



WHISPER
OF PINES

Cogar na nGiúiseanna

Janak Sapkota

WHISPER OF PINES

Cogar na nGiúiseanna

Janak Sapkota

With Irish-language versions by
GABRIEL ROSENSTOCK

Edited by
MÍCHEÁL Ó HAODHA

H A I K U



ORIGINAL WRITING

*Dedicated to my adorable Carla
for whispering the secrets*

An Chéad Chló 2011
© Leaganacha Gaeilge:
Gabriel Rosenstock, 2011
© Na haiku agus na senryu bunaidh:
Janak Sapkota 2011

Gach ceart ar cosnamh. Ní ceadmhach aon chuid den fhoilseachán seo a atáirgeadh, a chur i gcomhad athfhála nó a tharchur in aon mhodh ná slí, bíodh sin leictreonach, meicniúil, bunaithe ar fhótachóipeáil, ar thaifeadadh nó eile, gan cead a fháil roimh ré ón bhfoilsitheoir.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or information storage and retrieval systems—without the prior written permission of the author.

ISBNs

PARENT : 978-1-908817-41-9

ePUB: 978-1-908817-42-6

MOBI : 978-1-908817-43-3

Published by ORIGINAL WRITING LTD., Dublin, 2011.

geese by the lake
waterlilies
such whiteness

géanna cois uisce
póicíní locha
á, an bháine

an bháisteach ina caille
lasann péacóg
an mhaidin

in the darkening rain
a peacock

lights up the morning

a scattering
of magnolia blossoms -
windswept clouds

scata
bláthanna magnóilia –
scamaill rite

old man dozes in the sun
withering flower
in a clay pot

seanduine ag míogarnach
faoin ngrian; bláth feoite
i bpota cré

ar pháirc an chatha
idir na cnámha
fiaile

on the battlefield
between the bones
weeds

an open grave
a bleached bone
glows in the moonlight

uaigh oscailte
cnámh bhánaithe
ag lonnú faoi sholas na ré

on a windy night
the candle in the room

tries to be still

*oíche ghaofar
coinneal sa seomra
ag iarraidh a bheith socair*

thinking it's daylight
a bee searches for flowers
around a table lamp

*á shamhlú go bhfuil sé ina lá
beach ag lorg bláthanna
thart an ar lampa boird*

ploughing the rice field –
birds
squabbling over earthworms

How curious it is that a Nepalese haikuist – someone from the Buddha's territory – should present us with this haiku. Tradition has it that the Buddha's first inkling into the nature of conflict – and his mission to find the remedy for all conflict – came from such a sight, witnessed as a child, and now so succinctly sketched for us here by Janak. Relish these haiku and senryu. They come from the purest source!

Gabriel Rosenstock

Genuine haiku with fresh and unforgettable images that stay in our mind after we close the book.

Ion Codrescu

Janak achieves a deep interpenetration with nature in these finely engineered haiku, ably translated by Rosenstock who is at his best when in the presence of the mystic interface of the east.

Seán Mac Mathúna

When instead of expressing merely the personal, these haiku turn transparent, then the enthralling fragility of the form comes close to eternity.

Dileep Jhaveri

These haiku wake up the senses, prick up the ears, open the eyes, gouge wax from the ears, tingle the touch, smell the universe. They are as clean as every whistle, as cold as the mountain dews, as perfect as a snowflake, as welcome as Christmas, as sharp as a cutting edge, as tangful as sherbet. They are an education, because we know the world anew and again.

Alan Titley

He masters the core of haiku poetry with his concentrated images of passion and sympathetic insight.

Agnar Artúvertin

If God created the world, Janak Sapkota traces His mysterious ways and reveals them in three-line poems. His distinct sensibility has added to haiku spirit something new the like of which cannot be found among most of American-led haiku.

Susumu Takiguchi

Chairman, The World Haiku Club

Managing Editor & Acting Editor-in-Chief, World Haiku Review

Once in a while one reads a good haiku written by a Western poet, but many Western poets erroneously think that three lines, preferably consisting of 5-7-5 syllables, make a haiku. The haiku of Nepalese poet Janak Sapkota offer what most Western haiku miss: that delicate Eastern flavour, turning a handful of words into poetry, into real haiku.

