



The Poetry of Zen

From Hamill, Sam (EDT)/ Seaton, J. P. (TRN)

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A Zen poem is nothing other than an expression of the enlightened mind, a handful of simple words that disappear beneath the moment of insight to which it bears witness. Poetry has been an essential aid to Zen Buddhist practice from the dawn of Zen—and Zen has also had a profound influence on the secular poetry of the countries in which it has flourished. Here, two of America's most renowned poets and translators provide an overview of Zen poetry from China and Japan in all its rich variety, from the earliest days to the twentieth century. Included are works by Lao Tzu, Han Shan, Li Po, Dogen Kigen, Saigyō, Bashō, Chiao Jan, Yuan Mei, Ryōkan, and many others. Hamill and Seaton provide illuminating introductions to the Chinese and Japanese sections that set the poets and their work in historical and philosophical context. Short biographies of the poets are also included.

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Editorial Review

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Hamill, founding editor of Copper Canyon Press, and J. P. Seaton, a professor of Chinese, unite forces to translate and edit this collection of Zen poetry from China and Japan. More than an anthology, this is a little Zen primer with brief bios of all of the poets and insightful introductions that illuminate the collection in the context of Buddhist history and practice. As Hamill explains, poetry has long been part of Zen practice, and it seems not only to express deep philosophical and spiritual questions, but also to provoke them. Poignantly summarizing the "why" of creating this collection, Hamill states, "A good poem says more than the sum of its words, leading the reader into the practice of understanding the great unsaid that is contained, framed in a poem's rhythms, words, and silences." These poems indeed lead one to meditate on the quality of the mind, the nature of life. This may be a little book, but it is a major collection. *Janet St. John*

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Review

"A major collection."—*Booklist*

"The poets in this superb collection pay attention to the wonders of the natural world, the signs of precariousness of life in all living beings, the little changes that comprise each day, and the small details that are often missed by those who are less observant."—*Spirituality & Health*

"These evocative poems capture the ephemera of nature with uncanny starkness."—*Buddhadharma*

"There is no need to be mystical or religious to enjoy this writing."—*The Bloomsbury Review*

"This is a book to enrich our life and our practice, a collection that encourages us to be mindful, to keep at it. Read it, and sit."—*Tricycle*

About the Author

Sam Hamill has translated more than two dozen books from ancient Chinese, Japanese, Greek, Latin, and Estonian. He has published fourteen volumes of original poetry. He has been the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, and the Mellon Fund. He was awarded the Decoración de la Universidad de Carabobo in Venezuela, the Lifetime Achievement Award in Poetry from Washington Poets Association, and the PEN American Freedom to Write Award. He cofounded and served as Editor at Copper Canyon Press for thirty-two years and is the Director of Poets Against War.

J. P. Seaton is Professor of Chinese at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He is the translator of numerous books, including *The Poetry of Zen* and *The Shambhala Anthology of Chinese Poetry*, and his poetry translations have been widely anthologized in such books as *The Anchor Book of Chinese Poetry*, *The Norton Anthology of World Poetry*, and *The Vintage Book of Contemporary World Poetry*.

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