

Haiku in Breton (ranls. Aurore Menegaux)

It is said that Bretons are traditionally attracted to music, dance and poetry. Thus, they did not remain indifferent when the haiku trend spread across the world and a number of them have gone down this road.

No doubt the short form of this genre goes along the direction of our time's esthetic, as the haiku presents itself as a gathered and dense manner to express the link existing between men and nature, between the living and others, between what we see and what we feel. Here, no explanation nor analysis but a way to be the closest to the universe impulses and what they make men feel. Here, no accumulation of words and commentaries. On the contrary, each word is chosen depending on its ability to express a lot with few means. Three lines will suffice to reveal a history, an event, a whole parcel of poetry that will bring us closer to the mysteries of the world.

Thus, it is not surprising to witness since recently the eclosion of haikus written in breton. And this phenomenon is all the most interesting since the spirit of breton language is different from the one of French. This language is part of the Celtic language groups such as welsh, cornish and gaelic. It would even seem, according to some specialists, that the breton would be close to the spirit of Haiku, in its manner to express with words and very concrete expressions, abstract realities.

If breton can express itself in a clear and direct manner, it also knows how to use in a natural manner, images, expressions and turn of phrases full of flavour. Its flexibility allows those who write to multiply audacities unknown in french. Close to the sometimes disarming simplicity of japanese poetry, so sensitive to the concrete realities of daily life, authors of haiku in breton know how to give to what they write the flavours of a freshly disarming authenticity and contained emotion. The spell breaks when it comes to translating.

Some publications on japanese poetry have, it seems, preceded the wave of Breton poets trying their hand at Haiku. We may note the publication in 1985 of " 38 barzhoneg eus bro an heol o sevel " (38 poems of the land of the rising sun) (Skol Vreizh Edition). It was no haiku but elegiac poems put in breton by Fulup Audinet. In 1991, a body of folk tales "Marvailhoù ar Sav-Heol" (Tales of the rising sun) translated from japanese to Breton by Makoto Noguchi was published by An Here editions. In 1999 Skol Vreizh editions published "Koroll an haiku" (The round of Haiku) an educational method written by a teacher Kunihiro Fujii to teach haiku to children (translation from japanese to breton, Fanch Peru & Alan Kervern). Finally, latest one, the essay from Malo Bouessel du Bourg by Keit vimp bev editions: "Daoulagad ar Werc'hez" (The eyes of the Virgin) praising haiku and its practice.

These few publications could give the readership of Breton language the overview of a different way to perceive reality and of a sensitivity practically opposed to ours.

Yet, this discovery becomes a factor that brings together cultures, with a similar manner to approach and restore the consistency of the world that surrounds us.

The encounter between traditional japanese poetry and the breton readership was sufficiently strong so that, step by step, we see the emergence of poems written "in style of haikus", with sometimes surprising encounters and realizations. We can say that this new resource that came from the other side of the world gave breton literature and its poetry an unexpected impulse.

Several already established authors started to compose short poems "in the style of Haikus". We can admire the initiative from the 'douarnenist' (person coming from the city of Douarnenez in Brittany) Youenn Brusq (1922-2012). This form fitted to what he wished to express. Sensitive to the daily simple moments, he knew how to enjoy the peaceful joy of daily life and its poetry. In 1992 he was the first to offer his readers, it seems, haikus composed in Breton:

dirak al loar-gann	In front of the full moon
'giz un daolenn japanad	in the style of a Japanese painting
brini war ur brank	crows on a branch

eur wezenn goz	an old tree
war vord ar stank	on the edge of the pond
kousket o-daou	both asleep

Fanch Peru (born in 1950) has long been known as a writer who publishes novels, fictions and short-stories in Breton. Particular mention should also be made to an important work he made to renew the popular tradition in Breton poetry. His sense of both the rhythm and the music of the words bring him closer to the form of short poetry and its Japanese variant. His inspiring themes are also those of haiku, the rhythms of nature translating those of the cosmos, the promotion of the smallest detail announcing at the heart of a season, the following one, the simplicity of style, Fanch Peru blends the Japanese sense of observation with the modesties of Breton sensitivity.

e miz Here	In October
e vez gwalc'het an oabl	the sky is washed
div wech bemdez	twice a day

In the same trend, one of a wisdom born from a rural environment, there is also Anjela Duval a poor peasant from Trevor who was born in 1905 and died in 1981. The love of her country, the ground, the land, the one we work every day, the nature, this is what mattered to her. Her short poems, full of freshness and sincerity are in her image, and this is it in which she reached the general public's heart. Her fame spread to all Europe and she became the symbol of poetry's new life in the 70s in Brittany. Her influence on young writers, poets and artists was considerable, a new generation was at the time searching for a Breton culture modern and opened to the world. And Anjela was their model.

war al leton touzhet berr	On the short-cut grass
pemp dred o klask o boued	five starlings looking for subsistence/pittance
ur c'harr-tan er c'horn-tro	a car in the curve

Born in 1960, Rozenn Milin is a newcomer in the Haiku world. This is one strong personality being consumed with talent by the fires of life and who published in 1999 in "Hopala" magazine short poems inspired by her childhood in the countryside. Coarsed and consistent haikus, full of emotions and sensations expressed in a language full of flavours, here is what Rozenn Milin gives us to read:

glebor an deizioù du Humidity of dark days
a-dreuz ar mogerioù through the walls
he va eskern and my bones

Paol Keineg, born in 1944, played an important role among those who matter in poetry in contemporary Brittany. His books of poems bubble up with energy, with sometimes imprecations or poems with prophetic accents. Besides several publications in french that ignited the young generations, he published in 1974 a bilingual book of poems: "Mojennoù gwir/real stories" and especially a body of haiku in breton "35 haiku" to Bretagnes editions in 1978 where a haiku pays particular tribute to Anjela Duval:

ar menajoù hag an awel put The farms and the pungent wind
Anjela er baradoz gant he chwas gwenn Anjela in heaven with her white dogs
ken a luch ar saout ganti and her cow which squints so much

It is difficult not to mention here Bernez Tangi, an artist simultaneously painter, singer and poet born in Carantec in 1949. He was one of the creator of the famous group "Storlok" in 1970 regarded as the first rock band in breton. He also became known as a painter while his haikus have been translated into a dozen languages. He is often invited to present his work, particularly abroad.

Kamp ar repuidi Refugees camp
wn draonienn- in the valley -
goudor ar voualc'h a shelter for the blackbird

Other voices, other names would have deserved to be shown here. Marie-Therese Laot, Philippe Audinet, Olöff Pétursdóttir, the icelandish poetess who writes Haiku in four languages, Maiwen, Malo Bouessel du Bourg... which represents the general enthusiasm for a poetic genre which reveals many talents. The "TaoI Kurun" (thunderclap) annual festival meeting of the land of Quimperle fosters every year the development of this kind of short poetry, by organizing a contest of haiku in breton, french and gallo (which is spoken in East Brittany) whose results are announced on this occasion. It is Fanny Chauffin, the tireless moderator of this festival who spearheaded this contest which receives haikus from all over the world every year!

Why such passion for this kind of short poetry? Nathalie Caradec who holds a PhD on the study of non japanese haiku thinks that "haiku is not only of the magic of writing but of the experience always

renewed of the fragility of creation (...) Looking crystallizes this particular light whose transience creates the emotion and generates the writing of haiku"... and poets writing in breton, whose language is not a priori suited for this, have let themselves be tempted by the experience. No doubt will they have discovered, doing this, that the impermanence of all things and the existential anxiety can also be expressed in a few breton words!