Germain Droogenbroodt

Haiku is about movement in a world where we think that we understand stillness. It is about the journey, the passing through. The mind travels. The heart travels. The eye travels. They say that even as he lay dying, the Japanese haijin Basho was thinking of the next road he would take on his journey, the next words that would frame his frameless insights. Having read Janak Sapkota I can understand why.

Mícheál Ó hAodha
Author of “Survivor”: Dúchas Dóchasach (2007)

Brief Interview with Janak

Mícheál Ó hAodha

Can you tell us a small bit about your background, Janak? Where you are from? Many writers cite early childhood as the period when they were first drawn to books and poetry. What drew you to literature initially?

I was born in Baglung in the mid-western part of Nepal. Until the age of five I was under care of my grandparents in a small village, Bihunkot. Later on, I went to live with my parents in some other village of Baglung, where I stayed most my childhood. Both are very remote villages where nature is the only technology to which villagers have access. Daily life of local people is led with simplicity and complete dependence on nature. From the early morning shower in natural spring water till the moon-lightened stone trails at late evening, everything remains shaped by nature and virginally untouched by man. Definitely, the contact with nature during my childhood has enlightened me and awakened my senses for poetry. Many of those experiences are still reflected in my Haiku.

What are your interests/hobbies outside of literature?

Actually, poetry is my main past time. As a postgraduate student in Science, my days are fully stressed with assignments and deadlines. Whenever I find a little gap in between the busy days, I refuge myself in the poetry, which I feel as a shelter to forget the ritzy world and oxygenate my senses. Besides poetry, I share my free time playing cricket.

How did you first become interested in creative writing and when did you first think that you could be a writer?

I developed my passion for writing from the early stages of my life; already I used to write for school competitions and literature classes. And although teachers and friends could recognize talent in me and kept on incentivising me to continue, I honestly never believed I could one day become a writer. In Nepal it is a very tortuous path to survive being a writer. Luckily, I had the opportunity to meet Cathal Ó Searcaigh accidentally in the bus stop from college back to home, in one of his frequent visits to Nepal. We found that poetry was a common interest between us, and I can say poetry bonded us for a long-lasting friendship. After reading some of my poems, perhaps he sensed some potential in me and offered me a British haiku journal, Blithe Spirit, where I had my first insight into Haiku. There my fervour towards Haiku was born and under his guidance I start to write the first Haiku. One year after that, I published my first Haiku collection together with Cathal, Winter Lights. It was only then that I realized I could go further with my dream to be a writer.

What style or genres of literature do you enjoy as a reader?

I enjoy reading all types of poetry in general but especially true Haiku pieces. Philosophy and biographies also attract me more than fiction.

Can you tell us a little bit about the situation for writers in Nepal and the development of Nepalese literature and language?

The Nepali language evolved from Sanskrit and it is difficult to date the beginning of the Nepali era. Before Bhanubhakta (the 'Adhikavi', meaning the 'first poet') most of the writers used Sanskrit as their primary language. Bhanubhakta Acharya and Motiram Bhatta brought forward the Nepali literature from the Sanskrit era. After them the most significant period in Nepali literature began and poetry became the richest genre of twentieth-century Nepali literature.

It has always been impossible for a Nepali writer to earn a livelihood from literary work alone and hence writers need to support themselves from other income sources. Nowadays, the situation continues to be precarious. There is not any significant support for writers except for very few leading authors. Some institutions which were established with the aim of promoting Nepali literature such as Nepal Academy, Sajha Prakashan and Madan Puruskar Guthi are struggling without funds. Also, the limited nature of official support for publishing and literature force writers to seek opportunities in the English language. Unfortunately, I need to say that was the same reason why I started writing in English.

Is Nepali literature thriving? You have spent some periods undertaking writing workshops in Ireland and other western countries. How does western literature or writing differ from that of Nepal? Are many Nepalese writers actually living outside Nepal as was true (still, to a certain extent) and especially in the past in relation to Irish writers?

Lack of support for writers is still the main obstacle to the development of Nepali literature. That is the reason why many writers are seeking markets beyond national boundaries by writing in English, though still living in Nepal. These days, some few young writers look for opportunities abroad.

The main difference is that in western countries, literature is seen as an official occupation, not as a mere hobby as in Nepal. Nepali literature, on the other hand, reflects in general a more intimate relation with nature.

