

# KÓ

## Bob Beagrie



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The Black Light Engine Room Press  
12 Harrogate Crescent  
Middlesbrough  
TS5 6PS.

[theblacklightenginedriver@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:theblacklightenginedriver@hotmail.co.uk)

Bob Beagrie (PhD) lives in Middlesbrough. He is a poet, playwright and performer. His work has appeared in numerous anthologies and magazines and has been translated into Finnish, Urdu, Swedish, Dutch, Spanish, Estonian, Gaelic and Karelian. He is a part-time senior lecturer at Teesside University and also works in a freelance capacity as a Writer in the Community.

He has published many books and pamphlets including:  
*The Last Almanac* (Yaffle Press (2023) *When We Wake We Think We're Whalers from Eden* (Stairwell Books 2021) *And Then We Saw The Daughter of the Minotaur* (The Black Light Engine Room Press 2020) *Civil Insolencies* (Smokestack 2019).





## Introduction

Through the division of the year into four seasons, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, we see the natural cyclic changes to our environment. Yet within each season the subtle shifts often go unnoticed, especially within modern urban settings.

I recently learned that the Japanese year was traditionally divided into twenty-four mini-seasons or *sekki* each lasting around twelve to fifteen days and that within each *sekki* there are three micro-seasons or *kó*, each lasting four or five days. Each *kó* focusses upon a specific natural phenomenon with names that include: 'Fish emerge from the ice', 'Plums turn yellow', 'hawks learn to fly', 'swallows leave', 'land starts to freeze'. They provide a much more precise lens through which to view the seasonal changes.

I set myself a challenge of writing a haiku for each micro-season, and the practice honed my attention to fine details, encouraged me to look closer and become more attuned to the nuances within the year's story. Where possible, I tried to incorporate, or at least hint, to the name of each *kó* within the haiku. At times, due to the differences in flora and fauna between Northeast England and Japan it wasn't always possible, and sometimes I was more concerned with personal events such as the birth of my grandson. However, on the whole I feel that the sequence of haiku-snapshots creates a fascinating narrative to a year in my life and a celebration of the natural world in miniature. I hope you find the seventy-two haiku interesting, and they encourage you to look a little closer at the changing world around you.

Bob Beagrie



Risshun  
(Beginning of Spring)

February 4 - 8

in lengthening daylight,  
east winds melt the ice  
that stiffens each night

\*

February 9 - 13

in leafless thickets  
by the water rail's reed pool  
a leaf warbler pipes

\*

February 14 - 18

from the soil, snowdrops  
emerge like fish from the ice,  
light sliced from bloated night

Usui  
(Rainwater)

February 19 - 23

day break's sharp sunlight  
polishes the ground, moistened  
by night time's rain fall

\*

February 24 -28

sheets of dense hail stones  
rattle the snowdrops, through  
the glass, hardened mist

\*

March 1 - 5

grass sprouts, trees bud,  
daffodils yellow the verges,  
spring's stirrings emerging

Keichitsu  
(Insects Awaken)

March 6-10

early morning ice  
melts on the grass as insects  
surface into sunlight

\*

March 11 - 15

on the same black bough  
the first pink peach blossoms,  
a strip of suspended snow

\*

March 16 - 20

daylight hours spreading,  
like a butterfly's wings  
before its first flight

Shunbun  
(Spring Equinox)

March 21 - 25

interwoven twigs,  
straw and soft down make a bed  
for sparrow stone-hopes

\*

March 26 - 30

sun-brushed buds open,  
pinked petals unfurling,  
first cherry blossoms

\*

March 31 - 4 April

the flock of pigeons  
taking flight over the lake,  
feathering distant thunder

Seimei  
(Pure and Clear)

5 - 9 April

keeping an eye out  
for the return of swallows  
to scissor the clouds

\*

10 - 14 April

on the river's isle  
a cob repairs the old nest,  
the pen makes it home

\*

15 - 19 April

rainbow bridges  
remind me that the soul can  
journey on its own

Kokuu  
(Grain Rains)

20 - 24 April

a cabbage white's dance  
over sprouting reeds,  
three ducklings cower

\*

25 - 29 April

last frost, birds mark out  
boundaries of territories  
with their shell-grown songs

\*

30 April - 4 May

swift flight threads nine worlds  
on an invisible string,  
peonies bloom

Rikka  
(Beginning of Summer)

5 - 9 May

the planning meeting's  
shower of acronyms,  
baffling frog-song

\*

10 - 14 May

beside the speed trap  
blackbird drags a reckless worm  
out of the dark earth

\*

15 - 20 May

checking for new shoots  
among black bamboo stems,  
hectic sand martins roost

Shóman  
(Lesser Ripening)

May 21 - 25

my fingers roam the keys,  
pale hungry silkworms feasting  
on mulberry leaves

\*

May 26 - 30

in a Melrose garden  
safflowers blossom like sparks,  
part the horse's mane

\*

May 31 - June 5

strawberry moon  
over Roseberry Topping,  
mist coils at its foot

Bóshu  
(Grain Beards and Seeds)

June 6 - 10

in the church hall  
praying mantises hatch  
to breath the mist

\*

June 11 - 15

smell freshly mowed grass,  
behind my closed eyes  
I watch fireflies

\*

June 16 - 20

the midday sun  
has become a yellow plum,  
its juice wets our brows

Geshi  
(Summer Solstice)

