

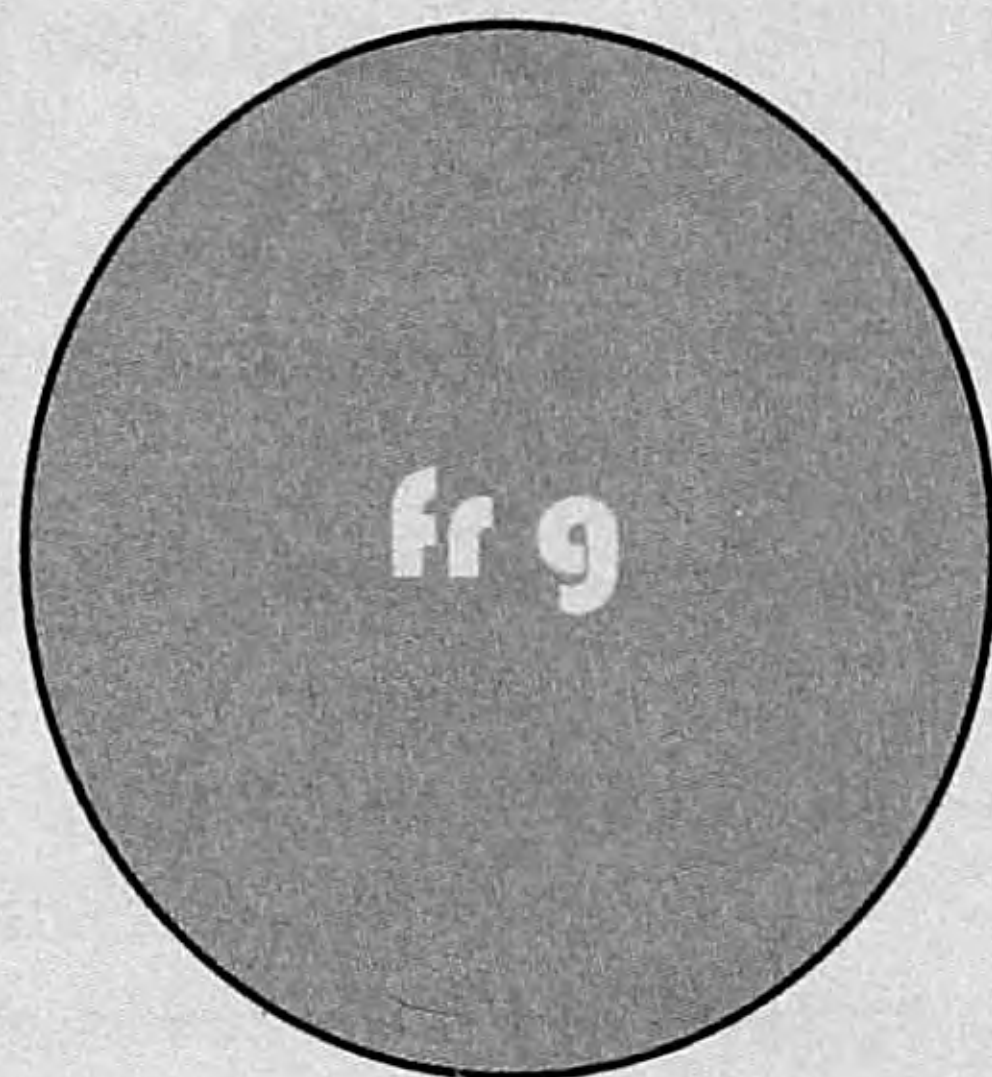
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Volume 34:1, 2011

frogpond

**The Journal of the Haiku
Society of America**



**Volume 34, Number 1
Winter, 2011**

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ISSN 8755-156X

Listed in the *MLA International Bibliography* and *Humanities International Complete*

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1. Submissions from both members and non-members of HSA are welcome
2. All submissions must be original, unpublished work that is not being considered elsewhere and must not appear on the Internet prior to appearing in *Frogpond*
3. Submission by e-mail is preferred
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 - (a) a self-addressed stamped envelope (with a Canadian stamp)
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The Submission May Include Any or All of the Following:

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2. Up to three (3) haibun
3. Up to three (3) rengay or other short sequences
4. One (1) renku or other long sequence
5. One (1) essay
6. One (1) book review

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3. September 15 to November 15 (Winter Issue)

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Literature Award
\$100**

For the best previously unpublished work appearing in the
last issue of *Frogpond* as selected by vote of the HSA
Executive Committee

From Issue 33:3

most of
what is
right

in

a wild
flower

patch

Scott Metz, Oregon

Haiku & Senryu

old conglomerate
filled with bright pebbles
this sadness

so soft
I would lie down
moss by the river

Bruce Ross, Maine

spring thaw
a stream runs clear
from my past

Joseph M. Kusmiss, New Hampshire

thaw
the snowman waters
the crocus

John J. Dunphy, Ohio

sunset fades
through the ICU window
her monitors glow

Ruth Yarrow, Washington

Too drowsy
to masturbate:
summer noon

Jenna Le, New York

Gospel crescendo
over the bullfrog's thrum—
sultry midsummer

Rebecca Lilly, Virginia

earthquake—
the emptiness
of a child unblinking

Lisa Alexander Baron, Pennsylvania

among redwoods
the day's problems
not quite as big

Stephen A. Peters, Washington

the same gray flat sky
a year after
her death

PMF Johnson, Minnesota

Home from surgery—
what kindness,
a flower is

Lanara Rosen, California

Anastacia
cleans the room every day—
her gold teeth sparkle

David Rosen, California

hurricane,
two thousand miles away
my candle flickers

Vanessa Erikson, Arkansas

autumn wind
blowing the shadows
out of a tree

Gregory Hopkins, Alabama

waning moon...
the subtle phases
of her aging face

Harriet Bates, North Carolina

hills
turning quietly
to sky—

Gene Myers, New Jersey

we've had a good year—
a bone for the dog
and a walk to go bury it

Michael McClintock, California

if dry, cracked soil
could let out a sigh
first snowfall

Jean Jorgensen, Alberta

dusk
a loon carries
the breadth of the lake

Tom Painting, Georgia

in the hot tub's light
a drowned moth
awkward conversation

Erika Lee Williams, Kansas

fog rolling in fog rolling in

she fakes it
he fakes it
equinox

Alan S. Bridges, Massachusetts

one night stand
two
too many

Lucas Stensland, Minnesota

water ripples
beneath a boatman's song...
hazy moon

Kala Ramesh, India

a scream and a hiss
the garden snake and I
meet again

Mary Kipps, Virginia

downgraded hurricane
combers hiss
back to the sea

Robert Seretny, Maine

newborn—
the whole sky
in her irises

Judson Evans, Massachusetts

whale songs...
when did we stop
talking

Bud Cole, New Jersey

Lucky to feel
this way
thistle clump

Enough to continue
the scent
of white clover

Patrick Sweeney, Japan

withered fields—
one of the scarecrows
rolling his own

Lorin Ford, Australia

early sun
the long cool throats
of trumpet vine

midwinter hedge
the hidden lives
of birds

Ann K. Schwader, Colorado

early dawn
the world emerging
from silhouettes

Rhiannon Schmidt, Michigan

burl bark grown into a wound a word

Mark F. Harris, New Jersey

he steals a second look at her
heat
leaving the tea

sunset
warmth from within
the egg

Johnette Downing, Louisiana

daybreak
the rose that wasn't there
yesterday

morning after
all the brown spots
on my banana

Bob Lucky, Ethiopia

looking in the mirror
just the man
I wanted to see

Michael Ketchek, New York

blunt knitting needles
the day unravels
shadow by shadow

Tanya McDonald, Washington

return to the garden
my Clausewitz copy
covered in blossoms

Hans Jongman, Ontario

vees of geese...
who'll tend your grave
when I'm gone

Robert B. McNeill, Virginia

solitude becomes loneliness red moon

Lynne Steel, Florida

evening shadows ash of the incense

Ruth Holzer, Virginia

water spills
out of the wave

— — —

seashells that don't fit

Gary Hotham, Maryland

early dark
Christmas lights
colour the rain

Susan Constable, British Columbia

where you were
the chill
of the upholstery

Barbara Strang, New Zealand

new glasses—
never knowing
what I've missed

moving day—
wondering what memory
we left behind

Mike Montreuil, Ontario

a ring around the moon...
another argument
about nothing

John Kinory, England

home for Mother's Day
all day I blunder
into webs of love

Franchot Ballinger, Ohio

my old rake
missing teeth—
another autumn

George G. Dorsty, Virginia

story hour
the lean of first graders
for the turn of the page

Wanda D. Cook, Massachusetts

pink clouds
holding the sunset—
cocktail party prattle

Priscilla Van Valkenburgh, Utah

icy rain
penetrating my coat
her parting words

family reunion—
remembering why
I moved away

Nika, British Columbia

cumulonimbus who's next

rainforestabluronthezipline

Scott Mason, New York

morning stuffed
with yellows
overhung streets
moist and motionless

Marshall Hryciuk, Ontario

in the features of the wind
hides
a paper dragon

Adrian Briedis-Macovei, Latvia

ebb tide
wanting
to stay longer

Katrina Shepherd, Scotland

food poisoning diagnosis
process of elimination

Julie Warther, Ohio

spring storm
on the sofa
her bra

Thomas Martin, Oregon

evensong
pigeons perched on the sills
with the saints

Roland Packer, Ontario

a dust-covered packet
of his old love letters
autumn winds

Carolyn M. Hinderliter, New Jersey

winter seclusion
dust rising
in the lamp's heat

the blizzard—
it covered everything with
a mother's hush

Joan Iverson Goswell, Pennsylvania

sting of sleet
on flesh—
too sharp my words

Lois Rehder Holmes, Illinois

evening wine
and a wake reaching shore
from a boat long gone

Burnell Lippy, Vermont

high beams visit
a small bedroom
my thin cotton life

Dan Schwerin, Wisconsin

coffee house babble
among all the voices
my conscience

Robert Moyer, North Carolina

distant quacking—
the milky way obscured
by duckweed

Roman Lyakhovetsky, Israel

the new year
the new you
old hat

David Gershator, U.S. Virgin Islands

walking in to the funeral the long shadow ahead of me

Patricia McKernon Runkle, New Jersey

Indian summer day
I learn more about her
at the garage sale

Robert Epstein, California

first frost—
the steel blue perfume
of my after-shave

Damien Gabriels, France

early morning the pond shimmers sky catching leaves

jazz a violet sky before the first note

Andrea Grillo, New Jersey

laughing
fourteen years converge
in one moment

Victoria Witherow, Utah

millions of summers
have come and gone—
the sand between my toes

David Rosenthal, California

killing frost
queen anne's lace
wears black

Merrill Gonzales, Connecticut

pruning
the bonsai...
my knotty life

Charlotte Digregario, Illinois

starting over—
my footprints erased
by the morning tide

Cara Holman, Oregon

a keepsake
the long gone glow of what
still touches the heart

John F. Scheers, Arizona

birch bark peeling away all my excuses

Michele Root-Bernstein, Michigan

distant chainsaw
the frosted breath
of cattle

Michele L. Harvey, New York

hyacinth scent
the hiss
of his oxygen

Kathleen O'Toole, Maryland

what a compliment
the rain also
came to my bonfire

Owen Bullock, New Zealand

lingering heat—
my breath stretches out
the balloon's color

Chad Lee Robinson, South Dakota

evening birdcalls
I give my walking stick
back to the wildwood

Ellen Compton, District of Columbia

screen saver—
my icons scattered
around Stonehenge

Barry George, Pennsylvania

if only she had been buried wild crimson cyclamen

full in azure weather the condemned cow's udder

Clare McCotter, Ireland

Needles of rain
stitching the graveside
to the grave

Joan Zimmerman, California

thoughts unspool
with the white line
road trip

Sheila Sondik, Washington

distant hawks
circling circling
my short life

all the stars
all at once
leaf storm

Matthew M. Cariello, Ohio

unexpected cloudburst—
I look up the word
unrequited

C. William Hinderliter, Arizona

text message
the suddenness
of black ice

Elizabeth Howard, Tennessee

only remembering
the scent of rain
first kiss

Angela Terry, Washington

Thanksgiving Day...
one pink rose
lingers on the bush

William Scott Galasso, Washington

weight of a sparrow
shaking loose
a yellow leaf

John Stevenson, New York

his empty room
the lucky penny
left behind

Deborah Fox, Pennsylvania

november sunset—
the barren tree suddenly
exciting

Angela Sumegi, Ontario

clear sky
she says we need
to talk

William Kenney, New York

pouring rain wine all day

in the raw
on the floor
half shells

Jayne Miller, Wisconsin

Christmas tree
wrong from every angle
trial separation

Marsh Muirhead, Minnesota

a mockingbird
doing my cough
pollen

Charles R. Larsson, New Jersey

old gloves
after so many years
my hand in his

Joseph H. Gorman III, Pennsylvania

an empty teapot—
there's nothing more
I can do

Sue Colpitts, Ontario

morning obituaries...
there i am
between the lines

Don Korobkin, Pennsylvania

winter afternoon
she pounds the Esc key
to no avail

caterwauling:
3 a.m., I learn
its meaning

Diane Mayr, Massachusetts

a doomsday sky
weighs on castle ruins
forget-me-nots

Elizabeth Bodien, Pennsylvania

Indian summer
what's left in the hose
trickles out

leaves changing...
the river
lets me be who I am

Francine Banwarth, Iowa

caroadhockeye

deafening rain
we talk of the dead
in whispers

LeRoy Gorman, Ontario

little baby foal
a polite way of walking
where she wants

Greg Piko, Australia

rose-tinted dusk—
eyes of a cayman
from a dark pool

Bruce H. Feingold, California

a sense of balance
backache
heartache

after the kiss
reading her eyes
for oncoming trains

Victor Pineiro, New York

wilted lilies
the sweater
she used to fill

Bett Angel-Stawarz, Australia

night cicadas
all through the hours
if only if only

vintage kimono
my seams unraveling
this perfect life

Renée Owen, California

filtering fresh milk—
the calf looks up
from the nipple bucket

Tish Davis, Ohio

next night
still feeling the wings
circle the bed

David Boyer, Connecticut

after the ginko—
still there, all the things
I never noticed

Carlos Colón, Louisiana

ex-boyfriend—
that summer I spent
watering ragweed

haiku ennui
seventeen bags
of dead leaves

Jennifer Gomoll Popolis, Illinois

cello concerto—
the vole's dark smallness
crossing the road

June Hopper Hymas, Michigan

the cumulonimbus
full of faces
hiroshima day

Sheila Windsor, England

after the quarrel...
a singed peanut's lingering scent

Jennifer Corpe, Indiana

winter light—
shadows of pine trees
on pine trees

frosted breaths—
the shapes of our words
talk at once

hortensia anderson, New York

New Year's Day—
grunting my boot
onto the wrong foot

Bill Pauly, Iowa

beginner's photograph: the blurred speed of a snail

Eve Luckring, California

rain's end on bare branches pearls of time

Dietmar Tauchner, Austria

wrack line
nothing left
to say

Joseph Robello, California

a little older now moving on to irish stout

Duro Jaiye, Japan

through the wheels
of a rusty muck spreader
the curlew-called wind

John Barlow, England

solitude my shakuhachi attracts only wild turkeys

S.B. Friedman, California

full moon—
all night the howling
of snowmobiles

John Soules, Ontario

Tinseltown
filmy clouds drifting
through moonglow

Patricia Machmiller, California

new widow
the jello
not quite set

Erik Linzbach, Arizona

sound of the surf
moon
with a shark bite

Robert Mainone, Michigan

his warm toes
over her cold toes
winter love

Audrey Olberg, Maryland

the girl's tight jeans
the men's loose looks

Anne LB Davidson, Maine

house all quiet
after signing off email
midnight rain

Lenard D. Moore, North Carolina

funeral chapel—
the heartbeat
in the little one's hug

green quince
I ask again
if he loves me

Carolyn Hall, California

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In Memory of Peggy Willis Lyles
(Sept. 17, 1939 - Sept. 3, 2010)

autumn clouds—
I read *To Hear the Rain*
for her voice

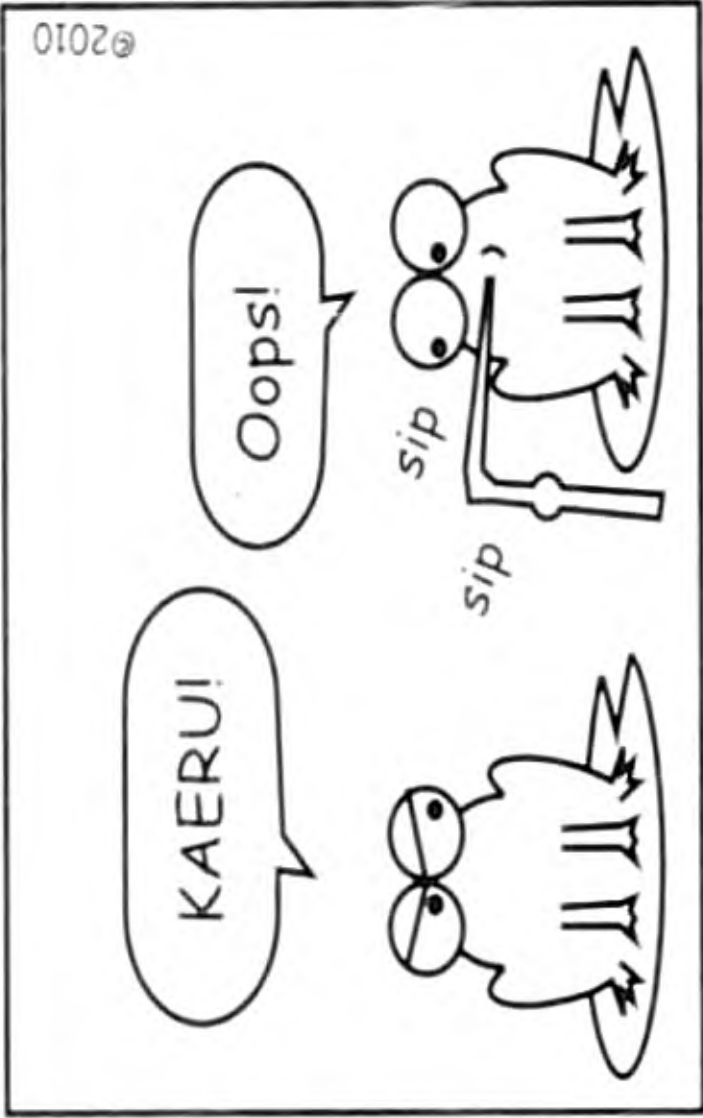
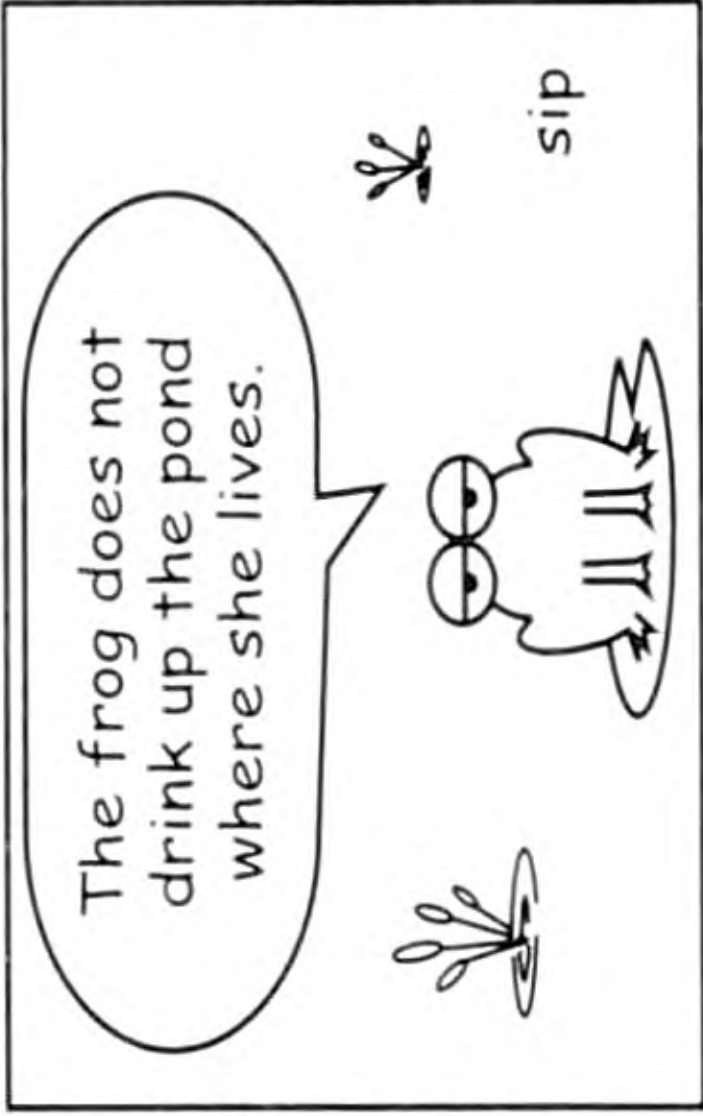
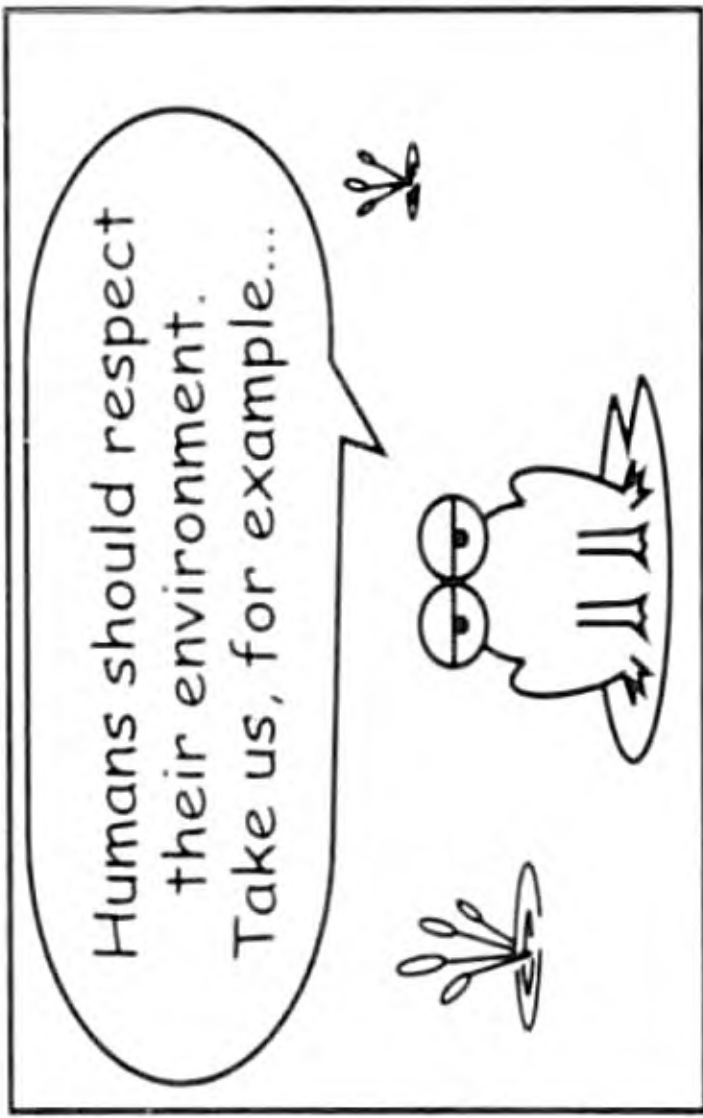
Lenard D. Moore, North Carolina