Can you give us some information about how the ideas and themes for this present book developed?

In 2010, I was on a writing residency at Cló Cheardlann na gCnoc, Donegal. During that time Cathal suggested me to contact Gabriel, as he is a Haiku Master. I decided to send my haiku to him and, to my surprise, the next day he returned them with comments and translations. He found them to be a very strong collection and advised me to make a bilingual edition. As result, based on some of those poems translated by Gabriel the publication of *Full Moon* came out, as a bilingual Irish-English limited edition. This new collection will be more or less a continuation of the previous

limited edition, and is also a bilingual Irish-English edition, ingeniously translated by Gabriel.

What is it about the writing of haiku that you like most?

Haiku is my shelter, the only place where I feel safe to truly express my inner and most intimate memories. With Haiku, I mirror myself.

What future projects are you working on now? Can you tell us a bit about them?

At the moment I am helping some students learning Haiku. They came to me because they could not find any lessons or courses of any kind of help to learn Haiku. Perhaps in future a publication might result in collaboration with them, as I visualize some potential and the need to promote new artists, but it is just a thought for now. Meanwhile, I am working on the manuscript of a fresh Haiku collection and at the same time translating my work into Nepali for another bilingual edition.

How do you find the writing process? Does it come easily to you or do you spend many hours reworking poems?

I never think on writing haiku but keep myself alert for haiku snapshots which I simply transform into words. I rarely rework my poems, unless I find the initial draft too vague.

Your poetry has been translated into other languages. Does this give you satisfaction? Does the process of translation give your work a new lease of life? Why is translation important?

Translations are important, as they act as bridges for cultural sharing. No poet could ever visualize and write about one cultural world as expressive as the one who grew in that environment, and can much more intimately 'undress' that culture.

When translation work is done with quality by an experienced translator, it can even attribute a new improved life to the original work. But not always!

The function of poetry in modern-day society?

Poetry is the art of language. It enlightens and expands the perceptive senses and knowledge of one individual, so much clogged by this modern artificial society. In the modern world it is also the voice of generations, a disruptive force for ideas and systems that have outlived their usefulness.

Other Nepalese writers or poets whom we in Ireland should know more about?

Lekhnath Poudyal was the supreme exponent of meter, alliteration and melody whereas Balkrishna Sama rebelled against the restraints of the conventional forms. Laxmi Prasad Devkota brought an entirely new tone to poetry by using folk meters and producing a great epic, Muna Madan. Besides, Gopal Prasad Rimal and Bhupi Sherchan are also worth reading.

What is poetry?

Poetry is the sixth sense that coordinates the reception of existence which may or may not be recognized by the physical senses.

JANAK SAPKOTA is from Nepal, currently a postgraduate science student in Finland. He has published *Lights Along the Road*, a collection of haiku co-authored with the American poet Suzy Conway. He won the Smurfit Samhain International Haiku Prize 2006 and the Seventh Annual Ukia Haiku Competition 2009. While on a writing residency at Cló Cheardlann na gCnoc, Donegal, Ireland, he published *Full Moon*, a limited edition haiku with Irish- language translations by Gabriel Rosenstock and images by Danielle Creenaune.

GABRIEL ROSENSTOCK is a poet, author/translator of over 150 books, mostly in Irish, which include *Haiku: The Gentle Art of Disappearing* and *Haiku Enlightenment*. He taught haiku at the Schule für Dichtung (Poetry Academy) in Vienna. Among his awards is the Tamgha I Kidmat medal for services to literature.

His vast output includes stage plays, plays for radio and television (RTÉ, Raidió na Life), novels and short stories, essays, criticism and travel literature. Among the anthologies in which he is represented is *Best European Fiction 2012* (Dalkey Archive Press, USA).

MÍCHEÁL Ó HAODHA lectures in the Department of History, University of Limerick. He has published widely on Irish migration, the Irish diaspora, social geography and oral history. His books include *American 'Outsider': Stories from the Irish Traveller Diaspora* (2007, with T.J. Vernon); *'The Turn of the Hand': A Memoir from the Irish Margins* (2010, with Mary Ward) and *'On the Run': The Diary of an Irish Republican* (2011, with Ruan O'Donnell).