

A Reflection of Mike Dillon: *The Road Behind*

by Andrew Tufano
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This haiku celebrates the life of a family member, and it affected me so much because it is so beautifully written. Dillon uses the idea of cherry blossoms growing and it paints the picture of the spring season. The cherry blossoms hold on in the wind but that is not the only thing holding on to something in the haiku. Just when you think you're getting a sweet spring haiku, Dillon changes the mood a bit when he says the dad is 83 and to me, he is holding on to his life. 83 is a lucky age to be and many people die before. I think it is so beautiful that when I was reading this, I got to see a family sitting together at dinner. The father is clearly 83 and his children are married and have children by now. The father may be a grandpa by now. This haiku celebrates that this man has made it to 83 and is still holding on, like those cherry blossoms, to life. I also want to point out this is the first time you will see of many colons being used in Dillon's work. The colon is placed so well in his haiku. It always shifts gears to something else, but it also relates and makes the story clearer. We were talking about springtime, then we are hit with the idea of an old man getting older and this could be his last spring.

cherry blossoms
hold on in the wind:
my dad's eighty-third spring

Mike Dillon, TRB, 13

This haiku reminds me of spring cleaning. My hair also grows so long and whenever it gets warmer out, I start to want to make changes to my hair, wardrobe, etc. I also loved how visual this is and I can hear the chair turn around to face the mirror. I think Mike Dillon has a common season he chooses to write about in his haiku and that is spring. Spring is such a transitional season with the weather changes and the time changes too. I have very well been in this position too and got a haircut during the springtime. I like how Mike Dillon has a simplicity to writing his haiku. Thinking about what this haiku is about, I do not feel as if this one is up for interpretation. It is simply about a haircut on a spring afternoon. It is written so clearly and with a colon as well. The colon is used after the first line of this haiku, unlike the one above but it is still effective and helps shape the story. Spring afternoon is a very smart way to start a haiku because so many different activities could be had on any random spring afternoons.

spring afternoon:
the barber spins me around
toward the mirror

Mike Dillon, TRB, 14

This haiku immediately brought me to a city, specifically New York City. There are so many pigeons everywhere and those streets are packed. I like the use of "noon-busy" because it sets the scene for lunch time. Those busy workers in NYC are all hustling the streets to find a subway station or the nearest restaurant for a quick bite to eat. I can picture all the chaos and hear all the noises a city makes, especially a busy city like NYC. The whole pigeon part in this haiku made me sad but also laugh. I am sad because the pigeon is

dying and if the reader takes it that way, that reminds me of a Kuro approach too. If the pigeon isn't really dying and you read more into the calm eye, it reminds of how pigeons are truly unbothered, and they get pretty close to you on the sidewalk. If the pigeon is actually dying, then I believe the eye would be calm because the pigeon is literally starting to die. The last thing the pigeon will see is another busy day in stinky NYC. Pigeons are flying everywhere in that city, and they land wherever they want to. You can feed them too and, in my opinion, they own that city and it would be a whole different vibe without them there. I just loved how I can get a feel for the tempo and pace of everyday life in this haiku. It's also another one with a colon and it has its simplicity as well.

noon-busy sidewalk:
the dying pigeon's
calm eye

Mike Dillon, TRB, 16

This haiku honestly really brought back a really sad day for me. That day was my Poppi's funeral and I remember being asked to be a pallbearer as well. It was such an honor to be so young and still get the opportunity to do that. The thing I love about this haiku is not only does it paint a clear picture, but you can also feel the weight these men have to carry emotionally and physically. My grandfather was the matriarch of my family and when we lost him so many people came to his services. He was known by a lot of people, and he made an impact on so many different lives. My Poppi is my guardian angel and I have such a strong spiritual relationship to him. I have a tattoo for him because he means that much to me. When he died, I had a moment where I realized that I had to be the music matriarch in my family now. As I got older, I learned that my family started to see similarities in our personalities and I have a ton of similar aneurisms and attitudes that my Poppi had. Hearing this makes me so happy because that man was my inspiration and still is. His impact on me was so big and to be one of the men standing by his side at his funeral, is exactly the way I know he would have wanted it. I like the use of the colon as well and the topic shifts to the sky. To me that one cloud, alone in the sky, represents the gateway to heaven and as we lifted him out of the church at the funeral, his soul was already looking over us in that one lone cloud. It truly is a really beautiful story that Dillon is trying to tell with this haiku. It is more serious and magical at the same time. I am a very faith-based person, so reading this haiku made so much sense to me and some people could prob read it and be so confused by the cloud concept.