a hummingbird's tongue
probes the sweetness
summer's end

Carolyn Hall, California

Editors' Note: For more about Peggy Lyles, please go to p. 52

Old Pond by Jessica Tremblay



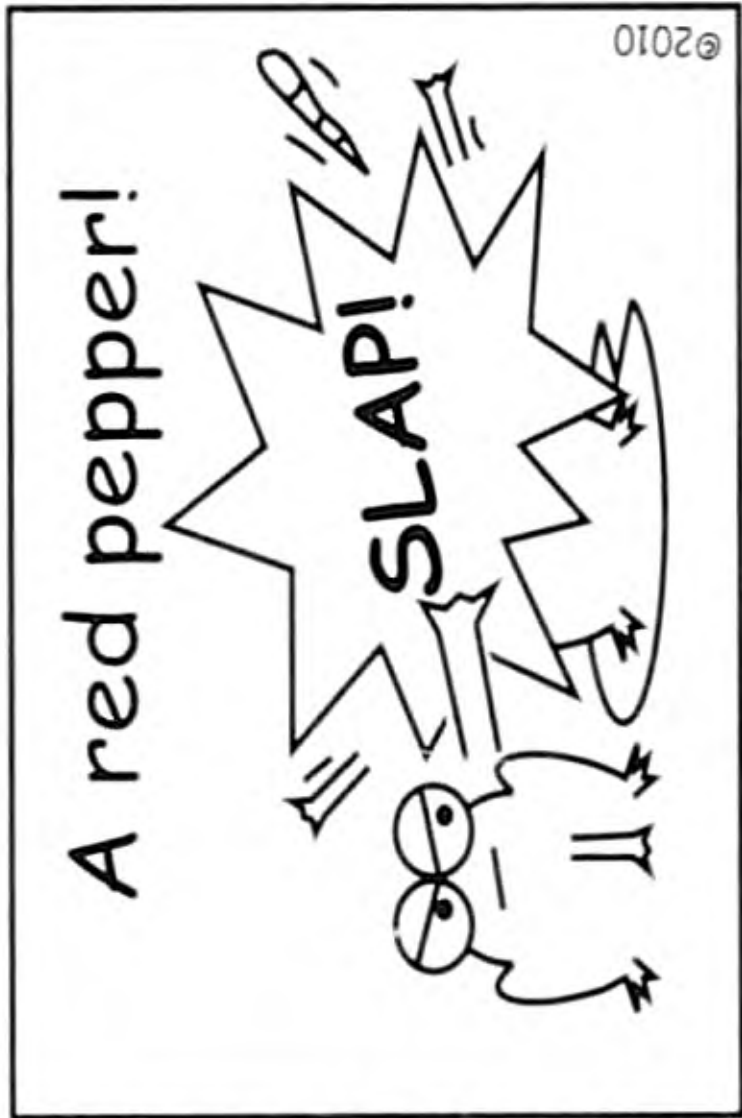
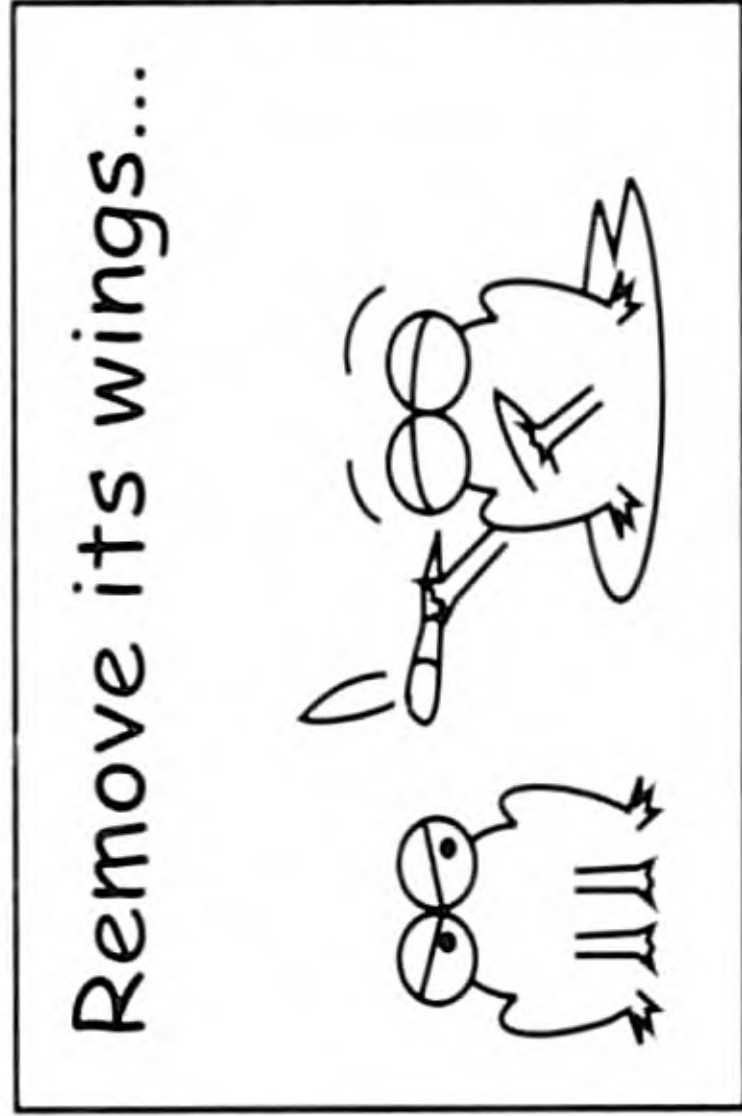
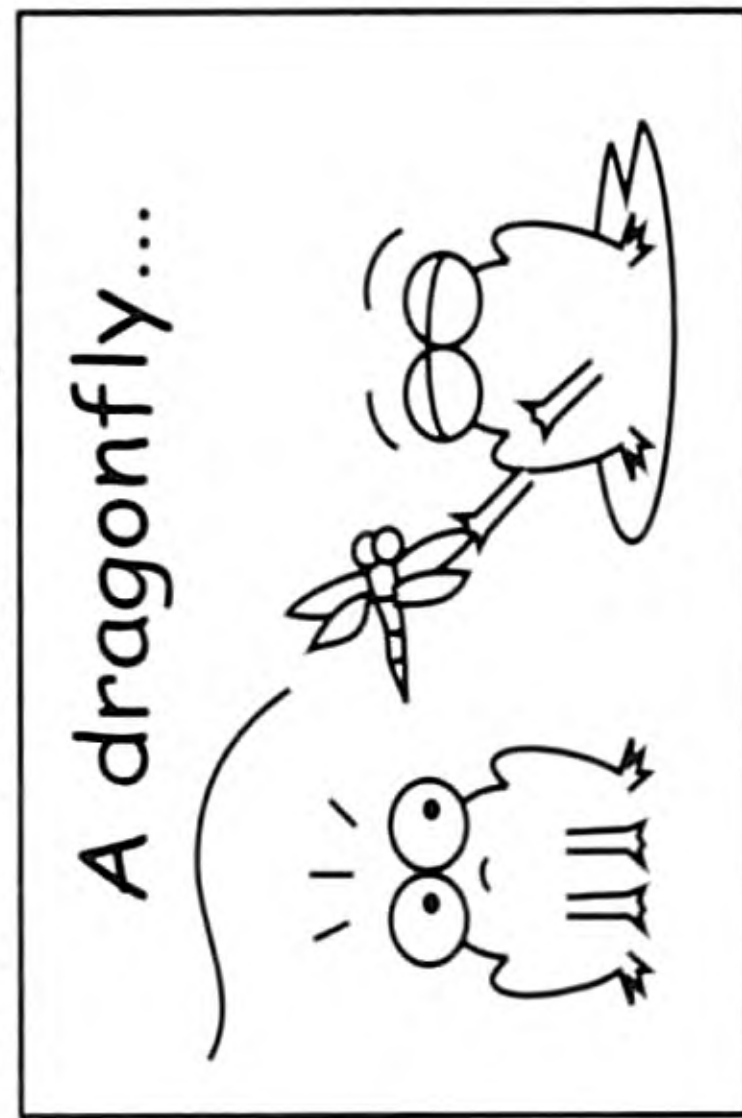
*Buddhist proverb

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Old Pond by Jessica Tremblay (featuring a haiku by Kikaku)



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Revelations: Unedited

GENESIS OF HAIKU: WHERE DO HAIKU COME FROM?

(The First of Two Parts)

by *Dr. Randy Brooks*, Millikin University, Illinois

Editor George Swede invited me to submit a “revelations unedited” for *Frogpond*, and I agreed to write a two-part revelations piece on my theory of writing haiku. My own theory comes from a blend of aesthetics of the global haiku tradition as well as my graduate studies in rhetorical theory. In this first part I will take up the theoretical question about the genesis of discourse—where do haiku come from? In rhetorical theory, this is known as “invention” in the writing process.

In the second part, I will address three broader theories of writing—the objective, the subjective, and the transactional—and how each leads to different assumptions about the writer, the reader, reality and language in the conjoined twin arts of reading and writing haiku. Although I am taking up questions of haiku writing theory, my approach will be to tell the personal story of my journey through these questions as a haiku writer, editor, publisher and teacher.

Part 1

As an undergraduate student at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, before I discovered haiku, I was immersed in contemporary poetry—Robert Bly, Gary Snyder, Robert Creeley, Sylvia Plath—and enjoyed studying the modernist poets such as William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound. However, as a Latin minor, I was also very interested in translating epigrams and reading fragments of Greek lyric poetry. My honors thesis was on western traditions of the short poem—comparing the ability of Greek lyric poetry to convey emotional intensity with the epigram, which more typically conveys witty satire. I became aware of the primary goals of the western short poem to bring readers to tears or laughter. In my final

semester at Ball State I won the student writing award and immediately took my prize money to the bookstore where I bought collections of short poetry, including two anthologies of haiku: *The Haiku Anthology* edited by Cor van den Heuvel, and *Modern Japanese Haiku* translated and edited by Makoto Ueda. You could say that my understanding of haiku initially “came from” these two books purchased in May of 1976.

One of the most interesting parallels I found between *The Haiku Anthology* and *Modern Japanese Haiku* is that both editors enthusiastically celebrated bringing unknown contemporary haiku to the reading public. Ueda states that “Many of the leading haiku poets of modern Japan still remain obscure in the West; some of them have not had a single haiku translated into a western language. This book is intended to help narrow the gap” (p. vii). Cor van den Heuvel asserts in his introduction, “Until now, the poets represented in this anthology have been largely ‘invisible.’ Though some of them have been writing haiku for nearly two decades or longer, their work has flowered practically unnoticed” (p. xxvii). I was fascinated with these contemporary haiku and the variety of approaches to writing haiku represented by the included authors. I realized that the haiku tradition was a vibrant, living literary tradition with a wide range of authors exploring the possibilities of the art for our own times. I started writing haiku in my journal that summer after graduation and have continued ever since. I enjoyed the variety of contemporary voices in these two haiku collections, and I began imitating favorite haiku by Kawahigashi Hekigodô, Ozaki Hôsei, and Michael McClintock.

For example, I appreciated this haiku by McClintock, which I read in the context of the Vietnam war:

dead cat . . .
open-mouthed
to the pouring rain

The Haiku Anthology, 1974, p. 83.

For me, this haiku put me on the battle field, with the pouring rain being both rain and bullets. The dead “cat” was an American GI lying in the rain, with his mouth open, just as it was when he died crying out in agony. The battle is too hot for the body to be retrieved yet. Of course this haiku can also be read as being about a literal dead cat in someone’s yard, with its fur matted down in the rain, having died while crying out. With either reading, it presents a cold, dark, haunting image of death that chills the reader to the bone. I’ve always liked this haiku for its ability to convey silence. When I read this haiku to students, it always gets a powerful immediate “ugh” response as well as longer-lasting imagined associations and memories of confronting death. The haiku has both impact and resonance. What more could we want from any work of literary art? I wanted to write haiku as powerful and evocative as that haiku.

Imitation and the Intertextuality of Haiku

One source of the genesis of haiku is simply reading (and enjoying) the haiku that have been written before. Then we imitate or rewrite what we have read, based on our own lives and cultural perspective. This is simple and natural on one level—we imitate the literary art that we read. We want to create literary art like the literary art we have enjoyed—that has moved us to tears or laughter or to an understanding. On the other hand, imitation is complex and genuinely worthy of being considered on a theoretical level. Literary art is never simply a matter of imitation. For quality literary art, the writer must go beyond merely imitating techniques or language or images seeking similar effects, in order to create a new literary work, in order to “make it new.” The challenge is not merely replication nor translation of an old poem from the past, but creation of something new that responds to the writer’s own time, the writer’s own cultural perspective, the writer’s values, thoughts, emotions, and so forth. This theoretical tension between the tradition and individual talent is healthy for the vitality of any art, including haiku. On one level, we are always rewriting something that has come before (the tradition

of known works). What we write comes “out of” what has been written before. On another level, we are always writing something new that has never existed before. This is often referred to as “intertextuality” which means that part of the genesis of haiku is how it revises or comes from previous texts.

Intertextuality of texts and quality imitation depend on a collection of commonly-known texts, which is sometimes referred to as “the canon” of a literary tradition. These known examples of excellence establish standards of quality expected from the subsequent rewrites and imitations. For example, Bashō’s frogpond haiku has that “here is the prototypical famous example of a haiku” quality, as evidenced in books such as Hiroaki Sato’s *One Hundred Frogs* collection of translations and variations. For the most part, the Japanese tradition of haiku has an established canon of venerated haiku writers—Bashō, Issa, Buson, Shiki—but the English-language tradition is relatively new and has only a few haiku writers who have emerged as examples of great writers in this literary art. This is both a blessing and a curse because “the canon” of any literature is always constructed to privilege and omit certain voices in the culture (often women and other social or political outsiders) or time periods (such as old Japan). The haiku tradition is blessed with the undefined openness for many contemporary voices and perspectives. But it is also cursed because so many high-quality haiku writers are unknown. Therefore, the haiku community always appears to be an outsider to the “mainstream” of literature defined as a series of well-known great writers.

Who are your great contemporary haiku writers? Why don’t we have the dominating genius writers who are venerated as the top exemplars of the art of writing haiku? In part, I believe that the answer to this question is the special collaborative nature of the tradition. Haiku is not a tradition based on a limited number of venerated great writers. Instead it is a tradition of social collaboration, a tradition of active participation between readers and writers in a collaborative creative process. In other words, the very nature of the haiku tradition is to be

able to contribute high quality literary art, without an established tradition or name recognition. In fact, the idea that the writer of the haiku is anonymous or unknown is a fundamental part of the democratic ideal of haiku as accessible and valued for its universal humanity rather than being the province of the elite few—whether they are elite by virtue of social class, education, or a coterie of critics who act as gatekeepers of a literary canon.

Haiku as a Collaborative Co-creative Act

The haiku tradition has emerged from linked verse traditions, so the concept that haiku are born as a collaborative act of creation shared by writer and reader has always been valued. Haiku are often created in response to or imitation of a previous work, which in turn is read and imagined resulting in the writing of another link or haiku. As Makoto Ueda explained in *Modern Japanese Haiku*, “Any poem demands a measure of active participation on the part of the reader, but this is especially true of haiku. With only slight exaggeration it might be said that the haiku poet completes only one half of his poem, leaving the other half to be supplied in the reader’s imagination” (p. vii). On a very fundamental level, I would argue that haiku “come from” this creative union of the writer and reader, an imaginative act of discovering significance together. The haiku experience is not something that occurs when the haiku is written; it occurs when the written haiku finds a reader who fully imagines it in order to fulfill its promise as a gift of realization, insight or feeling.

Haiku have often been characterized as gifts of insight or awareness or perception from the writer to be opened and enjoyed by the reader. Each haiku offers the promise of discovery of a resonating feeling—if you give it a fully imagined reading, if you let yourself enter into its space of perceptions, if you are open to its insight and feel the emotional significance of its moment, if you let it touch your own life memories and associations, if you play with the language and silences of the haiku, if you let it come alive, and if you

let it touch your own life memories and associations, if you play with the language and silences of the haiku, if you let it come alive, and if you let yourself come alive while holding it in your heart and mind for a moment. Once you have entered into that collaborative union with the haiku as a reader, you can't help but want to "give back" by writing haiku in response. You want to write haiku that are gifts for others to open and enter into the imaginative space they provide. Many haiku come from the desire to recreate that haiku experience of union between reader and writer.

This emphasis on co-creation of meaning has become a central part of my teaching haiku at Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois. One of the Japanese traditions I have adopted for teaching haiku is based on the distinction between editing workshops versus the celebratory enjoyment of discovering excellent new works to be admired. The Japanese usually have small groups of haiku writer friends who engage in editing sessions with each other, but when there are more public, social gatherings, they engage in *kukai*. As I understand it, in traditional *kukai* original haiku are submitted to the organizer who selects the best attempts for inclusion in the competition. In my classes I serve as the selector, so I place best attempts on a page with no names, then these are read out loud and enjoyed by everyone at the gathering. Each person selects a few favorites. Favorite haiku are noted and read out loud, then everyone can talk about what they love about that haiku. *Kukai* is not an editing session, so edit suggestions or comments about why someone does not like a haiku are not allowed. The point of *kukai* is to find haiku that are loved. The Japanese say that when the haiku finds a reader who loves it, that is the moment it is born. In my classes, after everyone has talked about why they like a haiku, a vote is taken to determine how many chose that haiku as a favorite. After the haiku is born, and only then, do we ask who wrote the haiku. When the newborn haiku is claimed by its author, there is applause (or snapping of fingers or tapping of pencils) to thank the writer for their gift. Then the group looks for another haiku waiting to be born. Authors of favorite haiku with the most votes

receive awards of haiku books or magazines. Through *kukai*, writers and readers can experience the social nature of haiku. The significance or meaning exists not within the poem, but within those who take it to heart and imagine it and connect it to their own memories, associations and feelings of being alive. The genesis of haiku comes from the desire to share such memories, associations and feelings with potential future readers who will love the haiku.