June 21 - 26

when self-heal withers  
we must depend upon others'  
laments and keenings

\*

June 27 - 1 July

the indefinite  
shade of a baby's irises,  
butterflies bloom

\*

July 2 - 6

the trifoliate leaves  
of the crow-dipper unfurl  
like dragon's wings

Shósho  
(Lesser Heat)

July 7 - 11

warm winds carry  
the beat of street music  
across stone-cut centuries

\*

July 12 - 16

from murky waters  
lotus blossoms open  
with the break of day

\*

July 17 - 22

traffic light burning red,  
it's forecast extreme heat  
as hawks learn to fly

Taisho  
(Greater Heat)

July 23 - 28

paulownias trees grow seeds,  
I'm minding the ache for a mucca:  
hitchhikes, dancing, his ramshackle spliffs

\*

July 29 - August 2

damp earth, humid air  
under battling night-clouds,  
the muggy labour of sleep

\*

August 3 - 7

fat raindrops in sharp sunshine,  
will the broiling skies break  
bringing fresh perspectives?

Risshú  
(Beginning of Autumn)

August 8 - 12

cool winds sometimes blow,  
but this year each singed leaf  
hangs in suspended animation

\*

August 13 - 17

between the loughs  
in the land of the setting sun  
no evening cicada's sing

\*

August 18 - 22

swallowing the glass sea,  
wrapping up the sky  
fog sails inland

Shosho  
(Manageable Heat)

August 23 - 27

no cotton flowers bloom  
but Deepdale beck blossoms  
dry pebbles in the drought

\*

August 28 - September 1

“You know what?” she says,  
“I’m feeling a bit chilly,  
I’m putting a cardigan on”

\*

September 2 - 7

when Summer’s heat subsides,  
some welcome the change,  
others dread what’s to come

Hakuro  
(White Dew)

September 8 - 12

dewdrops whiten the grass,  
pigeons' footprints form attachments  
between pavement puddles

\*

September 13 - 17

dipping between light and shade  
wagtails whistle September tunes  
to welcome a beautiful baby boy

\*

September 18 - 22

ask magpie, sparrow, squirrel,  
ring dove, robin, bee: they'll say,  
*Look, the swallows have gone*

Shúbun  
(Autumn Equinox)

September 23 - 27

once the bottle's drained,  
thunder settles  
into milk-sloshed slumber

\*

September 28 - October 2

blood berries and rain,  
against the coming cold  
bugs bed-in underground

\*

October 3 - 7

while farmers drain fields  
gold, copper, Autumnal treasures  
litter lawns, choke gutters

Kanro  
(Cold Dew)

October 8 - 12

arrows slice pale skies  
wild geese from the Arctic,  
their gobbl racket song

\*

October 13 - 17

I saw no late blooming  
chrysanthemums but baby  
cries blossomed in our house

\*

October 18 - 22

no crickets chirp but  
men are laying broadband cables  
outside my front door

Sókó  
(Frost Falls)

October 23 - 27

little sign of frost  
and tough burnished leaves  
still cling to thinning trees

\*

October 28 - November 2

samhain, the roads damp  
from today's light rain, bat flight  
under a crescent moon

\*

November 2 - 6

ivy turns yellow,  
nights of fire, billowing smoke,  
morning's charred remains

Rittó  
(Beginning of Winter)

November 7 - 11

far off to the East  
camellias bloom while here  
crane flies enter homes

\*

November 12 - 16

warmest November  
on record, no hoar on the laid  
wreaths of remembrance

\*

November 17 - 21

acclimatising  
to heavy rain, in darkness  
fields transform to lakes

Shósetsu  
(Lesser Snow)

November 22 -26

grim marsh skyline,  
cloud-wrapped pylons and chimneys  
hides timid rainbows

\*

November 27 - December 1

the last stubborn leaves  
wait for North winds to strip  
them from the branches

\*

December 2 - 6

a bluetit in the rain  
pecks at the pot-holed road,  
cobbles in puddles

Taisetsu  
(Greater Snow)

December 7 - 11

hoar frost, light snow  
tyre tracks weave through Fairy Dell  
Good day Mr Magpie

\*

December 12 - 16

our little bear cub  
hibernates, when he wakes  
he'll grizzle for milk

\*

December 17 - 21

salmon clouds gather  
to swim across the flood plain  
from the disused railway line

Tóji  
(Winter Solstice)

December 22 - 26

nights of hoarse voices,  
hacking coughs, crumpled tissue-  
snowdrifts beside the bed

\*

December 27 - 31

deep in Gribdale Wood  
deer shed their antlers,  
we stalk the new light

\*

January 1 - 4

packing decorations  
into boxes, reassembling  
daily miracles

Shókan  
(Lesser Cold)

January 5 - 9

parsley flower clouds  
clothe the Wolf Moon, frosted fields  
striped in light and shade

\*

January 10 - 14

wild Southerly gales  
bring warmth and flood warnings,  
thawing ice in the bones

\*

January 15 - 19

heather and high ground,  
where pheasants start to call  
through swarms of snowflakes

Daikan  
(Greater Cold)

January 20 - 24

on the tips of twigs  
of the twisted hazel tree  
new catkins cluster

\*

January 25 - 29

hard rains fall, drumming  
upon still waters' ice plates,  
bitter shafts of sunlight

\*

30 January - 3 February

high winds sweep eggshell  
clouds out to sea, tufted ducks  
synchronise their feeding













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