuo Basho

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Basho's Haiku offers the most comprehensive translation yet of the poetry of Japanese writer Matsuo Basho (1644-1694), who is credited with perfecting and popularizing the haiku form of poetry. One of the most widely read Japanese writers, both within his own country and worldwide, Basho is especially beloved by those who appreciate nature and those who practice Zen Buddhism. Born into the samurai class, Basho rejected that world after the death of his master and became a wandering poet and teacher. During his travels across Japan, he became a lay Zen monk and studied history and classical poetry. His poems contained a mystical quality and expressed universal themes through simple images from the natural world. David Landis Barnhill's brilliant book strives for literal translations of Basho's work, arranged chronologically in order to show Basho's development as a writer. Avoiding wordy and explanatory translations, Barnhill captures the brevity and vitality of the original Japanese, letting the images suggest the depth of meaning involved. Barnhill also presents an overview of haiku poetry and analyzes the significance of nature in this literary form, while suggesting the importance of Basho to contemporary American literature and environmental thought.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This is a very well-researched translation of Basho's poetry that does an outstanding job of presenting this valuable material for those interested in Japanese culture, especially literature and religion. It is a first-rate work that clearly reflects the author's long and intense devotion and commitment to the topic. It will stand out as unique because of the range of poetry that it covers."

About the Author

David Landis Barnhill is Director of Environmental Studies and Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh. He is the coeditor (with Roger S. Gottlieb) of Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Ground, also published by SUNY Press, and the editor of At Home on the Earth: Becoming Native to Our Place: A Multicultural Anthology.

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