The Haiku Muse?

What about traditional western conceptions of inspiration for poetry? Do any of these apply to the haiku tradition? What are the sources of inspiration in writing haiku? What is the muse that inspires us to write haiku? These typical questions about inspiration and the western approach to the genesis of discourse seem very wrong-headed when applied to haiku. This approach assumes that the poet is an extremely gifted individual, inspired by the gods or possessing rare intuitive talent beyond rational explanation. Such writers are born, not taught—a genius with innate talents and gifts. How such writers come to be or where their great works come from is considered a mystery. We are not supposed to ask questions about how they achieved their miracles of creation. We are just supposed to be in awe of them and their amazing works.

These western myths of inspiration from the gods and gifted talents of the extraordinary heroic writer do not leave much room for a collaborative co-creation model of writing haiku. The heroic model places all of the power of creation on the writer, with little more than appreciative reception left for the reader. It is an imbalance that the haiku tradition has, fortunately, avoided for the most part. In haiku the gift is between the writer and reader, not something the writer received at birth as a freak of nature making him “mantic” or “out of his right mind” or “overcome with inspiration,” someone who writes with divine inspiration. The closest thing I’ve heard to this from the haiku community is the idea that if one is stoned or drunk they are inspired to write brilliant haiku, because

they let go of inhibitions and write beyond what they can do in their “right mind.” Of course, many of the haiku written from this approach to inspiration do not seem to be as good the next morning or day after when the writer sobers up.

If we take the idea of the muse as simply the idea of motivation to write, without the myth of the gifted heroic genius, what are the things that inspire us to write haiku? This is a legitimate question, worthy of exploration. When we face the blank page of a journal, what motivates us to write haiku, beyond the desire to get response? What guides our choices of topics, language, and images and therefore is our overall purpose for writing haiku? This essay is necessarily too short to address all of these related choices, but I will address a few of the concepts about motivation, at least on the broader level of topics and purposes.

Moments of Insight

When I started writing, one of my mentors at Purdue University, Dr. Sanford Goldstein, discouraged me from writing haiku because of his description of the best haiku as moments of epiphany. More specifically, he argued that the best haiku came from moments of satori—life-changing moments of insight and awareness. Relating these satori moments to years of meditation in the Zen tradition, he believed that these moments are far and few between, so a person should only write three or four satori haiku in a lifetime. Now he may have been pulling my leg a bit and trying to persuade me to writing tanka instead of haiku, but his point about the myth of the “aha moment” as a necessary element of every haiku is a genuine criticism. With tanka, Sanford argued, the writer can be autobiographical and directly express his or her emotions in the context of that autobiographical moment. To write ego-less haiku with a koan-like Zen insight, you have to be a Zen master.

The expectation that every haiku “comes from” such an insight or moment of awareness is very limiting. In fact, this is another version of the myth that haiku can only come from

inspired moments of insight, available only to the most spiritually-aware writers. This tyranny of epiphany is as wrong-headed as the western conception of the poet as a gifted genius, although we have had several Japanese and English-language haiku writers who attempt to write from Zen meditation and Zen aesthetics. Zen aesthetics do not require that each haiku contain a satori moment, but a variation of it as a moment of “noticing an insight” is certainly an unspoken goal behind such aesthetics.

Don't get me wrong. I do believe that most haiku have a gift of discovery within them to be shared with the reader, but the nature of that discovery is not necessarily an epiphany or life-changing moment of satori. It may be simply a feeling or an observation or a perception of something interesting. So I continued to read and write haiku, filling up blank pages in my journal. Where did these haiku come from, besides the haiku I was reading? Fortunately, I found another mentor who taught me a great deal about writing haiku through our ongoing correspondence: Raymond Roseliep of Dubuque, Iowa. Instead of seeking moments of satori or epiphanies, he taught me to write haiku from “our own back yard” as evident in his short essay, “This Haiku of Ours” published in *Bonsai: A Quarterly of Haiku*, 1.3, July 1976. Roseliep wrote: “I believe we are preserving the quintessence of haiku if we do what the earliest practitioners did: use it to express our own culture, our own spirit, our own enlightened experience, putting to service the riches of our land and language, summoning the dexterity of Western writing tools” (p. 12). On the same page he goes on to describe the wealth of content we should be drawing on to create our haiku:

For subject matter we should dig into our own teeming country, God's plenty when it comes to materials: outer space discoveries, hairy youth, mini skirts, bell bottoms, roller skates, pizza, peanut butter, saucer sleds, circuses, our enormous bird fish animal & insect kingdoms, our homeland flowers-trees-plants-grains-vegetables-&-fruits, motorcycles, ships that plow the sky and deliver people to Japan—the storehouse is without walls. Practically everything under the sun

is valid subject matter for haiku as for any poem, except that in haiku it is the affinity between the world of physical nature and the world of human nature that concerns us, and so we focus our images there. It's American images I'm advocating rather than the Japanese cherry blossoms, kimonos, rice, tea, temple bells, Buddhas, fans, and parasols that populate so many supposedly Western haiku; something is not quite right when our poems come out sounding like Eastern poems. Creation is still more exciting than imitation.

Consonance & Dissonance

Writing theories often discuss the writer's purpose as motivated by a sense of dissonance—a feeling that things are not right, that something is wrong, that our knowledge is incomplete, that something is broken, that things are hopeless, that we must address an identified problem. Most scientific writing is based on this model of problem solving—filling in the gaps of knowledge, trying to explain the data that doesn't fit the theory, and so on. Most political writing is based on this model as well—proposing changes and actions to address the issue. Literature is often motivated by this underlying sense of dissonance—the protagonist in most fiction has to overcome a conflict, plays and movies have a similar pattern of characters growing or changing by overcoming obstacles or surviving tragedies. Dissonance is a powerful motivator, and it is also common in haiku—as evident in haiku (and senryu) that address political or social issues. Dissonance is a common motivator for haiku dealing with difficult relationships and moments of grief, loss, terror and strong emotions. Some very powerful, moving haiku have come out of dissonance as a genesis of haiku.

While other types of literature briefly convey moments of consonance in contrast to the primary focus on dissonance, haiku actually can be written entirely out of consonance. These haiku express moments of beauty and completeness, a sense that everything is as it should be, a feeling that life is wonderful and should just be appreciated. Taken to an extreme, a large collection of haiku that all express such mo-

ments can appear to be too focused on pretty, “precious” moments. Such collections seem sentimental. It is the mix of consonance and dissonance in haiku that keep us on our toes as haiku readers.

In fact, some of the best-known Japanese aesthetics associated with haiku, such as *wabi-sabi*, include a mix of both feelings. *Sabi* emphasizes accepting the aloneness of the poet, a solitary person encountering and responding to the events and experiences of being alive. *Wabi* emphasizes the broken-ness or worn-ness of things that are valued and treasured because they have a history of human use. They have added emotional significance based on associations and memories of those who used these things before us. Therefore, these aesthetics have the combined feelings of consonance or comfort of being with things well-worn by fellow humans, but the tint of brokenness and aloneness, the dissonance of our lives. Bashō is famous for his shifts in haiku aesthetics from his *sabi* phase to his final *karumi* phase—moving from the dissonance of existential aloneness to celebrating the consonance of being social. This tension between dissonance and consonance has been present in the haiku tradition from at least Bashō’s time.

In David Lanoue’s novel, *Haiku Guy*, the apprentice haiku writer, Buck-Teeth, gets advice from three haiku masters on writing haiku. Each emphasizes a different source of inspiration for the genesis of quality haiku. The black poet, Kuro, teaches Buck-Teeth that the best haiku come from “the shadow side of things: on death, loss, despair, and sorrow” (p. 43). Life is tragedy so you might as well accept it and embrace it as the best source for writing quality haiku. His advice is that “we must record the disaster, witness the tragedy. See the dead cats!” (p. 45). Buck-Teeth’s second haiku master, the green poet, Mido, teaches him that “being a poet means you’ve got to go out of your mind! Drinking’s just one way....” (p.51). In this way the budding haiku poet can “unleash your raw voice, your true voice, the voice of your self beyond that scared, fictive imposter” (p. 52). The third haiku master, Shuro, the white poet, promotes a Zen approach based on the

wordless poem. He pauses from time to time to absorb the moment but never writes a haiku on paper. He only thinks them. As Lanoue writes, “according to Shiro, language corrupts haiku. A poem in its pure form exists as a nonverbal insight called a ‘dibbit,’ a flash of wordless perfection that words can never capture” (p. 48). Through the fictional experiences of Buck-Teeth, Lanoue teaches us about the limitations of each of these approaches. In true haiku teaching style, Lanoue implies that each haiku poet will have to find their own best approach, their own source of inspiration, their own genesis of haiku.

Conclusion

The subject or content of haiku is not a source for the genesis of haiku. Haiku do not come from things. Haiku do not come from direct experiences. We have many experiences that do not result in a haiku. Haiku do not come from cameras. Haiku are not snapshots. Haiku come from a writer sitting down to write a haiku. The haiku writer draws on all of his or her resources to write a haiku—previous examples of haiku, memories, associations, feelings, cultural perspectives, direct observation, imagination, word play. These are the haiku writer’s tools, not the motivation nor process for inventing a haiku into being. Observation of the world we live in and awareness of our own inner states of consciousness and our own feelings are important in writing quality haiku, but they are not the source of where our haiku come from. Haiku come from our deliberate intention to write haiku, based on our intuitive responses to previous haiku and to awareness of our perceptions about being ALIVE in the world. They come from our whole selves—emotions, sensations, memories, language resources, social awareness, cultural contexts, values, and our own sense of significance in things and ideas we pay attention to. Haiku come from noticing and responding in the literary construct we call haiku.

I will conclude by discussing an example from one of my earliest haiku, published in *Modern Haiku* issue 8.1 in 1977:

dirt farmer's wife
at the screen door—
no tractor sound

Where did this haiku come from? First of all, I was reading a lot of haiku in anthologies and haiku magazines, including translations by Makoto Ueda, R.H. Blyth, Harold Henderson and Lucien Stryk. So I was interested in the idea of writing haiku. I was especially intrigued by the power of silence and things unsaid in haiku and how haiku could focus on perceptions of emptiness and absence, such as Buson's imaginative haiku about stepping on the dead wife's comb. I began trying to write haiku about noticing things not there. I was writing a series of haiku about growing up in western Kansas, where I spent many summers helping my grandparents with the wheat harvest. I was trying very hard, without much success, to write haiku that were not merely descriptive but also emotionally evocative without being overt about the emotion. I wanted the emotion to be suggested by the actions and images within the haiku. Both of my grandparents farmed, but I was very aware of the differences in their lives. My mother's family were homesteaders who owned a ranch and kept a herd of cattle. My father's family were cash-rent farmers who depended on the success of each crop to pay the bills. I observed significant social and cultural differences in these two homes.

Of course, none of these things were the genesis of discourse for this haiku. This haiku did not come from these contexts and circumstances. It did not come from theoretical goals such as "objective correlative." This haiku came from me writing in my journal about a heartfelt memory of my grandmother who died in 1963 when I was nine years old. I remembered her in the little farm kitchen made from a porch on the front of a little Sears-Roebuck house. I remembered her in an apron, listening for grandpa to come in for breakfast after his early start in the field. I remembered the feeling on a day when she returned to the screen door several times to listen for his return, to listen for the sound of his tractor, a sound that usually was carried easily across the Kansas fields on the south wind

to her house. I realized this was an image that contained a felt memory of her care and concern and love for my grandpa as his biscuits and eggs grew cold on the dining room table. As I wrote this haiku, I wanted it to connect to a broad audience, so that they could imagine it for themselves, so that they too could wonder why she could hear no tractor sound, so that they could continue the emotion inherent in her perceptions at the screen door. To let more readers into this haiku, I didn't write "my grandma / at the screen door." I wrote "dirt farmer's wife" which brought the social context and suggested the urgency of the tractor's success. I thought this distanced me as well—presenting her as more alone and isolated on the prairie, concerned about her absent companion. This haiku is not about being a grandson. It is about a wife watching over and caring for her farmer husband. I wanted to end with "no tractor sound" so that the haiku would be forever unresolved, left open to the reader to imagine the rest of the story.

For me, the genesis of haiku is writing a literary work of art in a tradition called haiku. In the writing of a haiku, I attempt to awaken my whole being's perceptions and awareness and feelings and memories of being alive in the world. If I have succeeded, I have invited readers to join in the co-creation of feelings and significance from their own responses to my haiku. In writing a haiku, the haiku writer starts with an act of literary imagination and leaves the door open for the reader to enter and add their own imaginative, heartfelt response.

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Tan Renga

Two Tan Renga

by

Pamela A. Babusci, New York; *Paul Smith*, England

*maple leaf—
the sound it doesn't make
while falling*

days getting shorter
i too shed my layers

* *

* *

Indian summer
cupping fallen leaves
in my palms

*memories linger
at the edge of dusk*

*

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Rengay

This Way

by

Ron Moss, Tasmania;

Peggy Willis Lyles, Georgia; *Ferris Gilli*, Georgia

One of the great pleasures of being active in the haiku community is that one might be very fortunate and get to write linked verse with friends and mentors. Ferris and I began writing rengay early this year, and in June I suggested that we invite Peggy to join us in this wonderful genre. Peggy immediately responded with her usual warm and openhearted commitment to share with her fellow poets. The rengay progressed quickly with lots of fun and laughter, until all too soon the last verse was upon us. This also marked the point of Peggy's declining health and her admission to hospital. Two months later we got the shocking news of Peggy's passing.

Ferris and I wanted to honour Peggy and her writing spirit by finishing the rengay. This from Ferris: "I'm so very glad we had that great time with her, a profoundly special experience." I'll second that!

road trip the car and mother begin to boil	rm
fingernail clippings in the rest stop sink	pwl
souvenir market a painted sign announces THIS WAY TO THE EGRESS	fg
repeated orders crackle from the drive-in speaker	rm
country church we bury my sister's ninety-six cows	pwl
a monarch butterfly drifts in psychedelic mushrooms	fg

minus one

by

Roberta Beary, District of Columbia; *Deborah P Kolodji*, California

on the school bus
one mother minus one
wedding ring

*a teacher's dismissal
at the parent conference*

relentless rain
a beat-up van ends
the carpool line

*two children
still waiting in daycare
cloudy afternoon*

on a brown lunch-bag
a red crayon heart

*career day—
one boy with two dads,
one girl with none*



Renku

Inside The Hedge

A 12-Verse Junicho Renku

by

Kathleen O'Toole, Maryland; *Fonda Bell Miller*, Virginia; *Mary Wuest*, Virginia; *Ellen Compton*, District of Columbia; *Lee Giesecke*, Virginia; *Elizabeth Black*, Virginia; *Penny Showell*, Virginia; *Roberta Beary*, District of Columbia; *Kristen Deming*, Maryland.

1. (ko) snowbank
inside the hedge
sparrow chatter
(season word: snowbank = winter)
2. (fbm) arlington cemetery
rows and rows of white stones
(link: white stones/snowbank)
3. (mw) mother's scolding
the tot places the tulip
back on its stem
(tulip=spring; people/cemetery; blossom verse)
4. (ec) I reset my Mickey Mouse watch
for daylight saving
(daylight saving = spring; watch/stem)
5. (lg) light-years away
in the eyepiece slowly
it moves
(eyepiece/watch crystal)
6. (eb) summer solstice
the quarter moon rising
(summer season; time and space—celestial bodies; moon verse)

7. (ps) in my dream
we walk hand in hand
among Roman ruins
(Roman/solstice; love verse)

8. (rb) his fingers comb
her silver hair
(fingers/hand: second love verse)

9. (mw) out there
over the stubbled field
the old rooster's crow
(stubble field = autumn; rooster/comb)

10. (rb) a new coolness blankets
the remains of the day
(new coolness = autumn; remains/stubble)

11. (eb) basket in hand
the woman
stoops to glean
(glean/remains)

12. (kd) bubbling up
waters of a spring-fed lake
(bubbles up—stoops)

*

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In the Waterfall

A Nijuin Renku

Ken Wanamaker, Nevada; *Origa*, Michigan; *Sue Shand*, England; *Colin Stewart Jones*, Scotland; *Lynne Rees*, France; *Christopher Patchel*, Illinois; *Norman Darlington*, Ireland (Sabaki)

1. for a while
secluded in the waterfall —
the start of summer bashō*
2. toetips tickled
by those sweetfish ken
3. dream playing
with the baby daughter
she never had origa
4. such clouds as travel
at the will of the wind sue
5. a wild-cat's
eyes lit up by
the hunter's moon colin
6. feeding the fire
keeps the ghosts at bay lynne
7. trick-or-treating
with the neighbour's lad
I blush behind my mask norman
8. his full heart
beating a tattoo colin
9. from Sword Beach
and Omaha Beach
the road to the interior lynne

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 10. | all's fair
out of the referee's sight | chris |
| 11. | frozen sacks
a hot poker game
with Ruth and DiMaggio | ken |
| 12. | a house in ruins
beneath the winter moon | norman |
| 13. | we reclaim
church windows
to add to our folly | sue |
| 14. | too late to change
what you've been hiding? | origa |
| 15. | he wants a quickie
she wants a quickie
divorce | lynne |
| 16. | a pair of socks drying
in the microwave | chris |
| 17. | ten little piggies
blind to their fate
smiling in their sleep | origa |
| 18. | but look — first shoots
in the market garden! | colin |
| 19. | the promise
of cider in fragrant
apple blossom | sue |
| 20. | we open our arms
to the east wind | ken |

*Translated by *Norman Darlington*: しばらくは瀧に籠るや夏の始
Shibaraku wa taki ni komoru ya ge no hajime

August Sea
A Nijuin Renku

by

Fay Aoyagi, California & **Lenard D. Moore**, North Carolina

1. August sea
a gull answers
the departure gong FA
2. late summer clouds darken
beyond the cottage window LDM
3. a recipe
of vegetarian curry
in mother's handwriting FA
4. an aroma of ginger
as the evening wanes LDM
5. Harvest Moon
in the rusty pail
fish scales LDM
6. under the persimmon tree
our first kiss FA
7. a dragonfly hovers
over the hammock
we share LDM
8. a soldier returns
with his artificial leg FA
9. cold afternoon
helicopter propellers
spinning faster LDM

10. I dance with Santa Claus
one more time FA
11. last snow of the season
a butler winds up
a gramophone FA
12. she kicks off her shoes
against the winter night LDM
13. mist
a princess returns
to the moon palace FA
14. he plants sweet peas
in the garden's back row LDM
15. mountain hut
a hundred candles lit
for a hundred stories FA
16. a ghost dog walks
on the autumn train tracks LDM
17. after all these years
our high school yearbook
shows her same smile LDM
18. in white breath
we exchanged our vows FA
19. cherry blossoms
on her borrowed hat
evening breeze LDM
20. everywhere
the scent of spring FA

Dream of New Year

A Kasen Renku

by

Eiko Yachimoto, Japan; *Ella Rutledge*, Japan

1. on the road again
I dream of New Year rice cakes,
folded fern pillow Bashō
2. greeting at an unknown gate
familiar scent of pine boughs Ella
3. explosive applause
for *yokozuna* wafting
from the radio eiko
4. in a hardware store window
a bunch of red-handled brooms Ella
5. the rising moon
mirrored in a mountain lake
untrodden, unmapped eiko
6. through the chilly air, a leaf
came down onto the dark stone ella
7. hunting fall colors
Makioka sisters choose
their fine kimono eiko
8. during a lull in the game
a man ponders his next move Ella
9. before we were born
a crown-prince danced in the rain
winning his first love eiko
10. the song no longer makes sense
now that you have gone away Ella

11. in purple sunset
the wake of a battleship
graces the deep strait eiko
12. an airbase runway repaired
old wounds left to fester Ella
13. Was a ghost whistling?
I'd hear it walking barefoot
through sugarcane fields eiko
14. rum cokes on the veranda
moonlight leaks through a roof hole Ella
15. the gold pendulum
of the clock swings back and forth
a mouse heads for home Ella
16. "let's rest on the river bank."
clouds drift from the east eiko
17. fading into white
down the petal-scattered street
a tofu seller's horn Ella
18. warped faces appear, disappear
children keep blowing bubbles eiko
19. mud flat at low tide
I pick up opalescent shells
remembering Mom Ella
20. rosary of long shorelines
a jet-pilot squints his eyes eiko
21. deep within the woods
an owl watches from the branch
of a withered tree Ella

22. first snow won't stop for two nights
shoji moistened tenderly eiko
23. soft glow on her lips
 hearing footsteps on the path
 she turns to meet him Ella
24. tomorrow is the day for
 Hester Prynne to face the court eiko
25. your photograph still
 hangs in the unused bedroom
 its colors bleeding Ella
26. hexagonal quartz crystals
 cushioned by thick cotton pads eiko
27. a perfect circle
 formed after many false starts
 containing nothing Ella
28. the harvest moon floating high
 to lure out an old lobster eiko
29. tourists now depart
 memories of sunlight lost
 in fog behind them Ella
30. a long entwined vine of grape
 to which I cling like a madman eiko
31. no longer does smoke
 from household fires twist upward
 to infinity Ella
32. schoolgirls chant in chorus
 at *Fudo-do* in *Kinkaku* Ella

33. carrying up and down
corridors of umber gloss
200 futon eiko
34. slowly from its chrysalis
emerges a butterfly Ella
35. a young shadow moves
on the cleanest concrete wall
to the blossom breeze eiko
36. the seeds have all been planted
a farmer drinks from the well Ella

Notes

Stanza 3. *yokozuna*: the highest ranking sumo wrestler.

