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Life is Short (or on the Definition of the Haiku)

The haiku has a lot more to do with life than with literature. And life is short! Should we, therefore, constantly dig in our heels about every comma in definitions? I love the fact that poets of the instant (haikists or haijin) raise questions about haiku. Not so much, however, to define and establish the definitive rules of that short poem, but to place themselves in a situation of ignorance with respect to writing.

I am speaking here, of course, not of the crass ignorance of someone who does not want to know anything, but rather of the ignorance of someone who knows that he does not know. This creative ignorance, it seems to me, is at the root of the desire to know and experience haiku.

Writing is a mystery, just like life. I am therefore suspicious of any approach that consists first of all of defining the haiku (what it is and above all what it is not) and then applying those rules in writing. In fact, that would be more like composition than writing. We are not in primary school anymore and the poet does not have to behave like a good little pupil!

Life is short, as I said, and if poets of the instant do not give themselves a space of freedom to create, no one will do it for them. Isn't the important thing to create, not to apply the rules correctly. (And where do the rules come from anyway? From the poetry itself or from poets conferring?) This freedom (which is also called writing) is an extraordinary opportunity to learn to live.

I am very demanding when it comes to the writing of haiku. The word freedom is not a synonym for sloppiness but rather for responsibility. (The poet of the instant has to go beyond verbal games and social games.) When I talk about being demanding, I am referring to the fact that writing must be the site of a presence and of a sensibility even greater than in the world.

The haiku is a short poem that speaks of the instant. That is enough for me. This "definition" opens all doors and above all confirms for me that the poet of the instant is the one who writes down what may be lost.