

ISSUE 42:1

# AKISAME

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EUROPEAN HAIKU SOCIETY

## THE SPRING PILLOW

by Chris Drake

誰がための低きまくらぞ春の暮  
*taga tame no hikuki makura zo haru no kure*

for whom  
 this low pillow?  
 spring evening

The low pillow is for a man, so it stands out as not being the norm in this woman's bedroom. Her own pillow is, by implication, also laid out in the early evening next to or near the low man's pillow.

Hers is a high, woman's pillow on a wooden base designed to protect her complex hairdo while she sleeps. Right now the room may be empty in dim evening light after preparations for the night have been made. Perhaps there is a small lamp. Or the *hokku* might be a rhetorical question the woman asks herself. I think there is a lot of *pathos* in the *hokku*, since the man has evidently stopped visiting the woman's house.

The word "spring" in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese has sensual, erotic overtones, so the male pillow may evoke a torrid relationship between the woman and the man, a relationship that now appears to have ended, though it is difficult for the woman to be sure. The man may have stayed away for a week or a month, or, if her love is very deep, she might keep laying out the man's low pillow long after the man has obviously stopped visiting. Maybe even every night for a year?

It's also possible to interpret the *hokku* as evoking a woman who has suddenly started laying out two pillows (and *futon*) and is just beginning a relationship. Or the woman might have more than one lover, and the *hokku* wonders which one will visit tonight. However, since "spring evening" can also mean "evening in late spring," I myself feel drawn to the reading in which the sensual relationship, like the spring, is drifting toward an end. Probably, though, Buson is trying to leave

the possibilities open. In any case, the *zo* acts as a strong question mark and invites the reader to ask the same question while reading the *hokku*, turning it into a poem about love in general.



Utagawa Kuniyasu, *Courtesan holding a pillow* (19th century).

## SUGGESTED READING

### BECOMING A HAIKU POET

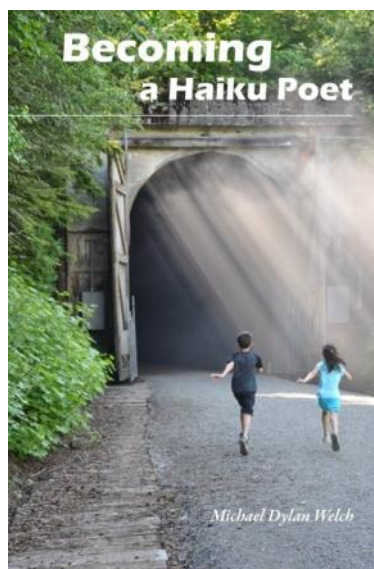
*by Michael Dylan Welch*

Learn the key techniques and strategies for writing haiku in English from acclaimed haiku poet, teacher, and translator Michael Dylan Welch.

This book emphasizes the most effective targets for haiku poetry, ones that are usually not taught in schools. There's more to haiku, and less, than you might think.

This concise book provides just the information you need to learn the art of haiku and to start becoming a haiku poet.

*Editor's Note*



**TITLE: Becoming a Haiku Poet**  
**AUTHOR: Michael Dylan Welch**  
**PUBLISHER: Press Here**  
**YEAR: 2015**  
**PAGES: 28**  
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**SELECTED HAIKU**

*spring snow-  
i gaze at my daughter  
on the sonogram*

Christiane Ranieri (France)

*snow flurries  
in my morning coffee  
spring dawn*

Christina Sng (Singapore)

*summer slalom  
in slow motion-  
snail on my cactus*

Daniel Gahnertz (Italy)

*backstroke lesson-  
a laughing child  
splashes clouds*

Marietta Jane McGregor (Australia)

*cold lakeside  
falling through mist  
a crow's caw*

Mark Miller (Australia)

*irises -  
the scent*

*of purple*

Valentina Ranaldi-Adams (U.S.A.)

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