Stanza 7. Makioka sisters: The English title of *Sasameyuki*, a Japanese novel written by Junichiro Tanizaki.

Stanza 22. *shoji*: Japanese sliding windows/doors with rice paper.

Stanza 32. *Fudo do in Kinkaku*: A hall in the temple often called Golden Pavilion, a famous destination in Kyoto, often of overnight school excursions.



10. school's closed
let's break out the sledge SW
11. they search
every inch of her cell
the pretty one SW
12. a needle goes deep
between songs RM
13. Yoko and John
on u-tube
waving thru the mist SW
14. cherries of ink fall
from a loaded brush RM
15. out on the tiles
with the winter moon
next door's ginger tom SW
16. a tweety-bird tattoo
sinks below RM
17. after midnight
the waitress elbow deep
in bubbles SW
18. clink of pint glasses
at the beer festival RM
19. all the way there
and back again
apple blossom scent SW
20. the call of a moss-froglet
under a distant star RM

Blue Butterfly
A Yotsumono Renku
by

Sandra Simpson, New Zealand; *John Carley*, England

the patter of rain
on a banana frond—
blue butterfly

*the queen of heaven
wreathed round with stars*

lighting a candle
for the ikon,
for myself, for you

*another mountain
tumbled to the sea*

*

*

*

*

Haiku Sequences

major earthquake

by

karen peterson butterworth, New Zealand

magnitude seven quake
my heart races
the clock stops

crammed in one doorway the whole family*

sweeping up
shattered wineglasses
we pass the bottle

aftershock
is the lamp still trembling?
am i? are we both?

one fortnight
more than seven hundred quakes
what next?

behind the
collapsed building
a weeping cherry
in full bloom

*This haiku is a revision of one that has previously appeared in
a fine line (NZ) and *Presence* (UK).

Decades

A solo zip sequence*

by

Sheila Windsor, England

decades apart we wave goodbye
goodbye paper poppies crushed

remembrance day at the cenotaph
then 'to buy or not to buy'

soon christmas a fly
in the library settles on silence

sycamores all naked now
i flip thru the pages of books

**First proposed in 1999 by the British poet John Carley,
the zip is a fixed form stanza of 15 syllables deployed at
will over two lines, each of which has a weak pause
indicated by a caesura.*



For Charlie Patton: The Blues Line

(These are sequenced poems that incorporate floating lyrics from traditional pre-WWII blues songs by Charley Patton)

by

Lucas Stensland, Minnesota

banty rooster
my eyes when
I'm away

sometimes I think
I'll quit you —
tangled vines

drunk
as I can be...
half-empty garage

smiling through
a hangover —
heart like railroad steel

women smelling complicated
po' boy
long way from home

forever
that lonesome road
my shadow behind

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*

Oil Spill

by

Michael Ketchek, New York

oil spill dawn
the waters
keep darkening

the ink stain spreading
across the blotter
looks like the sea

oil spill
rainbow
in a puddle

oil spill, what a waste
cold pressed, extra virgin
twenty dollars a bottle

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first day out

by

Renée Owen, California

from out of the blue birdsong
seedpods swirl i lose my busy thoughts
potty break beneath poison oak June afternoon
sunshine one nap blurs into another
flickers of green so many legs this millipede
learning to walk on water the current catches a duckling
dangling my toes in the river crawdad's hidey-hole
the only sound wind in the willows
my sandbox full endless summer sundays

A Life in Four Seasons

by

Chen-ou Liu, Ontario

I write her
one poem every day
spring dewdrops

a butterfly
tattooed on her buttock
summer heat

autumn dawn
before the mirror I count
gray hairs

snow on snow
thoughts of her emerge
one at a time

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Memory Lane

by

Margaret Chula, Oregon

Grampy's meadow
pods of forget-me-nots
cling to my socks

following my footprints
of fifty years ago
those endless summers

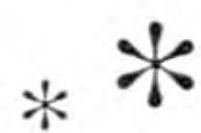
the grass
between the ruts
up to my knees

dried up corn husks
wind furls the white skirt
around my legs

searching for the gully
where we hid from the heat
deer prints in wet mud

beavers' paradise
skeletons of trees
drowning in swamp

I never thought twice
of picking black-eyed Susans
now, leaving them



Mountains in Darkness

by

Melissa Spurr, California

the outline
of mountains in darkness
my unknown origins

rings on a tree stump
forty-three years
of unanswered questions

milky way
my birth mother
seeks me out

windfall apples—
St. Anne's Hospital
for Unwed Mothers

cold stars
she says she couldn't touch
her own baby

the half brother
I never knew I had
waxing winter moon

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Star-Spangled Haiku

by

Johnny Baranski, Washington

*oh, say can you see
the moonlit city skyline
from the county jail*

*by the dawn's early light
one convict makes
a break for it*

*captured convict
what so proudly we hailed
flies at half staff*

*at the twilight's last gleaming
moonbeams show the way
home from jail*

*whose broad stripes and bright stars
enliven the county jail's
grim stone walls*

*through the perilous fight
few jail inmates go
unscathed*

*o'er the ramparts we watched
the county jail goon squad
put down a riot*

*inmate laundered socks
were so gallantly streaming
from D Block's third tier*

and the rocket's red glare
heard but not seen, a convict
in the "cooler"

the bombs bursting in air
recalls a vet doing time
for murder

gave proof through the night
that our flag was still there
guard tower searchlights

oh say does that star-spangled
banner yet wave behind
jail barbed wire

o'er the land of the free
jam-packed jails
harvest moon

dusk and the home of the brave
county jail outlaws locked
down for the count

*

*

*

*

Morocco Sequence 2010: For Moha and Aziz

by
Bruce Ross, Maine

through the clouds
spine of the Atlas Mountains
long ago memories

Tahala
in the abandoned Jewish graveyard
ripe prickly pear

Berber women
all their clothes drying
from the same tree

Djemaa el Fna
the snake charmer's cobra
relaxes its hood

Old City riad
the stained glass stars brighten
with daybreak

Merrakesh
the pre-call to prayer
into my dreams

afternoon medina
bags of broken-up bread
left for the poor

Badi Palace
into the bluest sky
clacking of a stork

Saadian Tombs
washing my hands
with basil leaves

airport departure
the muezzin's voice fills
the waiting room

Summer's End

by *Chris Bays*, Ohio

Once more, I hike up Himmelreich, Heaven's Kingdom, a hill rising above Otterbach in Germany. The climb is steep. My breathing more labored than when I was young. In twilight the asphalt path appears darker than the time it was clay and stones. It has been over ten years since I hiked this path, a path leading from my birthplace.

I rest. Wheat rustles next to me. For a moment, papa in military fatigues struts beside me; in my mind's ear he drawls on about Kentucky hollers and his youth. He is now gone. And the sky begins to turn from blue to gold. More and more houses descend into mist below. In the distance I barely make out oma's home, now the home of mama.

I've come back to care for mama. She can no longer join me on these hillside hikes. Soon she will live with my family in Ohio. I hear her strong voice singing Schubert Lieder when we once climbed this hill together.

I continue trekking toward the dimming light. The path gradually flattens and becomes dirt. I have arrived at the fringes of woods, dark woods that hold tales of roaming elves, and pilots shot down in WWII. Before entering I turn around and look at my hometown.

measured fields ...
Mozart's music drifts
from below

Köln

by *David Grayson*, California

Cleaning out the file cabinets, I found a folder stuffed with old photos and keepsakes. I pulled out a single sheet of fine linen paper, crisply folded in thirds. Addressed to me on stationery from the Hyatt Regency Köln, only two words were scrawled in the middle of the sheet: “Der Pickleschniffer!”

Written by Mark eleven years ago when he was in the third day of a drinking binge during Carnival in Cologne, I had all but forgotten this slip of paper. I could now clearly recall opening Mark’s missive to me from across the Atlantic—cracking up all that day, in spite of myself.

Of course, so much from then is gone: the old office where we worked; the local bars where we’d try to meet girls; the rickety bookshops we used to haunt; most of all—Mark.

the scent of nothing
but paper
autumn moon



A Memory

by *Dorothy McLaughlin*, New Jersey

Homey memories, sleeping for decades, sometimes wake and surprise us. I was peeling apples for a pie when I had a pleasant flashback, the small batch of apple jelly my mother made from red skins and cores that otherwise would have gone unnoticed to the garbage. I watched while she simmered them in water, then strained them through cheesecloth to get a pink juice, which she measured and placed in a clean pan, added Certo and sugar, and returned the mixture to the heat, reminding us children of the dangers threatening us in hot liquids. After several checks for doneness, she poured the amber liquid into a few small glass jars and waited for it to set. How delicious the house smelled!

Amazed at her skill in transforming scraps into jewel-like preserves, we enjoyed it occasionally on our toast. I don't think she repeated the performance. It must have been curiosity, not economy, that inspired her. Store-bought jelly was probably less expensive. No, I've not been tempted to emulate her.

newly turned loam
this spring's bean seeds wait
for apple blossoms



Looking Back

by *Roberta Beary*, District of Columbia

I don't remember her telling me a bed-time story. Or singing a lullaby. Or even putting a band-aid on one of my cuts. No good-night kisses. No singsong, I love you's. But every once in a while the gift of a book. Handed over without any fuss. *Treasure Island, Little Women, Emma, The Woman in White, Wings of the Dove, Tess of the D'Uberilles, Vanity Fair, Silas Marner, The House of the Seven Gables.* Maybe she wouldn't win any prizes for mother-of-the-year. But I wouldn't say no to nominating her.

pocket mirror
all the little bits
of me

*

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When my father became prayer flags ...

by *Sonam Chhoki*, Kingdom of Bhutan

Through monsoon clouds a golden haze radiates in the west. Gamboge tendrils of bitter gourd vines flutter noiselessly in the breeze. In the courtyard of the ancestral house 108 prayer flags flap in unison. I murmur the mantra on the silken banners:

OM MANI PADME HUM

Invocation to *Chenrezi*¹, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, to negate my father's bad karma and guide him through the *bar-do*². Just a week ago, my father and I walked where the prayer flags now stand. A raven alights on the crown of a towering prayer flag pole. What does it see? Does it know where the dead go?

fog in the valley —
long creak of prayer wheels
into the night

Notes

¹*Chenrezi*: (CHEN- RE- ZI) (Tibetan/Dzongkha, Skt. Avalokiteshvara). Embodiment of Buddha's compassion.

²*Bardo*: (BA-DO) (Tibetan). Intermediate state between death and new rebirth consisting of 49 days.

Vigil

by *hortensia anderson*, New York

“Grandmother, are you there?” I whisper, stroking her cheeks. Her face has the feel of fragile parchment—a finely lined map of joys and sorrows.

I vow not to sleep until she wakes.

Yet somehow, as evening passes, she slips away from me—a slight warmth remaining on her pillow.

chill wind—
the morning glory
slightly blue

*

*

Time shattered

by *Kathleen O'Toole*, Maryland

At this stage, tiny gestures become sacraments: swabbing my father's dry mouth, putting cream on lips thinned from six weeks without eating—like feeding a downed nestling with an eye dropper when I was a child. This fatigue—every limb aches, each body part seems twice its weight, and numb. Time is shattered into fragments: beads of dew on a blade of grass, a robin's wing in the boxwood, new blossoms on the gardenia, his delight in smelling each petal in a bouquet of white roses from his “scraggy bush.” Each good night kiss leaves its mark.

the old jewel box
used to play
Tenderly

Home

by *John Stevenson*, New York

The mature maples in our yard release a lot of seeds. Those that fall close to the trunk have no chance of thriving in such deep shade.

my son as Hamlet
I didn't know
he was going to die

*

*

*

*

Missing Man

by *J. Zimmerman*, California

Mid-November after I rake the leaves I stand at Central and First, holding the Stars and Bars. All of them died in Nam—my brother Joe, my cousin Freddy, mom's youngest brother Jack. Sometimes I just have to come out on the streets and stand with my flag. There's no parade.

The smell of burning
could be diesel
could be napalm

Thirst

by *Carol Pearce-Worthington*, New York

I have to get home. Over and over repeating aloud, home, have to get home. Lost in dark streets I take the wrong subway. Home is us, is our place, is safe, but the door unlocks into empty space. Inside is what I rushed to escape: The winter dark. I fall to the floor still wearing my jacket and hat. I cry so long that I become thirsty. I rinse my face at the kitchen sink, drink from cupped hands, return to the only place I can stand, this streak on the rug, accepting that nobody will come to say what's wrong, take off your hat, turn on a light, you'll be all right, no one to hold me or to know that I cry. No door opens, no faucet runs, no bed squeaks, no voice calls my name. He will not jingle his keys and I will not run to meet him.

I cry until light sifts between the venetian blinds and heat taps through the pipes and at least for now I seem to be done crying. Slowly I sit. There is nothing here but emptiness. Nothing but silence. No sounds in the other room. No keys in the locks, no footsteps in the hall. I will not hear his voice calling from the bathroom. Looking around, I will not find him. There is nowhere I can go that is not without him. My face feels stiff. Home is not home anymore. I am alone. I shiver. He is gone and he is not coming back. I am done crying.

thirst
long before
the rain begins



This Strange Summer

by *Aurora Antonovic*, Ontario

She wanted to be an artist, so I would spend hours showing her how to study flowers, leaves, pets, people, in order to duplicate them. Somewhere in between her mastering the pencil and her teen years, I moved away and lost sight of her. Last week, her funeral was held. Cause of death: anorexia-induced heart failure. The funeral home was filled with paintings and drawings of too-thin figures and malformed flowers.

almost autumn
how spindly and bare
the branches



Gail

by *Lynn Edge*, Texas

Black hair. Curves in tight jeans. She was the bold one. I admired her adventurous life; she wanted what I had. Two weeks before her death, she said, "Remember that blue taffeta dress? I wanted clothes like yours," and I replied, "But you got all the dates."

four divorces
a chest of drawers filled
with negligees

Golden Tresses

by *hortensia anderson*, New York

By the church in San Juan, we ask the woman to photograph
my mother, my sister and me.

“How lovely,” the woman says, “all three of you with the
same golden hair.”

Holding our braids together, we can't tell where one ends and
the others begin.

on sale—
boxes of “honeyed blonde”
in the third aisle



Marry Me

by *Genie Nakano*, California

Riding high, on Daddy's shoulders, I tell him, “When I grow
up, I'm going to marry you.” He laughs and says, “You'll
change your mind.”

He doesn't believe me so I kick and pull on his hair. He laughs
even harder.

third marriage. . .
i cry until
i laugh

Weekend

by *Lynn McLure*, North Carolina

I watch my husband, his familiar back to me, seasoning steaks for our dinner. His shoulders are tense as he bends over the two slabs of raw meat, rubbing in the salt, pepper, spices and pulped garlic. I set the table with the cracked dishes and bent utensils supplied in this weekend cabin where we have come to “work on our marriage.” Neither of us speaks. We feel uneasy without the buffers of work and children. Earlier I bushwhacked my way up the hill behind the cabin and found a huge flat rock, a great sitting place. I thought how in past years we might have discovered it together, climbing hand in hand and arriving sweaty and breathless and making love on its sun warm surface. Now we sit silent inside this musty space drinking large glasses of a good Burgundy and waiting for the coals to heat.

late season wine
the fragrance of decay
in our lovemaking

*

*

This Way

by *Carolyne Rohrig*, California

We don't want to be fixed. We want to be loved.

canoe ride
our oars cut the moon
to pieces

Not Amused

by *Ray Rasmussen*, Alberta

I thought that she'd love being my muse, but after sending her a haibun about our breakup, she writes, "It seems I was only your muse when we broke up and not when I was loving you."

But doesn't everyone pay attention to a toothache, and not the sound tooth? And it's the third time she's broken it off, so I have lots of practice with that side of things.

What bothers most is that she added, "If anyone ever asks my advice I'll say never get involved with a writer."

the black cat
in and out the door
my finger on delete



Sunrise at the Beginning of the Journey

by *Deborah P Kolodji*, California

A watercolor sea. Among a group of sailboats, one striped sail.
I walk the shore, each foot returning to the earth.

But I want to be lifted by waves, rejoice in ocean spray. Sail
my dream....

circling gulls
where do they sleep
at night?

Freshman Fall

by *Scott Duke Kominers*, Massachusetts

It was not her parents' bittersweet goodbyes, nor the brand-new books, nor even her thick brass dorm room key. It was not the dining hall, nor the boy she met there: sophomore; Mathematics Major. It was not her first class, nor her first date, but that weeks-later, fall-winter night which finally confirmed for her that she had entered college. That night, while students outside wore sweaters against the chill, she for the first time removed a shirt, drew up her skirt, and was pierced by Math atop his unwashed sheets.

October nights
the sounds
of leaves changing



Indian Summer

by *Laurel Bennett*, Virginia

It's the middle of October, on an unusually warm day. A small cloud of grasshoppers are feeding furiously on fat blades of grass and tiny purple flowers. Darting like butterflies they land, chew, take off, and land again.

But then there is this: From time to time, two grasshoppers pair off, present themselves side-by-side, head to rear, and rhythmically flick each other's slender legs.

swapping
spicy scents—
hot autumn

The First Cold Nights

by *Theresa Williams*, Ohio

And not yet time for heavy quilts, the bison skin we bought in Rapid City, steamy baths to warm old bones. The first cold nights: not yet the loneliness of the housebound, white emptiness, jades struggling for light at a small window. We're distracted by the bright leaves of oaks and maples. Still time to linger near the lake, bask in the clarity of twilight and geese flying home. We found our old cat today, the one we tried to fatten for the coming winter. He fell in his tracks on his way to water, as though his heart suddenly stopped, death coming in its season.

autumn grass
crickets
still humming

*

*

Behind Glass

by *Deborah P Kolodji*, California

A Siamese glimpsed behind windowpanes in my sister's upstairs bathroom. I think of the Mi-ke cat watching a procession from the window of a Hiroshige print.

Rescued from a feral life of raiding trash cans, my sister's cat once ran with abandoned pets. A by-product of an economy filled with foreclosures.

The woodblock print cat looks pampered, its history erased by time.

museum mouse
the only cat
the one on the wall

Little Changes

by *Peter Newton*, Massachusetts

It's a small town. A working-class town. We do what we can. For most that means eat, work, sleep. Repeat. It falls to a handful of volunteers to add any extras. If the high school cheerleaders want to compete in Miami, The Legion holds a meat raffle and the Senior Center petals poinsettias. It's a family of strangers. We cheer each other on. We take our chances. We buy each other flowers. It's a small town. Little changes. The state cuts school funding, someone stands up at Town Meeting and says: what if we try this? Or maybe did this? Sometimes a long-shot grant comes through. Most times it doesn't. Did I mention the street lights? It takes sixteen grand a year to keep 'em all lit, so each night with little fanfare our town goes dark.

a break
in the clouds . . .
a line of stars

*

*

The Uninvited

by *Michele L. Harvey*, New York

The local precinct called our block (36th street, between 5th and 6th), "burglary school." It was a tall, thin, canyon of commerce, in Midtown Manhattan. Only the smallest sliver of sky found its way down to our four-storey walkup. It was dim, even at midday. Thousands came by nine and left by five. Often, one or two would stay behind. Like spiders, they would leisurely pick their way along the hidden web of fire escapes accessing the full length of the block.

windblown snow
and starlight sifts
through a splintered skylight

Lost and Found

by Sheila *Sondik*, Washington

Opening the front door, I see all the drawers gaping open in our CD cabinet. Had I missed a small earthquake during my day trip across the border to Vancouver? The basket on the bookshelves near the door is overturned, too. Taking off my shoes, I walk back to see if my laptop is in its convenient spot near the phone. Gone. I feel no human presence, so I'm not frightened as I walk through the house, retracing the burglar's trail of exploration and pillage. He'd been quite successful in finding almost everything of value that was portable: the computer, my camera, my jewelry, my hand lens for botanizing, our matched pair of binoculars. Stunned, I'm finding it difficult to accept the reality of this act of violation in our serene setting.

outside our window
the cedars and firs
still there



Taken

by *Glenn G. Coats*, Virginia

The animals have been missing for three days. Thieves stole their trailer while it was parked at a motel. There is a reward offered for proof that the animals are being fed. The tiger will falter first without water. He will stop moving, dehydrate, and his kidneys will shut down. The two camels will last days longer. They are bred to cross barren terrain.

longest day
the scent of hay
close to the ground

Were the animals taken by mistake? Is there a black market for part-time circus stars? Did the robbers see value in a large aluminum trailer with bars on its windows?

