

Poetry: Voice of Deep Ecology

By Lone Wolf Circles

"Afterimages" Shinkichi Takahashi
(Anchor A 843).

"Embracing the Earth" Art Good-
times (Homeward Press)

The Round River Rendezvous was a heartening experience for me. It was the first time I felt comfortable in a group of more than four. I could feel the '60's sense of purpose and excitement ('60 BC). I am still flying on that energy, on the inspiration. When Bill Devall spoke of the arts as the cutting edge of the Deep Ecology message, I could feel it! The responsibility (ability to respond) . . . it is painting the "tiger" in the eye that knocks off the viewer's blinders. It is the "myo," the mystery behind the clouds that entices the mind to expand. It is the naked exposure of wildness that excites us to dream. The text and substance of deep ecology is a sensitive and committed lifestyle, and it fills the void with color as the arts cut away the bullshit. Reviewing painting and music from a higher standard. And poetry

Poems are images stripped of pretensions like a body unclothed. They are at their best simplified as close to the root syllable, to the primeval grunt and sigh as possible without sacrificing intent. True poetry is set to rhythm not unlike a heartbeat or the complex patterns of jungle drums. It is freed of the superfluous until, as perfect as a feather, as magical as a witch's potion, it helps the reader fly.

I can picture Shinkichi Takahashi sitting in lotus wearing Roger Candee's *Earth First!* t-shirt when he writes "...confidence and action is all. One would present a sorry sight if one kept loitering, fascinated, within the fold of literature. True poetry is born out of the very despair that the word is useless and poetry is to be abandoned." Or, from his poem "Words":

What's grasped by words is vulnerable;

Richer, more poetic the flux of realities.

Takahashi's contradictions are not to be mistaken for nonsense. As a Zen poet he carefully orchestrates dichotomies, utilizes the improbable to stop the flow of consensus reality so that we can look at the world anew. It is the poet's alchemy to destroy definitions, certainty, and boundaries; to expose the allegedly finite as infinite. He explodes the concrete, black and white mind-set that has created our lifeless cities and trashed

our wilderness. Takahashi has tossed logic, tanks, schools, "stop" signs into the air. And landing in a world of wide-eyed babies and awed primitives, a world of possibilities, is diversity. It is here that the sun is but a grain of sand, and a tiny mushroom contains all the planet. As in his poem "Quails":

It is the grass that moved, not the quails.

*Weary of embraces, she thought of
Committing her body to the flame.*

When I shut my eyes, I hear far and wide

The air of the ice age stirring.

*When I open them, a rocket passes
over a meteor.*

*A quail's egg is complete in itself,
Leaving not room enough for a dagger's point.*

*All the phenomena in the universe:
myself*

*Quails are supported by the universe
(I wonder if that means subsisting
by god).*

A quail has seized god by the neck

*With its black bill, because there is no
God greater than a quail.
(Peter, Christ, Judas: a quail.)*

A quail's egg: idle philosophy in solution.

(There is no wife better than a quail.)

*I dropped a quail's egg into a cup for
buckwheat noodles,*

*And made havoc of the democratic
constitution.*

*Split chopsticks stuck in the back, a
quail husband*

*Will deliver dishes on a bicycle, any-
where.*

*The light yellow legs go up the hill of
Golgotha,*

*Those quail who stood on the rock,
became the rock.*

*The nightfall is quiet, but inside the
concealed exuviae*

*Numberless insects zig-zag, on
parade.*

Earth First! is men and women not afraid to experience the animal within them (Montana campfire chant: *We're not afraid*), ready to anoint themselves with the sweat of mating eagles and become the eagles. Not afraid to evolve, to fly . . . (Marcy Willow in response to New Wave feminist reporter: *I like*

Earth First! men because they're not a bunch of sissies.) We can best protect other life species by experiencing their world view. This is why I paint and it is the serious benefit of Dave Foreman's fun interspecies role playing at RRR '85. Once having leapt beyond words, into the very souls of other species, we leap back out but we can never abandon them. Blood-brothers. Not mere empathy, but transmutation. As in the closing of "Skinning the Elk" by Earth First! poet Art Goodtimes:

I am marked for life

I wear the elk's tattoo

*As its meat becomes my meat
And its blood stains my blood*

Spirit

Leaping

From shape to shape.

Art is substantive proof the caveman never died out, and has worked to get poets put on the Endangered Species Act. He is the ultimate radical (at RRR: *As it is, I'm letting you slide on those obnoxious "Park in an orderly fashion signs."*) If the arts are the cutting-edge, Goodtimes is a Nicaraguan machete. From "Survival":

*Crazy Horse rides in the Black Hills
pine*

*And the lightning in his veins
Are the arrows that I aim*

My name is power

My name is energy

My roots run underground

I embrace the earth

Kill me

And a hundred more will grow

My favorite, entitled "Gluttony":

In an argument once

A friend asked me

"Why must we save the eagles?"

Siding with ranchers

Along the Sonoma coast

Who'd shot the bird as a predator

For stealing

Two or three of their sheep

(A percentage)

"A man has to eat"

He insisted

Unbalanced

Mind reeling — meat lashed

To the barbed wire of his words

I fell silent (a poison)

Hearing only

The thrashing of wings on his lips

It wasn't until later

In the aerie of my own room

That a cry rose within me

As potlatch becomes compost

And enriches the earth

Each adds a blanket to the heap

"Friend — friend

To save ourselves"

Thrust yourself deep into the hearts of other living beings. It is at those depths you will fully understand "Deep Ecology." Listen to Art's closing to "Hot Creek":

Hear it

The Hot Creek heart

Playing us like drums

Our cells set singing

To the pulse of the mother core

Later, let's look at singer Greg Keeler's written poetry, John Haines, and the old man himself, Gary Snyder. Tree-sitters and poets at the vanguard. From Takahashi's "Sun":

. . . Flicking at my thoughts

Strewn about the rocks like violets.

It's you, faces cut like triangles

Have kept the snake alive!

*The pavement's greened over with
leaves.*