we men lift
the matriarch's casket:
the lone white cloud

Mike Dillon, TRB, 17

This haiku made me laugh and brought some good memories back. So far in this essay, you've probably caught on to the idea that I love haikus that tell a story and usually it is a story that I can relate to. This specific haiku is so simple but so realistic. I used to go to southern Florida a ton as kid and I would stay in the section of the condos where we would have to walk to the pool. I would always have my pool goggles on and a towel ready because I would spend hours in that communal pool. I would be with my family, and they would always make new friends and chat. As a kid, I would stay and play in the shallow end and then swim to this waterfall. My parents would be watching to make sure I was okay having a full conversation with some new friends at the deep end. The "old people" would always be chatting and laying out while the kids would be kids. This one doesn't use a colon either. This is one of many ones that Dillon doesn't have a colon in there. I like how he splits up deep end and of the pool. He is smart with that because he could be referring to the topics of discussion that these older people are having. Then he swoops in and makes it about being at the deep end of the pool.

old people laughing
at the deep end
of the pool

Mike Dillon, TRB, 19

This haiku is my favorite haiku I have read by him. My childhood home holds a ton of weight in my life. I still live there till this day and will always go back to visit when I move out because I will miss it. I live next door to my family, and I have always been a family-oriented person. My brothers and cousins would always be switching between yards and swimming in both of our pools. My family has huge lunches and dinners because we are 100% Italian as well. We know how to party, and we are such great hosts. So many of my days as a kid, I would always be playing around with my brothers, cousins, and whatever guests we have over at the time. We always played whiffle ball in the front yard. Like the few haiku above, this haiku uses the colon, and it sets the scene for a childhood home. After the colon, it went a different route that I related to completely. As a kid, we didn't use regular bases that you would see on the baseball diamond. You would see us get creative and find items that were man made and already around. Dillon also tends to write about baseball over the other sports. I love that about him because baseball is the main sport that I played. My dad was my coach and my brothers, and I were raised by playing the sport. When we played on the front yard, we would use a rock or a square of the sidewalk as bases. The use of smoothness it so conflicting to me though. Because we played outdoors and used scrapes as bases. I also love that our home plate would always land on my sidewalk because as we would be up to bat, we would run the bases and then always run back home. As I am close to graduating, I am about to run back home.

childhood home:
the smoothness of the half-buried rock
we used for home plate

Mike Dillon, TRB, 29

This haiku was a haiku I picked because it was the title of the book that Mike Dillon wrote his collection in it. The long road behind is what really stuck out to me. Dillon also doesn't use a colon in this one. It is a clear a cohesive haiku that can be taken in many ways. The first way I read it was a road trip story. Over the beginning phases of this pandemic, my friends and I went on a road trip to Florida, and it was twenty-two hours in total. We split up this drive into two days. When we stopped in Alabama after the first part of the drive, we hung out and explored that state for a day or two. The sunset early that night and then we decided at one am to start our second phase of the drive and head to our destination, Florida. This is the same spot I would go to as a kid, but we stayed at a different time, and I am not on vacation with my family this time. As we went on our late-night drive, I started to get worries because my friend said she was getting a little tired. We swapped out drivers, I took a nap, and I woke up when the sun was rising again. I looked around and noticed we were in Florida, and I looked back to see the long road behind me. I looked on Google Maps and I saw the long road behind. We really drove overnight, and I got to watch the sunset and rise in 24 hours. This experience was so cool to me because I rarely drive out of state because I usually fly. I would do this form of transportation again just because it was so cool to be driving when the sun rose and be in a warm state when it was happening. I remember I opened the windows and took a breath in, and a huge smile appeared on my face.

Another interpretation I had while reading this one was the idea that I am graduating in 38 days. This journey at Millikin has been so fulfilling and I truly don't regret my decision to come here. There has been many ups and downs, but I am so proud to have received my education from here. As the sunsets and my journey here comes to an end, I realize I have a ton of memories I made if I look back and see the road behind me. I am completely different person compared to who I was at the start of this long road. I am proud

to have changed for the better and I feel as if I have grown in so many different aspects. Even though this road is a long one, it will be a road that when I look back it, I will remember how much this placed helped me become the person I am today.

early sunset lights up
the long road
behind

Mike Dillon, TRB, 38

Works Cited

Dillon, Mike. *The Road Behind*. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2003. Print.