For the first time, a newspaper has called the animals by their proper names. The tiger (Jonas) is listed first. The two camels are Sean and Todd. Jonas is almost tame and the camels more likely to spit than bite.

This evening, mothers and fathers are watching for them as if they are children returning before dark. Grandparents stir when a hound barks and they look deep in the forest for movement or the flash of eyes. A farmer finishes cutting one last row of hay then sits for a time on his tractor. He longs to witness what he has never seen before.

branches snap
on a gravel road
a few stars

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New Home

by *Bob Lucky*, Ethiopia

During a break in the rain, we go out and explore the neighborhood. The road down from our house to the hillside village is slick with mud, so we go the opposite way on a paved road winding along the ridge. This is an upscale area, home to politicians whose watchmen carry AK47s, not the green rubber baton our two watchmen share. Tucked into a wall is a tiny shop selling the plastic flip-flops we need, the temporary solution our electrician has come up with to prevent us from getting shocked in the shower.

sunset
along the wall the gleam
of razor wire



Tyndaris

by *Ruth Holzer*, Virginia

As light fades, the Aeolian Islands slip away on the horizon. Walls and watchtowers protect the abandoned town for another night. More sand settles over the theatre. For a little while longer, I remain in the porticoed agora where once powerful men debated the policies of alliance and treachery.

basilica arch—
feet blistering
in new sandals

Meeting

by *Sonam Chhoki*, Kingdom of Bhutan

A gaunt figure, head bent, face obscured, walks through the withered grass at the edge of the field. I don't know why I think it's a he. The measured stride seems to suggest a certain sense of purpose. Where is he bound for, through our overgrown land? And why does he keep his arms by the sides, as if he dare not breathe even as he moves? Against the bobbing branches of the old cypress, he is like an apparition dropped from the belly of the rain-laden clouds. Is it the failing light or is his frame elongating with each step he takes?

I'm not sure what I should say when we come face to face. A white *Apsoo** crashes through the shrubs. I bend to pat it.

“Is this your dog?”

Even before I look up he is gone.

dipping
into the setting sun—
a swan's head

Note

**Apsoo*: (AP-SOO) Tibetan terrier



Dancing Elves

by *Wende DuFlon*, Guatemala

the tickle
of little bubbles
deep dive

Swimming the bottom like fish, splashing and standing on our hands we are water-logged and happy. Like an improv dancer I twirl in place, water droplets fly off my elbows in short arcs forming a medieval sleeve. A sensate world greets me with a barrage of color: purple to lilac, rose to red, salmon to orange, mustard to buttercup, pine to sage, white on cream. Like grace notes above the garden, three cupolas are framed by blue sky with billowing white cumulous clouds and the broad cypress-green leaves of a giant *strelitzia nicolai* bird of paradise tree.

Someone calls out that storm clouds gathering. It's time to dry off, shower and change out the smell of chlorine for the attar of rose and to steep cinnamon tea and toast thick slices of raisin bread.

Thunder rolls up from the Pacific Coast. It comes from behind and around the single volcano, swoops over the dome of the neighboring colonial church, down to the adobe walls of the five century-old house and enters through hand-carved wooden doors and plate glass windows like a guest without an invitation. The hairs on my skin stand straight out and the blood races down my legs without coming back up—for a second I take the rumbling to be the three tectonic plates moving below us.

The storm light is soft and green like wings of a Luna moth. The magnetically-charged air intensifies the purple native *nazareno petrea volubilis* blossoms on their old thick gnarled vines, vibrates the mix of scarlet and magenta bougainvillea, shakes the pink and yellow jumbo shrimp flowers, and electrifies the red-orange pomegranate passion fruit hanging inno-

cently from graceful branches. The birds chatter and call with urgent abandon that alternates between excitement and panic. Then, as though on cue, wind gusts pick up the branches of the tall jacaranda tree pulling its periwinkle-colored flowers from their places and scattering them across the plush green grass carpet.

Our dogs bark nervously and move from their spots on the lawn to the earth-red tiles of the corridor that joins living spaces around the central garden. A sudden light breaks through the moment and thunder follows without pause, threatening the tall glass windows of the family sitting room. Just as the last dog slips under a carved wooden bench a curtain of silver gauze seems to unfurl and drop between the garden and us. The plants quiver and shine with the soft rain fall. Our voices quiet. The dogs watch in silence. Birds hush.

a ring of water
round the iris stem
still life



Berkeley Poetry

(for Julia Vinograd)

by *David Gershator*, U.S. Virgin Islands

Rainy day in Berkeley. I duck into Cody's on Telegraph Avenue to look for the Bubble Lady's latest chapbook.

As I go down the aisle, deeper into the poetry section, the building starts to dance and shake. Books drop from the shelves. How can I brace myself for the megapunch? Berkeley's overdue for the Big One...but it's only a relatively minor shake. Probably only a four-point something on the Richter scale. The roof doesn't cave in, and I walk out of the poetry section in one piece.

Poetry can be dangerous! I could have died in there under an avalanche of verse, not a fate I aspire to, even though, ironically, it is a goofy poetic way to go. Next time I see the Bubble Lady I'll tell her that I nearly died for her sake and that she should blow some extra special bubbles for me—bubbles easier to chase down than poetry books in the earthquake section of Cody's or rainbows hanging out over Telegraph.

waiting to be picked up
at Sather Gate
a bluejay's feather

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Birds of a Flock

by *Ray Rasmussen*, Alberta

I zoom my lens on two teens sitting hunched against a peeling stucco wall. Costumed in frayed jeans, dirty t-shirts and unlaced sneakers, they're watching the milling crowd of revelers at the festival I've come to photograph. Both have tattoos and burn marks on their arms; their faces are masked with a studied blankness. Like a flock of birds moving in unison, the crowd veers around them.

The one with the word "Mystery" on his black t-shirt turns my way and gives me "the look." He doesn't need to say, "What are you looking at!" I instinctively turn my camera elsewhere and pretend that I wasn't focused on him. But might his gaze have been curiosity rather than my imagined malevolence? I consider approaching him and saying, Nice t-shirt, what's the mystery?—anything to engage him in conversation, to move beyond the stereotype. Instead I do my best to become one of the flock.

dusk—
the black cat stalks
a sparrow

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to the alice cooper concert

by *Renée Owen*, California

home of the hundred thousandth burger
golden arches gleam down main street
munching fries freckled with salt
chocolate malts melting in florida's heat
fluorescent lights rimming bleary red eyes
fingers twirling blue-striped tubes of white
plastic that used to be just straws shaky
steps down a yellow brick road to the spit
clean bathroom mirrors out the back door
vrrroom of your mustard mustang squeeze
three abreast in front five butts behind horn blares
dancing on first row seats in a sea of alic's
spittle swirled with crimson chicken blood
bugles of light trails twisting the dark night

bucket seats
by the roadside one less
possum at play

*

Sixty-Seventh Fourth

by *Lynn McLure*, North Carolina

Fourth of July on a Sunday this year, with fried chicken, beer
and fireworks tonight at the big picnic. Something not right
about a whoop and holler holiday on a Sunday. I take a folding
chair, not comfortable on a blanket on the ground. Young peo-
ple I used to think of as children now bring their children to the
hill. The sparklers make me sneeze and the loud firecrackers
startle me. I yawn even before the spectacular show that starts
after my nine o'clock bedtime. Old men look good to me.

on a crowded hill
waiting for fireworks
catching his eye

The Writer

by *Johnny Baranski*, Washington

“This town is filthy with writers,” said passenger A to passenger B on the early a.m. bus commute into city center. “Yeah, I was at a party last Saturday evening and just about everyone I asked, ‘What do you do?’ answered, ‘I’m a writer,’” replied passenger B. “It’s like being in New York or LA where everyone say’s he’s an actor.” “Which usually means he’s really a waiter,” added passenger A. “Except here,” laughed passenger B, “when someone says he’s a writer it usually means he’s unemployed.” Neither of them was aware that I was jotting all of this down in the little black notebook I always carry with me. They didn’t know that I was a writer as well as a working stiff or that their words, kind or unkind, could also butter my bread. I’ve been at this a long time. I don’t know about actors but it would behoove the writer to have a job outside of writing. Not in academia mind you but out on the streets Bukowski-like among the rabble.

frosty morning
a new poem starts to uncurl
my arthritic hand

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Opportunity

by *David Grayson*, California

He speaks rapid-fire, the words tumbling out: *300,000 subscribers. Multiple verticals. Extreme programming. Series B financing.* Meanwhile, I catch snatches of the office. There's the obligatory foosball table, soda cans lining the desks, and Google, Linux, and Berkeley t-shirts draped over chairs. I take a deep breath: Everyone here is young. As his words strafe past me, I wonder if I can do this again. The endless chatter on IM, the midnight emails, the crises *du jour*. I imagine these kids rise to the rafters as if filled with helium.

lighter than air
one word
yes

*

Horsefeathers

by *Cherie Hunter Day*, California

I'm standing at the top of the stairs in the doorway of the seldom-used, screened-in porch at the farmhouse. My hands are on my hips with arms akimbo. I'm about three years old and dressed in play overalls instead of the usual flowery sundress. I smile for the camera—a mischievous smile, full of delight. Tied around my head is a plastic ribbon with three feathers standing up in a makeshift headdress. The feathers are small and barely discernable among my short dark curls. I remember collecting feathers. Pigeon were fairly common on the farm. Crows and barn owls too left summer souvenirs. My mother called them horsefeathers and tried to convince me that they really did come from horses.

tall in the saddle—
a pony named Nutmeg
is my getaway

Worthy Suggestion
by *John Stevenson*, New York

As many a rational adult will do, I ended up saying, “No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.” to a little child.

she wins
the argument
by saying yes

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I Sit and am Amazed
by *Neal Whitman*, California

I attend a retreat at New Camaldoli Hermitage, perched at the end of a dirt road that heads up the foothills of the Santa Lucia Mountains above Highway One which winds along California’s Big Sur. Fifteen resident monks follow the inner rhythm of each day according to four liturgical prayers in chapel and radiate outward to the rhythm of each season. I sit on my hut’s porch looking out over the Pacific.

stop swatting at each buzz
most fly-bys, well, they fly by
Issa and Angels

The Cup of Joy and Sorrow: December 21, 2010

by *Neal Whitman*, California

A sake cup. Purchased in a Berkeley gallery. Made by the Buddhist nun who took the name Rengetsu—Lotus Moon—symbolizing a pure heart. In her day, admired for her poetry, calligraphy, and pottery. Her cup, now in an alcove over my desk, displays all three arts in the one object. Its *waka* (translated by my friend, Atsuko) written over a century ago by Rengetsu.

Enjoy delicious sake
Without overdoing it
And it becomes
An elixir that eases
Old age and death

Tonight I take it down from its shelf—with care. Tonight we toast the total lunar eclipse. Where we live on the Monterey Peninsula of California, this rare event is even more rare as it overlaps the winter solstice. It last happened two centuries before her lifetime. Standing in a light mist, we sip sake from it and the shadow moves across the moon. We talk softly of the joys and sorrows in the cup we held this past year and those it will hold next year.

on the longest night
waiting for it to begin—
a fogwild night

Earth's shadow
crossing the moon—
seals start to bark

from my hand to hers
the palmed cup full of sake—
promises made to keep

sake for two
hold the cup and the moon
in your heart

Fear of Five-Seven-Five: Procrustes in our midst

by *Gerald St. Maur*, Alberta

Perhaps I am a maverick, or perhaps I fail to understand mainstream thinking, but either way I find myself disquieted by the conventional wisdom so widespread in the writing of haiku and tanka today. Too often I read about or hear gurus who, cleaver in hand, assure believers that to shorten is a divine imperative and that the pursuit of virtue lies only along a path free of metaphor or personification. As with most schools of thought, such admonitions have some merit but they are not unalloyed truths devoid of limitations. I would therefore like to offer an alternative view challenging, in particular, the Procrustean abhorrence of syllabic structure.

I don't know if you enjoy wine but, if so, please keep the following question in mind as you read this brief article. "If there is not enough wine to fill the bottle, should you:

- a) leave the bottle unfilled?
- b) add sparkling water?
- c) choose a smaller bottle?"

Leaving aside various jocular – dare I say drunken – responses such as, "Who cares? Just keep the glass full," I suggest that the metaphor is worthy of serious consideration if you equate wine with poetry and bottle with form. It seems to be just too simplistic to dismiss form as unimportant, or less important, implying that the size and shape of the bottle have little to do with presentation. Perhaps some home bottlers might agree.

But to return to the question, let me comment first on the possible choices. If the bottle is left unfilled you are left wondering what you are missing when you come to pour. If you simply add water you dilute the wine, but you could add sparkling water. If you settle for a smaller bottle you are accepting less wine than perhaps you were hoping for. It is not difficult to

see in this metaphor various biases found in the writing of the two most popular Japanese forms, haiku and tanka.

Mainstream composition, at least on this continent, espouses the view that there is no point in filling a space of 17 or 31 syllables if you don't want to—usually phrased as, “if you don't need to.” In fact, kudos accrue automatically if you use fewer. Keep the nouns; suspect everything else. Concision is a virtue, but not at the risk of sounding like a beginner in an “English as a Second Language” programme.

The trappings of punctuation fall victim to the same bias. Certainly there are phrases and lines that don't need punctuation or are enriched by the ambiguity introduced by its absence. But to disregard an important linguistic resource is cavalier at best and dysfunctional at worst; constraints help order emerge from chaos. I may be wrong, but the only defence I can imagine for the religious annihilation of punctuation is to regard the process as a type of *decoupage* in which the readers are left to assemble the disjointed pieces by themselves. While I welcome the explorative, interactive function of *decoupage* in the visual arts, I have difficulty locating it within the North American tradition of Japanese forms.

“Less is more” is the catch phrase of many haiku and tanka advocates on this continent today. And the claim is valid in its emphasis on the removal of the extraneous—thought or word. But can this tendency be overdone? In haiku, for example, can it lead us to the absurdity of the wordless poem? In visual terms, it can indeed, as any concrete poet will testify. In aural terms, it leads us to pure sounds—juxtaposing disparate images of course. I must admit that such poetry can be enjoyable, perhaps even meaningful, but I think the bottle has then been reduced to thimble size. Not much of a swig!

Haiku and tanka are invariably discussed as literary genres written for the printed page and read in book or magazine format. Unfortunately, this has led us to pay much less attention to the sounds of the poem, a tendency which is perhaps understandable given the fact that most poets are better writers than

they are readers. Typically, poets will spend years improving their writing but no time at all improving their reading skills. Very often, the reader of haiku or tanka—eschewing the use of title or headnote—will provide an introductory statement providing context so that the essence of their poem will not be missed. It has often struck me that what they offer is less of a poem and more an oral haibun. Borrowing from the written tradition, what a wonderful sub-genre the oral haibun could become, the poem being naturally embedded in the carefully crafted prose, the whole being a sustained delight for the ear.

Reading in western languages is unlike that in Japanese which is unstressed. Natural English, for example, has a loosely iambic stress pattern and the haiku offers English-speaking poets a wonderful opportunity to roughen their lines, the feet of which do not fit a line length of five or seven syllables. Two-beat and three-beat lines are naturally suppressed, but while this may appear to place severe limits on the natural cadencing of lines, I have never experienced it. In writing a long narrative poem based on the heptasyllabic line, for example, I discovered that I was twenty-five lines into the poem before I had accidentally repeated a particular cadence. Repeats turned out to be so far apart as to be unnoticed.

For those rare poets who like mathematics, let me present the musical possibilities. In a single five-syllable line, each syllable may be stressed or unstressed and therefore there are 2 to the power 5, i.e., 32 different cadence possibilities in the line. In a 17-syllable haiku there are over 120,000 patterns. Lots to choose from. Imagine how many patterns there are in the tanka. Over a billion! And imagine the musical scope of a syllabic structure of 5-9-5 or 7-9-7. Sadly, this rich cadencing decreases exponentially with each missing syllable.

This suggests to me that the musical possibilities for such small forms are very much greater than hitherto realized. Why have they gone largely unnoticed? I believe this is partly due to the malady that affects much of poetry today, namely that it is written for the eye not the ear. Gutenberg be

damned! But for haiku and tanka, in particular, the music has been inhibited by a form of reductionism that is insensitive, if not hostile, to melody and rhythm, and is apparently incapable of accommodating it beyond the staccato. So much for the resources of language; so much for the delight of the ear.

In closing, let me admit that most of the haiku and tanka I read today are rewarding. Yes, some of the poems, my own included, do suffer from an over-emphasis on imagery—the same mistake made by Ezra Pound and his cohorts—and, yes, some of it does seem rather precious. But I find all this forgivable. Unless you are Bashō, not every poem will be a *magnum opus*. And I would certainly agree that to be precise and succinct is a virtue. But there are tone-deaf gurus who would have us remove so much that not only is the music sacrificed but the “moment” can all too easily be obscured in the idiosyncratic or buried in the cryptic. The difficulty thus created for the reader is only exacerbated by the refusal to provide a context. The result is well illustrated by a one word haiku such as “tundra.”* Anyone who has lived or worked on the tundra would find this romantic extravagance laughable.

In this short piece I have done my best to hide my delight in the well-crafted haiku or tanka that uses the minimum number of words to express the essence of the poet’s experience, intellectually and emotionally. But I must challenge the cultish view that the 5-7-5 structure is historically or culturally remote, and that it serves merely as a starting point for beginners. Even if the poet accepts these beliefs—on faith—he or she must always cherish the freedom to choose: to leave the bottle partly empty, to add a little water music, or to use a smaller bottle. May we all enjoy our wine.

*Van den Heuvel, C (ed.). *The Haiku Anthology*, Anchor Books, 1974, p. 163.

Former Dean of Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Alberta, Gerald St. Maur is the author of four poetry books and several plays. He is also a visual artist with work in various private and public collections. His interest in Japanese literature spans more than three decades during which time he has written extensively on the genres of haiku, tanka and haiga.

Aesthetics and Haiku Poetry: A Conceptual Framework

by *Yoàv J. Tenenbaum*, Israel

The haiku is more akin to a photograph than to a film. It captures a moment in time. Its images do not unfold into a story. The difference between a haiku and a photograph is that reading a haiku requires a creative imagination, whereas looking at a photograph necessitates familiarity or link-theme imagination.

A further difference between a haiku and a photograph stems from the perceptual difference between looking at an image and reading the depiction of one. The sensory process the reader of the haiku goes through is different from that experienced by an observer of a photograph.

A haiku at its most sublime does not merely produce thought. It does not just evoke emotion. It blends thought and emotion into one expression of coherent art form.

The response to a haiku is usually bereft of the “Ah!” expression, whether verbally conveyed or emotionally felt, that emerges at observing a work of art in the visual form. It takes more time for the effects of a haiku to “sink in,” so to speak. There is also a process involving three different stages: reading, perceiving and admiring.

One can recall visiting a museum and being immediately struck by the images portrayed by a particular painting. A similar experience would be well-nigh impossible when reading a haiku. This is not merely due to the different mental processes entailed in watching a painting and reading a poem, albeit a very short one. Rather, it has to do with the intrinsic aesthetic characteristics of a haiku. There is a low-key beauty, subtly relayed, in a haiku. This is perceived in a placid and reflective manner. A “Haiku Moment” is different in perceptual image-making than a “Painting Moment.” The beauty entailed in the first is transitory, almost silent, like a slow train passing by one watches from afar, whereas the beauty entailed in the latter is more static, less silent, almost verbal

in expression, lasting longer both in observation and memory.

The haiku is not about saving words, depicting reality in as brief a manner as possible. The intention behind it is not to convey an image as succinctly as language can possibly allow. This would be to misrepresent haiku. The aim of haiku poetry is to ignite a feeling, to elicit a response that can only be achieved through a haiku form. The aesthetic dimension in haiku is directly related to its form. The effect produced by a haiku image is due to form no less than to content. The singular structure of haiku becomes part and parcel of its content. The same image conveyed in a different manner would elicit a different response from the reader.

Haiku's style is minimalist. As it happens in other areas such as interior design, a minimalist style can exude warmth and convey beauty no less so than other styles can. In the case of haiku, content and form combine to depict a reality rich in imagery through a blend of barely a few words ordered in an elegant, unassuming structure. The voice emanating from a haiku is usually soft in tone and low in volume. The haiku does not shout, nor does it cry or laugh out loud. Haiku whispers.

Yoàv J. Tenenbaum's poems, including haiku, have been published in various magazines and journals. In 2005 he won the first prize of the Bashō Haiku International Contest in Japan. A collection of his poems, *Unwrap Me*, was recently published in the US. He lectures in the Diplomacy Program at Tel Aviv University.



World Economy in Word Economy*

by *Ruth Yarrow*, Washington

Sometimes, when I read the haiku journals, I wonder how much current world issues impinge on our lives and are expressed in our poetry. It often seems that our haiku are inspired by our current experience, but experience that is essentially personal and not linked to headlines in the newspaper.

I also wonder if most of us are writing from a vantage point of economic security, resulting in a middle-class slant—and perhaps limitation—to our poetry. We do have haiku poets among us who write from other than most middle-class experience, such as Johnny Baranski’s poems from his time in prison for protesting a nuclear weapons system or Cor van den Heuvel’s poems that sound as if they were written by someone down on their luck and hitchhiking on a lonely road. And certainly not all of middle-class life, even if relatively secure economically, is a bed of roses without thorns. Witness the many powerful haiku written out of the pain of separation or divorce, or the illness or death of a loved one. But we mostly have a place to live, enough food, leisure to subscribe to and read haiku journals, and to travel and meet together as we are today.

When the issue of *Modern Haiku*, Volume 41.2 arrived in our mailbox after mid-May, I decided to try an experiment. I read through the haiku in that issue and in the most recent *Frogpond*, Volume 33:1, with an ear cocked for any current issues finding their way into our work, and any written about or from the perspective of people not in a comfortable middle-class lifestyle. Perhaps it was just coincidence in these particular issues, or the inclination of the editors. But I hadn’t read more than a few pages in *Modern Haiku* when it seemed that the world economy, the economic downturn, had slipped into our haiku. That’s why I’m calling this presentation “World Economy in Word Economy.”

*This paper was first presented at the Haiku Society of America’s Second Quarterly Meeting in Seattle, June 27, 2010.

If we start where the headlines crescendoed, in the stock market, Tom Tico, Jeremy Pendrey and Pall Ingi Kvaran were aware and maybe there. The downturn overtones of Ash Wednesday, a funeral motorcade, January rain, autumn, and closed curtains are unmistakable.

Ash Wednesday foreheads
here and there
in the financial district

Tom Tico, *MH*

funeral motorcade
through the financial district
January rain

Jeremy Pendrey, *MH*

autumn dawn
the stockbroker
shuts his drapes

Pall Ingi Kvaran, *MH*

The worldwide nature of the downturn may be echoed in this poem from Japan.

another skyscraper
nearly complete
summer dusk

Duro Jaiye, *MH*

The ongoing malaise from the economic downturn lingers on, not in the big banks that our tax dollars bailed out, but in the job market.

job hunting—
unclaimed pumpkins
in the compost pile

William Scott Galasso, *FP*

What a powerful image, feeling like some thing not chosen, thrown out, not to be used but decomposed! The repetition of the “aw” sound in Bill Kenney’s poem fits the feeling exactly.

January thaw
empty storefront
at the mall

Bill Kenney, *MH*

You may think I'm reading too much into the following haiku, but the autumn wind here seems to blow in the direction of a layoff. It reminds me of a time when the dean in my department wanted me to start an environmental education center and leave the position teaching undergraduate ecology that I was enjoying. I distinctly remember the discomfort of his arm around me when he was trying to persuade me.

autumn wind
my young boss's arm
around me

Marcus Larsson, *MH*

For those without jobs, the lure of easy money can pull them into a downturn in their lives, as happened on our block:

autumn dawn
a dealer paces
his corner

Jeremy Pendrey, *MH*

The ripple effect of such a downturn on the lives of our children and grandkids comes through with an economy of words in this haiku:

two dealers
in the park opposite—
empty swings

Lew Watts, *MH*

For those with hard low-paying jobs, the downturn means being job scared and clinging to what employment they have. John Stevenson hints that larger denomination bills are scarce for some people, and that it is not only the dollar bills that are growing wrinkled and worn.

for the waitress a fan of hard-used ones...

John Stevenson, *MH*

Even employment that pays well may feel like a trap when the job market is thin.

evening coming
people rushing home to change
into other lives

Cor van den Heuvel, *MH* (Part of 35 Renga)

A very visible aspect of the downturn has been the loss of homes by low-income families lured into mortgages they could not sustain. Note that each of these haiku contrasts something heartwarming with the same powerful single word last line.

no foot prints
in the snow
foreclosure

Mike Spikes, *FP*

rooftop Santa
waving above
foreclosure

Earnest Sherman, *MH*

Before the next haiku, I'll share what Google says about "American Beauty." It is a hybrid perpetual deep pink and strongly scented rose, bred in France and introduced in the United States in 1875. A ragtime composition, the 1999 film and the Grateful Dead album are all named *American Beauty*, and it is the official flower of the District of Columbia.

profusion of
American Beauties—
FORECLOSED

Patricia J. Machmiller, *MH*

So if people lose their homes, they may have to turn, reluctantly, to friends and relatives.

trees bared my welcome wearing thin

Jeffrey Stillman, *MH*

The next step is homelessness. Here in Seattle, whole families are turning up in our third tent city, named Nicklesville after the former mayor. This too is a world phenomenon.

under the only light
the homeless start to gather

Charles Chang, *FP*

In a downturn we think more carefully about how to save
what we have.

February 15
the browning edges
of unbought flowers

Jennifer Gomoll Popolis, MH

hard times—
crows stealing
cheap dogfood

Paul Hendricks, MH

high school reunion
we all talk about
retirement benefits

Amitava Dasgupta, MH

just looking
at grocery store orchids
is enough

Anne Elise Burgevin MH

Or if someone is down to nothing to spend:

evening shift
same wheelchair
different beggar

Mykel Board, MH

There is a sobering overtone to this last haiku. The poet is noticing and cynically concluding, as I confess I have also thought at times, that people begging may not be honest. When I have those thoughts, I have a deep feeling of unease that there, but for many strokes of luck in my life, I might be. And yet I'm writing that person off as dishonest.

This unease and alienation from others is just one of the modern social problems portrayed in a fascinating book that came out last year with the subtitle "Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger." The British authors found in a thirty-year study that the degree of material equality among members of a society was the factor most strongly linked to health and happiness. It was not wealth, resources, culture, climate, diet, or form of government, but equality. And our

country, by most measures the richest on the planet, but with a huge spread between rich and poor, has per capita shorter life spans, more mental illness, more obesity, and more people in prison than any other developed nation.

I won't launch into a long discussion about where our tax dollars go, but over half of our discretionary federal spending goes to the military, not to closing the gaps between rich and poor.

Titan missile silo
the sign warns
of rattlesnakes

Ann K. Schwader, MH

In conclusion, I am impressed by how many of our haiku are tuned in to the global economic crisis and the people caught in it. By being aware of our emotional response to the crisis—emotions that include worry, fear, empathy and caring—we are writing effective haiku about it. Because we write in the haiku form, we are capturing those emotions with admirable brevity. So yes, world economy in word economy! I'll close with one of mine—the only one quoted here that isn't from 2010.

food bank line –
a pigeon picks up crumbs
too small to see

Frogpond XXIX:2, p 29, 2006

Ruth Yarrow taught ecology in colleges and environmental centers in northeastern US for several dozen years. She and her husband retired in the northwest where they continue to work on environmental, peace and justice issues and revel in mountain backpacking. She has published over 600 haiku in the major journals and five books of haiku. She has led workshops, judged contests, edited journals and coordinated her local haiku group. She finds that writing haiku helps her be aware of the richness of life.

The Sword of Cliché: Choosing a Topic

by *David Grayson*, California

I currently live in Alameda, a Bay Area town situated next to Oakland and directly across the bay from San Francisco. I'm married and a parent. I work for an Internet company in San Francisco. My life revolves around family, work, and friends. Like many haiku poets, the bricks-and-mortar of my daily life are also the bricks-and-mortar of my haiku.

However, residing in a dense urban environment layers another set of topics onto my haiku. The characteristics of life in a large metropolitan area constitute some of the oxygen of my daily life, and naturally my writing. Wealth and poverty, social and ethnic diversity, traffic and crime, restaurants and cultural pursuits, open space and architecture are all threads in the fabric of my daily life. Not surprisingly, these realities too are recurring preoccupations of my haiku.

the coldness
of my pocket change—
cardboard shelter¹

One topic that I find myself returning to often is homelessness. For a haiku writer (indeed, for any artist) the choice of a topic for a poem usually feels natural and “organic.” Any topic that arises directly from experience is bound to feel legitimate.

However, a writer needs to be on guard against the risks that attend certain topics—not the least of which is cliché. A cliché is an idea that has been overused to the point that it has lost its original force or novelty. Of course, sometimes it is not the topic itself that leads to cliché but rather how a writer handles it. At the same time, experienced writers know that certain subjects carry a greater risk

From my perspective, homelessness is one such topic. On the one hand, avoiding it seems absurd. I encounter homeless men and women every day. Sometimes, the circumstance of

homelessness is unique or particularly jarring. For example, I once encountered a mother begging for money while her son—who was close in age to my own then-five-year-old—played next to her. In another example, I was confronted with the overpowering smell of a wheelchair-bound man who had defecated in his pants and was struggling to clean himself in full public view, while an attending police officer stood off to the side, hesitant to begin helping him. Many urban residents share similar experiences, including Paul Mena:

scattering pigeons —
a homeless man
flirts with schoolgirls²

It would be nonsensical for me to consciously avoid the topic. On the other hand, the topic of homelessness is fraught with pitfalls. First, the act of simply choosing this topic may trigger skepticism. I may be subject to “political” challenges: what right do I, who am not homeless, have to write about the subject? Will my work necessarily treat the homeless as objects, however well-meaning my intentions? For instance, am I focusing only on the most visible slice of the homeless population (those living on the street, often mentally ill)? Finally, if I am construed as merely an observer, or only incidentally a participant, there is the charge that the haiku is not based on direct experience—it is almost a desk-ku.

Beyond these arguments, I face the challenge of writing a poem that meets the standard of previous admired work or offers new insight. It is all too easy to succumb to the cluster of emotions that is typically evoked with this topic: indignation, pity, hyperbole, and so forth are all (understandably) easy emotional responses to fall into.

Because the topic is inherently sensitive, the writer may be in danger of writing a less good poem. That is, because of its inherent nature, the topic can do much of the work for the writer; it can trigger a powerful response in a reader even if the poem is not great. Put another way, it’s probably easier to write a mediocre haiku about homelessness than a medio-

cre haiku about, say, traffic congestion. The subject of homelessness itself does a lot of the “heavy lifting” for the writer.

So, the writer—to use a cliché—is stuck between a rock and a hard place. The subjects that are often the most compelling are precisely those that have been written about before—and remembered by readers. These subjects inherently encourage the writer to fall under the spell of a timeworn response—to fall on the sword of cliché. However, it is essential to remember that each of these risks also offers opportunity.

As Paul Williams noted, good haiku usually stem from our daily lives: “such perceptions as do transform themselves into haiku tend to emerge from the familiar rather than the new.”³ Repetition affords the writer the opportunity to reflect and see a subject from many different angles. This can help the writer move beyond commonplace observations and achieve a more nuanced or unique understanding.

As the month ends ...
the line at the soup kitchen
longer every day...⁴

In this poem, Tom Tico notices the subtle changes that occur over time at the soup kitchen. This is not a one-time impression.

homeless guy
the santa hat finally
in season⁵

The same dynamic is present in this haiku by Roberta Beary. It’s clear that the poet has encountered this person before, and this fact forms the basis for her observation. In both Tico’s and Beary’s haiku, a long-standing familiarity with the subject matter provides the foundation for the poem.

A writer should certainly be concerned about portraying a subject (homeless or otherwise) as an object or a “prop” for their own ideas or ends. However, it is often true that topics like these stimulate the writer in unplanned and surprising ways

Robert Spiess noted: “In the better haiku there is a surprisingly large amount of subjectivity beneath the objectivity of the haiku’s entities ... It is this subjective aspect that accounts for very much of the difference between a haiku that is merely descriptive per se and one that engenders intuitional feeling ...”⁶

homeless beggar—
the itch of his clothes
all down my spine⁷

In this poem by H. F. Noyes, the “homeless beggar” is the initial focus of attention. But in the last two lines, the focus shifts to the speaker. Although this shift away from the beggar may seem self-centered, it is in fact this subjective response that conveys the empathy. The speaker imagines—strongly, viscerally—what it might feel like to be the homeless beggar.

homeless man
the postman delivers
a smile⁸

The same is true in Elena Naskova’s poem. The homeless subject is the first image, but the main character is the postman. It is the postman’s subjective response—his smile—that calls attention to the humanity of the homeless man, who might be overlooked by others.

In each of these cases, the poet waded into tricky territory and returned not with a heavy-handed gesture but with a fresh insight. Venturing into such subject areas is challenging, but they offer rewards for those who learn how to step carefully.

Notes

1. 3rd Place, 2008 Anita Sadler Weiss Awards.; in *A New Resonance 6: Emerging Voices in English-Language Haiku*, eds. Jim Kacian and Dee Evetts. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2009, p. 53.

2. Paul David Mena, *Simply Haiku*. December 2003, Volume 1, Number 6 <http://www.poetrylives.com/SimplyHaiku/SHv1n6/Paul_Mena_haiku.html>. Accessed March 28, 2010.

3. Paul O. Williams, "Loafing Alertly: Observation and Haiku," in *The Nick of Time: Essays on Haiku Aesthetics*, eds. Lee Gurga and Michael Dylan Welch. Foster City, CA: Press Here, 2001, p. 21.
4. Tom Tico, *Spring Morning Sun*. San Francisco: Belltower Press, 1998, p. 68.
5. Roberta Beary, *Shiki Monthly Kukai*—November 2008 <<http://www.haikuworld.org/kukai/recent.nov08.html>>. Accessed October 16, 2010.
6. Robert Spiess, *A Year's Speculations on Haiku*. Madison, Wisconsin: Modern Haiku Press, 1995), 16.
7. H. F. Noyes, in *The Red Moon Anthology 1996: The Best English-Language Haiku of the Year*, ed. Jim Kacian. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 1997, p. 81.
8. Elena Naskova, *Shiki Monthly Kukai*—November 2008.<<http://www.haikuworld.org/kukai/recent.nov08.html>>. Accessed October 16, 2010.

David Grayson's haiku have appeared widely. He is featured in *A New Resonance 6: Emerging Voices in English-Language Haiku* and was a featured poet in *My Neighbor*, the 2009 installment of the Two Autumns, a reading and chapbook series by the Haiku Poets of Northern California. He has served as President and Vice President of the Haiku Poets of Northern California. David is currently writing a monthly feature for The Haiku Foundation. Entitled "Religio," a forum devoted to the intersection of haiku and religious tradition: <http://www.thehaikufoundation.org/forum_sm/religio/>.

The Value of Iconic Place Names in Western Haiku*

by *David Cobb*, England

Because of the general tendency in the West to try to replicate the Japanese use of *kigo* (season words), our haiku are easily misinterpreted as “**a poetry of nature.**”

This is to overlook the double significance of the season word: to spotlight a moment in the writer’s existence on Earth, yes, but also to remind the reader that it happens during the eternal cycle of life, to be repeated each time that particular season comes around, albeit never in the same way.

So, as Thomas Hemstege argued in a useful article in *Modern Haiku* (Vol. 35, No. 1), it would be just as reasonable to refer to haiku as “**a poetry of time.**”

But now I want to go a little further down that road. For us humans, time and place may sometimes seem inextricable—partly because many places we see, and particularly like to see, have a history attached to them: a history that may well arouse emotions, such as sorrow, pride, regret, triumph, or a variety of other feelings. Just as cherry blossom is present in nature to evoke emotion, and Christmas is there in time to evoke emotion, the Pyramids are there forever as a source of emotion in space/ place. **Place names give off a poetry of their own.**

Let’s look now at **Japanese practice**. The power of place names to release feeling is well known to Japanese poets. Some names of places and festivals are even included in the traditional *saijiki* (almanac of season words.) Even more so in the almanac used by *haijin* of the modern or avant-garde school.

We can divide them into different types:

- *uta-makura*—places that almost any educated person is likely to know something about and that are definitely iconic;

• *hai-makura*—places that are lifted into that aura by their mention in a well-known poem. In English poetry we have an example in “Adlestrop,” where the poet Edward Thomas wrote:

Yes. I remember Adlestrop —
The name, because one afternoon
Of heat the express-train drew up there
Unwontedly.

Place name haiku can be subdivided again into:

- places famous for their beauty,
- places possibly not very beautiful to look at, but remembered because of some historical event, or legend or myth, attached to them, or because of a famous or heroic person who once lived there.

When Bashō started out on his celebrated journey along the *Narrow Road to the Deep North*, memorialised in the haibun (more accurately, *nikki*, or travelogue) known as *Oku-no-hosomichi*, he had a sort of cultural map in his head, with dozens of “pillow places” where he intended to rest his head. So in that travelogue we can find examples of both *uta-makura* and *hai-makura*, though it has to be said his normal practice is to mention the place names in the prose, thus setting the context for a haiku that doesn’t include a place name.

Matsushima is a place celebrated for a bay containing many beautiful islands. The sight of it rocked Bashō into writing

The cuckoo would need
the wings of a crane to span
the isles of Matsushima

An example of literary and historical reference is

Across the rough seas
stretching to Sado Island
the Milky Way

because the Japanese reader will be familiar with *The Tale of Genji*. Sado Island is where exiles were sent, including Prince Genji, “the Shining One,” as punishment for an illicit affair with a lady of the Imperial Court. (Incidentally, this haiku is an example that reminds us, if our aim is to create literature, the “unvarnished truth,” meticulous veracity, is far from a requirement of haibun. Researchers have calculated that, looking out from the vantage point where Bashō actually stood, and at the time when he stood there, it would have been impossible for him to observe the phenomenon he records. We can nevertheless accept the poetic truthlikeness.)

I am tempted to think Bashō’s mind was infused with feelings similar to those of spectators at a Japanese *Noh* play. Typically, in dramas of this genre the main character is a man or woman who suffered some unkind fate long ago. He or she appears in the first act, in a way that might remind us Westerners rather of the Ghost in *Hamlet*. His/Her sorry tale is told to a wanderer, this time reminding us perhaps of the man in *The Ancient Mariner*, who “stoppeth one in three,” constantly telling and retelling his story to anyone who will listen to him. The wanderer is invited to say a prayer for the unhappy spirit, so that it may have rest; and a Japanese audience finds itself drawn into this prayer by the actors, so that they experience a sort of “communal catharsis.” They have a feeling of inheriting some of the guilt of their ancestors which it is their responsibility to expiate. The interest of Japanese haiku poets in place names continues to this day, so we find the “grand old man,” Kaneko Tōta, referring to Hiroshima in this way:

Round the A-bomb Dome
buckling in the heat
a marathon

Now let us turn to the situation in the West with regard to the mention of place names in haiku.

I trawled through three major anthologies of British haiku and found almost none.

One explanation for this may be the idea that you sometimes hear that it should be possible for as wide a readership as possible to make sense of the experience the poet describes. So a common noun like “river” or “mountain” might be preferred to a proper noun like “Thames” or “Rockies.”

There may be occasions when that is true. But I want to suggest that there are other times when something important, something truly poetic, is lost if we avoid the proper noun. **Some place names actually are poetry.** Let me try to give you an example.

I was on holiday once in Scotland and my little daughter, perhaps eight or nine years old, was with me. We visited a battlefield where the traditional life of the Highland clans was more or less snuffed out. I could have written:

my daughter searches
for four-leaf clovers
on the battlefield

But what I actually wrote was:

my daughter searches
for four-leaf clovers
on Culloden Moor

Not only because the history of “Culloden Moor” penetrates the heart deeper than many another battlefield, but also because of the gloomy, falling sound produced by those two words: Culloden Moor has a dying cadence.

Here is another example. This time I’ll give you only the first two lines and then pause while you try to think of a place name that, coming in the final line, might turn a rather inauspicious beginning into something far more poetically powerful:

a man with a torch
goes looking for a name —

No, it isn't a tourist who has put up for the night at a guest house, been out to the local pub, and now has a problem finding his (or her) way back to his bed.

a man with a torch
goes looking for a name—
the Menin Gate

I hope you will agree with me, the name “Menin Gate” has iconic power and poetic force for which there's no substitute.

Now, I don't wish editors of haiku magazines to be swamped with “place name haiku” for the next six months, until another fad takes over. But you might just ponder whether “river” is always the best word to use.

*A variation of this paper was first presented at the International Haiku Festival in Gent, Belgium, September 13-19, 2010.

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Phenomenology and Haiku's Aesthetics of the Body; Or, Biking with Bashō and Merleau-Ponty

by *Ian Marshall*, Pennsylvania

On a biking trip in Maine, I have a bad day. My wife Megan and I are following the newly established IAT, or International Appalachian Trail, an extension of the renowned AT that ends at Mt. Katahdin in Maine. The IAT (or in French-speaking Quebec the “SIA,” or *Sentier Internationale des Appalaches*) goes from Katahdin across Maine, along the Canadian border, up through New Brunswick to Quebec’s Matapedia Valley, through the Matane wildlife reserve and Parc de la Gaspésie, then along the northern coast of the Gaspé Peninsula to Parc Forillon and Cap Gaspé. In the first year of a six-year section hike of the trail, Megan and I have backpacked from Katahdin north through Baxter State Park, and now we’re traversing eastern Maine on a leg of the trail from Baxter to a town called Mars Hill. The “trail” here follows country roads and rail-trails, and since we did not look forward to lugging our backpacks along sun-exposed roads, we are traveling this stretch on bicycles. But a day out from Baxter, the derailleur on my bike won’t shift into the lowest gears—the ones I need to get up the big hills. Cursing, oddly enough, does not seem to fix the problem, and I haven’t been able to make the necessary adjustment to the screw that affects the gear-shifts. Consequently, I’m struggling mightily on the uphill and feeling more than a little frustrated.

We’re on a journey in imitation of Bashō’s *Narrow Road to the Deep North*, with one of the purposes being for me to learn more about haiku along the way—by reading Bashō and meditating on haiku aesthetic principles and of course trying to make time for haiku writing practice. Given the demands of a journey, though, our impression after five days of hiking and one day of biking is that most of our attention is focused on the physical demands of the trip.

Perhaps it’s fitting that my meditation topic for the day is non-intellectuality, one of the thirteen aesthetic qualities of haiku identified by Robert Blyth in his classic four-volume study

from the 1950s—qualities which Blyth saw as Zen-derived. Given my preoccupation with the challenge of big hills, I certainly didn't do much thinking today, productive or otherwise. On the other hand, it's not like I slipped into some state of pure physical being and left mind behind. My derailleur problems provoked frustration and anger, which suggests that I was still trying to solve the problem, engaging with the world around me in an intellectual rather than sensory way. I should be able to fix the darn derailleur, I thought, and I was frustrated that my problem-solving efforts failed. In *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Robert Pirsig calls this sort of intellectual roadblock “stuckness,” and the solution is to avoid getting stuck on one way of trying to solve the problem and to find fresh ways of seeing the dilemma. With a stuck nut, for example, you have to realize the essence of nutness, to wonder about the nature of a nut and its relation to bolt, and to realize that there is more than one way to unstick the nut—by applying lubricant, for example, or by drilling it out, or by finding the appropriate tool. I probably needed to figure out the nature of the derailleur and to experiment more patiently with the adjusting screws that control the derailleur's movement.

But all this searching for alternate solutions or different ways of seeing a problem is not really moving beyond intellect. Rather, it's a use of intellect in order to find a new way of seeing the problem. But with “intellect alone,” says Blyth, “we arrive nowhere” (197). Too much knowledge of something can lead to a “divorce from the suchness, the wholeness of that thing” (198). We need to know the world in some more intuitive way, or perhaps in some bodily way. In that sense, perhaps my derailleur problems were a blessing in technological disguise. Without my lowest gears to work with, I have a new appreciation for the hilliness of this landscape—and for that matter a deeper appreciation for how delightfully effective the technology of a bicycle is when the derailleur is properly adjusted. Our bikes took us fifty miles today, over hill and dale and across a good chunk of the state of Maine. This is a kind of knowledge that I can feel not just intellectually,

but bodily. Of course, Bashō had days like this as well on his long and narrow roads, wearying days, footsore days, days of living more in the body than in the mind. Setting out on his journey he complained about “the pack straining my scrawny shoulders,” and crossing the Shirokawa Barrier into the frontier he spoke of “all the pains of the journey, body and mind exhausted,” so that he could “only throw something together” in the way of haiku (50, 55). At a hot spring he complained of a leaky roof and illness and of being “harassed by fleas and mosquitoes.” The next day, he moped that his “spirits would not rise” (57). Crossing the Shitomae Barrier he described “trudging around at night” as he and his companion “pushed through bamboo grass, waded across streams, stumbled over rocks, cold sweat pouring” (63). Climbing Mount Gassan he made it to the summit “out of breath and body frozen” (66). En route to Hokuriku Bashō says “my heart ached at the thought of the vast distance” and he spoke of his recurring illness and a “spirit afflicted by heat and rain” (69).

And yet through all that Bashō managed to create the classic work of haiku practice. Could it be that the intense physicality of a journey is in fact an advantage in the practice of haiku?

That question brings me to the topic of phenomenology, a philosophical idea that seems a perfect fit with the aesthetics and world view of haiku. As developed by Edmund Husserl and taken further by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology is concerned with perception as a means of knowing the world. Essentially, the phenomenological claim is that our knowing of the world is rooted in our bodily and sensuous encounter with it. Husserl struggled with the apparent subjectivity of that line of thought, since if ten people perceive something ten different ways, doesn't that make reality a purely subjective thing? So if I see, say, the Crucifixion depicted in a pancake, does that mean that the image of Christ on the Cross is “really” there? Husserl's answer lay in the notion of “intersubjectivity,” meaning that phenomena are experienced by a multiplicity of perceiving subjects who could come to some agreement about the nature of the thing. Reality is not

objective reality, then, nor is it purely subjective, but intersubjective. What haiku does in presenting pure suggestive image without explanation is to allow for this kind of subjective and inter-subjective perception of experience.

Bashō in fact seems to foreground the idea of intersubjective perception as one of the key themes of his *Narrow Road*. Part of the impetus of his journey, after all, was to visit *utamakura*, or places renowned in classic poetry, and in doing so he is constantly noting how things have both changed and stayed the same—in keeping with his poetic ideal of *fueki ryūkō*, the unchanging and the ever-changing. One example is his encounter with the Takekuma Pine, a legendary ancestor of which had been long ago cut down for bridge pilings. Visiting the twin-trunked pine, Bashō says he felt “a deep sense of awakening” (58). The Takekuma Pine was storied in classical verse, but when the eleventh-century poet Nōin visited it a second time, it had been cut down. Nōin wondered if a thousand years had passed between his visits, presumably referring to the time it had taken for the tree to grow in the first place, so surely it must have taken an equal length of time to destroy it. Its replacement had grown to become, in Bashō’s day, “truly an auspicious tree,” giving at least the appearance “of a thousand years.” Of course, the replacement tree had really been growing for “only” about seven hundred years, but Bashō says a thousand in order to invoke Nōin’s language. The point in terms of intersubjective perception is that Bashō tries his best to see and experience what Nōin had seen and experienced—but you can’t look at the same tree twice. That couldn’t be more dramatically illustrated than by the difference evident in Nōin’s second encounter with the pine, where it had gone from pine to no-pine. Even seven centuries later, though, when there is a pine again, the appearance of sameness is an illusion, and Bashō is constantly aware of difference amid sameness. It’s not even the same tree, as Bashō seems to emphasize when he calls our attention to its being twin-trunked. It’s two trees in one.

Of course, one of the things that is different in Bashō’s perception is that the tree is now charged with poetic significance.

So too was the case with the willow celebrated in a *waka* by Saigyō. In his travels, five hundred years before Bashō's, Saigyō had stopped to rest for a moment by a streamside willow, yet he "lingered long" (Barnhill 158, n. 34). Bashō's experience there seems to echo Saigyō's, and perhaps to do it one better, for he sees *a whole rice paddy / planted* while he rests by the willow. In one sense, the hyperbole suggests that time has ceased to exist under that willow, which in turn suggests that he could re-experience what Saigyō had in that same place. But the hyperbole also points to a difference. This is a place where a poet—and his influence—can linger long indeed, not just a few hours, but half a millennium. Bashō encounters not just a pleasant spot under a willow, but a pleasant spot under a willow that is imbued with Saigyō's spirit, perceptions, and words. Even when Bashō's experience there seems an echo of the previous poet's, there's a difference—not to mention that the willow must have been significantly larger by Bashō's day.

In a sense, every haiku seems to rely on intersubjective experience, for every reader is asked to re-encounter what the poet presents us in image form—and of course our encounter will always be colored not only by our own experiences but by the very fact that we see the image presented in a form of a poem, which predisposes us to see it as a moment or image that must have been selected and so is worthy of our attention.

What it is that is presented to us in haiku brings to another key element of phenomenology, Husserl's notion of the "life-world." According to David Abram's summary, the "life-world" is "the world of our immediately lived experience as we live it, prior to all our thoughts about it. . . . reality as it engages us before being analyzed by our theories and our science" (40). This sounds very much akin to Makoto Ueda's sense that haiku "presents an observation or sentiment in all its immediacy, before it is intellectually conceptualized" (11). It also echoes Blyth's description of haiku's "non-intellectuality," and it seems to account for haiku's emphasis on concreteness, on the solid matter of experience that can be apprehended through the senses. This tendency Blyth called, in another

term from his list of haiku's thirteen Zennish traits, haiku's "materiality."

Abram explains that Husserl's life-world is "not a private, but a collective dimension—the common field of our lives" (40). Of course our individual experience of that common field will be inevitably partial and different from everyone else's, depending on how and where we are situated. And of course different cultures will construct a different life-world and see that common field in a different way. But underneath all the cultural and individual differences in perspective and perceptions, we find a common field of experience that we share with each other (and for that matter with other species). So a haiku may be highly subjective in giving an impression of a particular moment from a particular perspective—and, yes, it may be culturally influenced, and the cultural chasm between East and West is not to be underestimated—but beyond all those differences haiku touches on a common field, the life-world of the biosphere, with its patterns of seasonal change and its modality of life-death-rebirth taking place amid webs of inter-relationships. This is surely part of the cross-cultural appeal of haiku. It is true there are dimensions of haiku as it is practiced in Japan that are so culturally bound we may always be missing part of what's going on—which is what led Gary Snyder to suggest that haiku should be considered only a Japanese practice, and so whatever it is that we do in English should be called and considered something different ("News of the Day"). At the same time, though, when Bashō describes the "pitiful" sound of a cricket under a helmet on display at a shrine, well, we can sense the poignancy even without being familiar with the events of the Battle of Shinohara, or of how Sanemori, the owner of the helmet, dyed his hair black to hide his age so he could fight and die in the battle (72). So too we can grasp the idea of cicada sound drilling into impenetrable rock, or the sound of a frog jumping into an old pond, or a hot setting sun seeming to thrust a river into the sea. These are moments, impressions, images from the life world that are part of the common field accessible to all of us.

Building on Husserl's ideas, Merleau-Ponty's conception of

perception renegotiates such binaries as self and world, subject or object, denying primacy to either term. If I see a rock, neither I nor the rock creates the perception, and neither can take full responsibility for the event of perception. But neither one of us is a completely passive part of the perception event either. While I am necessary to the perception, Merleau-Ponty also stresses that the rock has its part in the process as well, just as if I am perceived by another viewer, I have to be there to be seen. As Blyth says in reference to haiku's emphasis on materiality, the "equality of things and ourselves, our common nature, is reciprocal. We exist only if they do. . . . We are equals and can live together harmoniously only if our independence and our dependence, our separateness and continuity, is recognized. Things have done their part; it is for us to do ours" (255). Perception, then, is a reciprocal event involving the participation of both perceiver and perceived. But it is also always incomplete. The viewer will never know all sides of me, just as I will never see at any one moment all sides of the rock. (And if I try to see the inside of the rock, by smashing it open, for instance, well, I won't have a rock any more.) Here is what is "non-intellectual" about all this: Merleau-Ponty says that in our experience of the world, thought and sensation can never be separate. There is no transcendental ego or rationalizing self or spirit or soul or consciousness or mind that is somehow contained by and at the same time separate from the body and the senses. We perceive via the agency of the senses, and that means perception as both sensory input (to perceive an object) and thought (to perceive an idea or concept).

You can make a case for haiku, too, as the art of perception, similarly renegotiating such binaries as self/world and subject/object. This accounts for the apparent selflessness or egolessness of a haiku, the deflection of attention away from the perceiving consciousness and toward the thing or things being perceived. It's not really that the self disappears into the world, but that the binary by which we perceive of self and world as dualities is renegotiated or reconsidered in the event or process of perception. The perceiver's role in the perception

event is undertaken with the senses, not with some separate self or ego that controls the senses and the body from the control tower of mind or consciousness or soul.

So too with the supposed wordlessness of haiku. The ideal of wordlessness suggests that somehow we'll get in a haiku the world itself, pure objective reality, as if the language (product of a perceiving, poetizing subject) is not only transparent but non-existent. But that's absurd, isn't it, since obviously the stuff of haiku is language, and without that we don't have a haiku. From a phenomenological perspective, the ideals of selflessness and wordlessness might be seen as a way of deflecting attention from the language-making, perceiving subject and putting more attention on the object-world in order to disrupt our usual privileging of the perceiver's consciousness in the act of perception and instead to emphasize the process itself, the event whereby subject and object interact. Note, for example, in Gary Hotham's *letting / the dog out / the stars out*, the absence of a subject "I" who lets the dog out and sees the stars. The human subject is not exactly erased—someone must have let the dog out—but the haiku directs our attention elsewhere—ultimately to the universe over our heads. The emphasis is on the moment or process of perception and not on the action or consciousness of the perceiver.

Merleau-Ponty says such perceptions may be true, but they are never complete or whole. There's always something more to perceive—to go back to my example of a crucifixion scene on a pancake, there is another side of the pancake, or a view of the far edge, or its aroma coming off the griddle, its heat on the tongue, the combination of its soft spongy texture and the metal tines of the fork, the roasty buckwheat taste mingled with that of the embedded blueberries and a generous oozing dollop of pure maple syrup, the sound of the fork clattering on empty plate, the lip-smack, the ah, the yum, the full belly. And there's always another side or dimension to the Takekuma Pine or Saigyō's willow. You get the point—all perceptions are partial and can never exhaust the "suchness" of a thing. Perception is a process and an event, and perceptions can be

true, but they are never complete or whole. Haiku emphasizes the process of perception by using the present tense, often the present participle, and it emphasizes the incompleteness of any perception by its fragmentary nature. Haiku's aesthetic of partiality and its grammatical and syntactical incompleteness constitute a formal capturing of the fragmentary nature of perception, employing such brevity that of course we are always aware that there is more that could be said—and perceived.

In short, it is phenomenology's renegotiation of binaries, its emphasis on bodily, sensory perception, and its delight in incompleteness that make it seem a philosophy ripe for application to haiku. I am aware of course of the irony that I'm going on and on about a philosophical approach to experience in order to make a point about a non-intellectual awareness of the world. Actually, Bashō seemed aware of the same kind of tension, and often opted to deflate intellectual and spiritual pretensions in order to bring us (or himself) back to earth and the physical world. On his journey, he stopped at "a temple for mountain ascetics," where he prayed not to the monk who had founded the temple's sect, but to the ascetic monk's high-heeled shoes: *in the summer mountains / praying before the clogs: / setting off* (53). The idea was that Bashō sought strength before heading deeper into the mountains, where of course he'd be relying on his sandal-shod feet. And so Bashō, in true phenomenological fashion, concerns himself more, even in his devotions, with the realm of the physical and the sensory (oh my poor aching feet) rather than the spiritual or intellectual. Blyth notes that another feature of haiku is humor; in fact, the "hai" part of the word means humor—and I'll add that the humor of a haiku is of course evidenced in the bodily response of laughter or a wry grin. Blyth says the humor of a haiku comes from "the central paradox that lies somewhere concealed in every haiku" as well as a "lack of sentimentality" and the tendency to move "from the sublime to the ridiculous" (214, 222). Haiku's movement from spiritual concern to physical realm lies at the heart of such a move. A prayer in a temple setting suggests the mystical and the sublime, but the concern for the well-being of the feet instead of the spirit

appeals to our sense of the ridiculous. Or to put it another way, if I may be permitted my own punning rendition of the scene:

Zen bootism
at the mountain shrine
a prayer for the sole

In regard to the above, I'll note that Blyth also suggests that haiku humor can result from "studied idiocy" (219), a character trait and writerly practice I'll be all too happy to cultivate further. But I digress.

A day after my derailleur problems, at a campsite on Mars Hill, over a dinner of fat, satisfying, submarine sandwiches, Megan comments on the physical challenge of our trip. More sweat than any communing with nature. We have been pushing ourselves, trying to cover lots of miles by foot and by wheel in limited vacation time. Forty miles backpacking through Baxter Park, 86 biking across the state, another mile up (and I do mean up) Mars Hill. A hundred and twenty-seven miles in a week. Today, both biking and hiking. Writing hike-u. And bike-u. (It's enough to drive you ku-ku.)

Megan says her impression of Maine, as seen from her bike, is of stillness. The activity is all on the perceiver's end, the biker's, and glimpses of the rest of the world are caught as in a photo. We feel breezes and see the effects in the wildflowers' lean, but we don't see the process of the flower yielding to the breeze. We see life as essentially static, a cow's raised head in a field, as if it's posing, and the thatch of high grass luxuriant around a fence post. While hiking, by contrast, you see little things in motion, flowers up close, birds moving nearby. The essence of biking is uphill work for downhill reward, and breathe in the spruce as you go. It's the quiet click of wheels and the stillness of white-flowering potato fields.

The more you're in motion, it seems, the more the rest of the world seems to settle into a state of stillness. And the closer you get to stillness, the more the world seems to spring into motion. Perhaps that is why in our busy, often harried lives in

the “real world,” we seem to regard the rest of the world, the non-human world, as essentially static, as background for our important doings. In our hurry, we miss the fact that the world around us is as alive and active as we are. What haiku does is select out moments for our contemplation, asking us to slow down and notice—which might explain why haiku is more a noun-heavy than a verb-driven poetics. When verbs are used in haiku, they are often present participles, minus the helper verb that would make the haiku grammatically complete, so the action is always incomplete and in progress.

These thoughts on stillness and motion tie in with Blyth’s notion of contradiction, a reference to haiku’s tendency to work via paradox, whereby two opposites cohere into some sort of unity, or where things that may seem contradictory according to the workings of intellect may nevertheless cohere into a truth we recognize intuitively—before the perception gets processed through the mill of the intellect. For instance, when Bashō refers to the “stillness” of cicada sounds penetrating rock, we have to consider how sound can penetrate rock (which does not seem logically possible), and we have to ponder how that shrill sound could also constitute stillness. Again, phenomenology’s concern with the process of perception, where the opposite poles of perceiver and perceived, subject and object, are forsaken in favor of a melding of the two during the actual perception event, seems pertinent, or at least helps resolve the apparent contradiction or paradox. Sound penetrating rock might seem, if not objectively true, an accurate rendering of the perceiver’s sensory apprehension of the cicada’s shrill call, and the sound might well be perceived as peaceful, the essence of stillness. But haiku is hardly about pure subjectivity; in its outward-looking insistence on materiality, it more often moves us away from subjectivity and towards the object. In Bashō’s “if you want to know the pine, go to the pine” lesson, he points out that “going to the pine” requires you to “leave your subjective preoccupation with yourself. Otherwise, you impose yourself on the object” (qtd. in Reichhold 72). The object and the self cannot be separate, says Bashō, a concept that seems to accord with phenomenology’s insistence on perception as a reciprocal transaction be-

tween object and self.

Meanwhile, back on his narrow road (is it narrow because it is only one person's version of that particular journey?), Bashō visits Unganji Temple, "the site of the mountain hermitage of Priest Butcho," who had been Bashō's spiritual teacher. Bashō makes a point of saying he used a walking stick to get there. (Now there, in contrast to my bike's derailleur, is a technology I can grasp.) He describes Butcho's home as "a tiny hut atop a boulder and built into a cave," and his haiku specifies that *even woodpeckers / don't damage this hut: / summer grove* (53). The suggestion of course is that all of nature seems to treat the hut as sacred place, but thinking more literally I presume that the woodpeckers don't touch it because it's made of rock and grass (a thatched roof), and neither is to its dietary liking. So much for the advantages of the middle way—which I imagine would be wood. Another reading of the poem is that the grove itself is the hut, and so Butcho is at home in the woods, a whole forest for his domicile, which is so extensive that not even the hammering of woodpeckers can do any serious harm to those roofbeams.

Here at our wooden lean-to perched atop Mars Hill, we hear nary a woodpecker. But in the dark, we see a moth with glowing eyes by the side of the lean-to, its eyes reflecting starlight. We walk out to the open summit of Mars Hill and, yes, as is appropriate, Mars is rising. We also glory in the glow of the Milky Way arcing overhead, like a long wisp of cirrus or a gleaming galactic wheel finding traction in dark matter. We are grateful to see the Milky Way so consistently these clear nights free of town glow. I recall Bill McKibben in *The Age of Missing Information* saying that TV doesn't give a sense of the sacred even in religious programs. Its specialty is the close-up, not the panorama, and it doesn't do vastness well. By way of contrast, the night sky urges us to wonder, to ponder creation, and it reminds us of vastness and, in a healthy way, makes us feel small and humble. There's more to this universe than we could ever even dream of, Horatio. And when we have a sense of the sacredness of creation, we are less likely to screw it up or to disregard it.

the Milky Way
a narrow road
eye-traveled

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A professor of English and Environmental Studies at Penn State Altoona, Ian Marshall is past president of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment and the author of *Story Line: Exploring the Literature of the Appalachian Trail* (1998), *Peak Experiences: Walking Meditations on Literature, Nature, and Need* (2003), and *Walden by Haiku* (2009). Much of his work takes the form of "narrative scholarship," a blend of first-person narrative and scholarly inquiry. Marshall was recently interviewed on the subject of haiku for the Public Radio International show "Living on Earth."

Reviewed

Hotham, Gary. *Spilled Milk: Haiku Destinies.* Montrose, Colorado: Pinyon Publishing, 2010. 133 pp, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-0-9821561-5-5, 15 USD <www.pinyon-publishing.com>

By *Michael W. Thomas*, England

“My desire as a poet,” says Gary Hotham in an essay appended to *Spilled Milk*, “is to let the reader experience the moment, the state of being that is the focus of the haiku, with as much intensity as is possible.” This present collection, gathered from an array of publications in magazines as diverse as *Haiku Canada Review*, *Blithe Spirit* and *Frogpond* itself, gives ample testament to that aim. Years of working at his chosen form have enabled Hotham to develop a sureness of language and vision. *Spilled Milk* is a journey through states and moments, and its intensity is of the unforced, enduring kind.

Hotham is a skilled creator of composite states: scenes in which two emotions pull against each other, allowing the reader to meditate on the hybrid thus produced. So, *enough sunrise—reveals a small window / in an old hotel*. The pivotal word occurs at the very beginning. The view hardly merits the burnished glow demanded by the Taj Mahal. Here is an example of a recurrent strength in the collection: a particular word energizes those whose company it keeps. Sometimes, this process is inverted, with brightness creeping up on and transforming a dun-coloured scene: *overcast morning—/ goldfish touch / the surface*.

Elsewhere, Hotham reveals a fascination with a particular kind of afterwards. His speakers are aware that a moment or possibility has passed, perhaps freighted with significance:

crumbs around my coffee—
no one going by
stops going by

Or, more pointedly,

far away—
carnival lights
changing colors

A number of such haiku transmit the feeling that whatever is going on is happening anywhere but here; it is to Hotham's credit, however, that he doesn't disrupt the poems' form by seeking to introduce notes of obvious wistfulness or isolation. As he notes in the appended essay, it is for the reader to gaze upon the scene and unfold the mood it offers.

Several haiku hint delicately at times and places—hidden but no less beguiling—beyond the recorded moment. Small details and gestures suggest a connection, however transient, with a larger pattern:

other worlds

part of her seashell in some other
hands

Here, the energizing word is “other,” linking unknowable lives with the quiet, intimate act of holding a shell-fragment, a link that recalls the distant, changeful lights of the carnival. Arresting in the same way is

near sunset

children running against
their shadows,

which suggests the playful idea that, throughout the preceding day, their shadows have been elsewhere, exploring worlds of their own (and who knows? perhaps unearthing shadow-shells). Only now do they return, their stories kept secret.

“On the whole,” says Hotham elsewhere in his essay, “I don't want a distraction from the flow.” *Spilled Milk* honours his intention. Moods of seasons, small markers of joy and abandonment, the breadth and depth of starry nights—all flow through the collection without wrong moves or empurpled phrases. This is a flow well worth riding.

Michael W. Thomas is a poet, novelist and dramatist. He has published several novels and poetry collections, the latest collection being *Port Winston Mulberry* (Littlejohn and Bray, 2010). He is poet-in-residence at the annual Robert Frost Poetry Festival, Key West, FL. Website: www.michaelwthomas.co.uk

Van den Heuvel, Cor. *A Boy's Seasons*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Single Island Press, 2010, 205 pp., perfect softbound, 6.5 x 7.5. ISBN: 978-0-97-40895-8-4, 24.95 USD < <http://www.haikumuse.com/home.html> >

by *Nick Avis*, Newfoundland & Labrador

Cor van den Heuvel is perhaps best known as the editor of the three editions of *The Haiku Anthology*.¹ For over 40 years he has been a leader in the haiku movement and a tireless promoter of haiku and its related forms. He is a translator, a highly regarded critic and one of the haiku movement's foremost poets. Past president of the Haiku Society of America, his awards include three HSA Merit Book Awards, a World Haiku Achievement Award presented to him at the World Haiku Festival (2000) in London and The Masaoka Shiki International Haiku Prize for 2002. Anyone interested in haiku ought to know who he is and should be familiar with his work.

A Boy's Seasons is van den Heuvel's tenth publication and is very well produced, the layout in particular. The subtitle on the cover, "haibun memoirs," indicates that the work is autobiographical. There are no less than 28 substantial haibun, some of which contain shorter haibun, 250 poems, 15 pages of endnotes and a nine-page afterword. It is the length of a novel and has the same level of complexity you would expect to find in that genre.

There are four main sections: the one from which the title comes, "A Boy's Seasons," which contains 17 haibun about the various seasonal pastimes of van den Heuvel's youth, anything from marbles to baseball; "The Paper Route," a poem or sequence; "A Boy's Fights," divided into three haibun; and "A Boy's Holidays," consisting of eight haibun on the traditional American holidays from New Year to Christmas. Each haibun is distinct, as is "The Paper Route," but they are all richly woven together with recurring themes of boyhood, growing up and coming of age, which, along with its length, makes *A Boy's Seasons* a book in every sense of the word.

Many of van den Heuvel's remarks about the book in the introduction are unnecessary since he repeats them so much more effectively in the opening haibun that immediately follows. The endnotes are complementary, interesting and informative. The afterword consists of a concise, accurate overview of the history of haibun, including its origins in English, as well as a tribute to those who introduced him to this form.

The prose is very well written, wonderfully lyrical, often beautifully lucid and at times the most marvelous poetry. The poems range from isolated, poignant moments in the narrative to some of the best haiku and senryu you will ever read.

The haibun have both similarities and differences with Bashō's original conception of it, what I will call "traditional haibun," and the earlier Japanese poetic diaries.² In the afterword, van den Heuvel also acknowledges the influence of Jack Kerouac. Ultimately, however, van den Heuvel's haibun, like his haiku and senryu, are very much his own.

Carl Patrick says in his preface that *A Boy's Seasons* is written as if everything occurred within the space of one year, regardless of the boy's age; as if van den Heuvel has "suspended the activities of childhood in a kind of time warp, an eternal present." However, this feature is only true of "A Boy's Seasons" and "A Boy's Holidays," not the entire book.

Makoto Ueda calls haibun "haiku prose or prose written in the spirit of haiku."³ Hiroaki Sato calls it "haikai prose"⁴ The principal characteristics of haiku prose, many of which are often lost in translation, are the following:⁵ the prose is brief; the sentences are short and crisp, filled with multiple, sensory images of everyday events; there are few abstract ideas; the language used is "concise, allusive and figurative;" they tend to be detached and restrained although thoughts, feelings and emotions are directly expressed; and there is almost always a sense of lightness or humour, some of which is irony.

Some of the haiku do not have the necessary independence

to be a poem even though they may function like one in the haibun:

“go on home
your mother’s callin’ ya”
“oh yeah?”

This quote appears toward the end of the second section of “A Boy’s Fights” and by the time you reach this point there is an established storyline with developed characters. As a result, this rather trite, juvenile taunt captures the moment, contrasts with the seriousness of the fight to the boys involved and functions as a lighthearted senryu. The poet is of course laughing at himself.

The following sequence is from the “Easter” haibun:

Easter morning
dew on a cellophane wrapper
in the driveway

in the grass
a soft rain is washing
an Easter egg

Easter afternoon
not a crumb remains
of the chocolate rabbit

Each of these is a poem in its own right and together they form a fourth independent poem that is simply outstanding. Then there is the relationship with the prose to consider. This sequence emphasizes the dual nature of the work as a whole with its two levels of perception and interpretation: the boy’s and the adult’s, the literal suchness of the moment and the human implications of it. There are also longer sequences that follow each of the haibun introductions to the individual seasons.

These major shifts away from traditional haibun are found in contemporary English explorations with the form in which there are the usual divisions along traditional and non-traditional

lines between writers and theorists over what defines a haibun and whether shifts such as these are acceptable or necessary. Regardless of these differing viewpoints, there are a lot of first rate, interesting and innovative haibun being written today and van den Heuvel, while firmly rooted in tradition, is at the forefront of these exciting developments. And without a doubt, he sets a very high standard of excellence for this genre as is seen in the following excerpt taken from the opening section “The Seasons.” After telling us he devoted all of his time and energy to repeatedly practicing his three favourite sports, van den Heuvel continues by saying:

This devotion was a kind of religion. With my mind and body totally involved in the practice or playing of these sports I felt a oneness with my surroundings, and by extension with the universe. The mind became clear. Set only in the direction of completing an act of beauty and grace—though never thought of in such sissy terms, but rather as a feat of strength and skill – it, the mind, became completely united with my body and together they moved through space and time to a pitch of motion that sometimes passed into the wonder of perfection, the perfect swing, the perfect pass into the end zone, or the perfect hookshot floating up in a flowing arc to fall with a whisper through the strings of the basket.

first warm day
fitting my fingers into the mitt
pounding the pocket

When it was warm and sunny enough for us to get out a ball and gloves for a game of catch, we knew winter was over. A baseball flying through the air was our sign of spring. We loved the sight of it the way a Japanese haiku poet loves to see the first plum blossom flowering in a still snowy landscape. A baseball was our plum blossom. Blossoming in the blue skies of early spring when snow and puddles still lingered along the side of the road, it would continue to bloom all summer long.

summer afternoon
the long fly ball to center field
takes its time

When the leaves began to turn color and started falling,
and there was a frostiness in the air, it was time to switch
to throwing and kicking a football.

chill wind
a football twirls through
the falling leaves

When the ground got hard and snow began to fall it was
time to play basketball, hopefully in a gym, but if not, we
shoveled out the snow around the basket in the backyard.

winter rain
the sound of the basketball
in the empty gym

So for me there were three main seasons: baseball, foot-
ball, and basketball. And the four natural seasons became
their backdrop.

Van den Heuvel is masterful with lineation, sound, rhythm and
cadence, from the beautifully long, flowing sentence of the
first paragraph to the intricately woven sounds that cascade
down through the prose and the haiku. Note as well how the
sound of the bouncing basketball in the last haiku echoes the
pounding of the glove in the first. Each of the extraordinary
haiku in this haibun is the epitome of its season with literal,
metaphorical and other levels of interpretation. As in the very
best haiku, they also contain multiple sensory images.

As the mitt, the baseball, the football and the basketball re-
appear throughout the book, they take on a symbolic, if not
archetypal significance:

deep winter
I spin the basketball
on one finger

There is perfect balance and fragility. Even though the boy
has the world at his fingertip and the image, like a statue,

seems eternal, everyone knows it cannot last. I am reminded of Hercules, Rodin's Thinker and Hamlet all rolled into one.

In addition to the haibun, there is "The Paper Route," which van den Heuvel calls a haiku sequence, although around a third or more are senryu; and, as with some of the poems and the sequences in the haibun, there are verses in it that are not independent but work perfectly as stanzas of a poem. It is dated the winter of 1944-45, which would mean that van den Heuvel was in his early teens. It is written as if everything occurs in one evening and the excellent haiku and senryu embrace many of the themes in this book.

far-apart streetlights
leaving one walking towards
another

Adolescent intimations of sexuality:

the darkness between houses
I dream of the young widow
wearing only her slip

As always, basketball and baseball:

dodging around a snowbank
I sink a long shot
for the silent stars

the snowy field
where we played baseball
falling star

Just beginning to understand things more deeply:

uncleared driveway
just visible in a dark window
the gold star flag

And the comfort of domesticity:

sounds of supper
I shut the door quietly
on the evening news

Perhaps the reader by now may have noticed that van den Heuvel's poems are quite long. The majority of them are 15 syllables or more and a number of them are over 20, with 24 being the maximum. I have always seen the length of a haiku as a matter of choice although around 17 syllables seems a reasonable limitation. The longer form permits more detail and greater attention to sound and lyricism. Redundancy, which is really the curse of a specific syllable count and not the number of syllables as such, is hard to find in this book; and even when it is arguably present, the poet has made a clear artistic choice, not a mistake. The longer poems also work well with the longer prose.

There is tremendous diversity in this book, as we have already seen, and the following two excerpts, one from "Memorial Day" and the other from the "Halloween" haibun are just two more shining examples:

The parade would end up at the town's biggest and oldest cemetery on the Dover Point Road, where prayers and speeches were given in praise of those who had died for freedom in all our wars and somebody would always recite Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. With their rifles pointing at the sky, squads of soldiers would fire salutes to the war dead, and then taps would sound sad and long under the blue May sky, stretching over the wide lawns of the cemetery, and fading into the surrounding pine trees. The crowd would slowly disperse, some people staying to decorate the graves:

after the speeches
the honored dead return
to their silence

evening
in the deserted cemetery
bird song

Then we might wander up the dark country road who-whooping like an owl or moaning like a ghost until we came to the next house, where a pumpkin-headed figure stuffed with straw was propped up on the lawn. We walked under a large bat hanging from the dark porchlight, and then jumped three feet in the air when the door suddenly opened and a monster holding its own head under its arm shook a long (rubber) knife at us.

Halloween
the chimes ring deep in the house
but nobody comes

The following is the “Spring” haibun. Like many of the introductions to the individual haibun it is written in the third person and we move from the general to the particular, another technique found in traditional haibun:

Spring is mud . . . and baseball. Warm sunlight and warm breezes mingling with a coolness from the still cold earth and the melting snows of winter. It’s a white ball flying through the air, from one leather glove to another – back and forth – until, missing one of the gloves, it lands on the spongy lawn among patches of dirty snow – or splashes into a mud puddle in the driveway. Spring’s an open window in the classroom and a strange restlessness in the class. Sweaters tied around the neck or the waist. The softness and glitter of girls coming out from under coats hats and fluttering in the sunny breezes. It’s your dog running through puddles and chasing nothing at all back and forth across the front lawn. It’s standing in the outfield waiting for the ball to come your way while the cries float out from the infield: “Atta boy, Lefty . . . No hitter up there.” It’s marbles and bubble-gum cards and pussy willows. It’s riding your bike off ramps made with boards on heaped-up dirt and flying through the air with a sinking feeling in your stomach. It’s

swinging like Tarzan from limb to limb through the trees budding with new leaves. It's hanging out on street corners, dreaming in the library, running on a baseball field, going fishing in the pond, getting tongue tied in front of a pretty girl. It's a feeling of loosening bonds, rising energy, wild abandon – freedom. And baseball.

baseball cards
spread out on the bed
April rain

This beautifully poetic prose is a little closer to the brevity of traditional haibun. The haiku contrasts sharply with the prose after which you would expect a home run not the game rained out. But the boy's enthusiasm for baseball, like spring itself, cannot be contained. The baseball cards and the game are all brought to life by the boy and the April rain.

The final section involves "Christmas haibun:

Whatever was lost in growing up, a little glimmer of it still shines for me in the lights and decorations of any Christmas tree on Christmas Eve, even if it is standing in the middle of a crowded airlines terminal, in hotel lobby, or draped in snow in a small-town square.

on a train
Christmas lights in all towns
flicker into the past

As the last one in the book, this haibun provides the perfect ending.

A Boy's Seasons is certainly one of the best haiku publications you are going to read, both in breadth and scope, although I cannot imagine it necessary to recommend highly to the haiku community any book written by Cor van den Heuvel

Notes

1. Doubleday Anchor, 1974; Simon & Schuster, 1986; Norton, 1999.

2. Miner, E.. *Japanese Poetic Diaries*. Univ. of California, Press, 1976.
3. Ueda, M. *Matsuo Bashō*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1982, p. 112..
4. Sato, H. *Bashō's Narrow Road*. Berkeley: Stonebridge , 1996, p. 19.
5. Most of this paragraph is found in Higginson, W. & Harter, P. *The Haiku Handbook*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985, p. 211 as well as in Matsuo Bashō, p. 142; although the qualifications and opinions are mine.

Nick Avis has been publishing haiku and related poetry internationally for over three decades. He was president of Haiku Canada for six years and has written reviews for *Modern Haiku*, *Frogpond*, *Inkstone* and the *Newfoundland Quarterly*. He has also published a number of papers on haiku and is currently writing a series of articles entitled "fluences" for the Haiku Foundation.

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Laurie, Christina. *Seasons Rising: A Collection of Haiku.* Huntington, NY: Fore Angels Press, 2010, 108 pp, perfect softbound, 5.5 x 7.5. ISBN 978-0-9799947-4-6, 13.95 USD.

by *Matthew M. Cariello*, Ohio

You need an editor. I need an editor. We all need editors, someone to gently (or not so gently) point out our literary delusions, get us out of compositional ruts, and tell us when we're just plain bad. Without editors, we risk self-indulgence and, if not ridicule, then certainly the critical reservations of others. Some of us are lucky enough to have an internal editor, a built-in crap detector (to paraphrase Hemingway). Other writers are not that lucky. My cousin Nick once told me just about the most important thing I ever learned about writing: your poem should never be about how smart, sensitive or just plain observant you are. Anything but that, but not that. Smart man. I immediately installed those words as my crap detector (although sometimes it doesn't work as good as it should).

Christina Laurie is obviously a very accomplished person. According to the cover notes, in addition to publishing "thousands of poems and haiku in numerous periodicals in the United States, Canada and Japan," she is also an ordained minister and "national chaplain of the National League of American Pen Women, Inc." A haiku in this collection won a prize in 1984. One would expect a fairly high level of accomplishment from one of Laurie's books. Unfortunately, *Seasons Rising* is filled with rough drafts. Virtually every haiku needs a rewrite of some kind: get rid of that cliché, fix that line break, lose the -ing verb, vary the construction, get the spelling right (!), and cut, cut, cut.

Let's start with the prize-winner, this haiku from *Dragonfly*, published in 1984:

The sandhill cranes
Flap and glide, flap and glide
The hazy moon.

I'm not sure what prize this haiku won back in 1984 (another haiku on page 74 is identified as "Prize winning haiku" with no attribution at all), but it's quite good. The repetition of "flap and glide" not only mimics the movement of the cranes' wings, but connects the bird to moon, both metaphorically (they both glide) and visually (both are "up"). Few other haiku in this book rise to the level set here.

More typical is this:

In the winter woods
the last three brown oak leaves
bare branches orphaned.

There are several problems here. The most glaring is the use of "brown" to modify "oak leaves" in winter. It's redundant, a bit like saying "four-legged table" or "winged bird." The first line adds a season, but does so with the near cliché of "winter woods." But it's the last line that's most infuriating. Are the brown oak leaves on the branches? In that case, they're not orphaned, are they? Or are they on the ground? Which is orphaned, the brown oak leaves or the bare branches? How would the branches be orphaned by the loss of their leaves? Aren't the leaves thereby orphaned? Why "orphaned" anyway? Isn't that a blatant anthropomorphization of branches, or leaves, not to mention winter woods? There's an epistemological unpredictability in this haiku that makes it very hard to understand, and this kind of inconsistency mars the book as a whole.

There are numerous examples of slack editing throughout.

Crunching hay baler
At the crest of the last hill
Plump, wild strawberries.

I can see what she's getting at here. We're supposed to see the hay baler, with its large, loud machinery, in contrast to the ripe strawberries. One is large, rude and man-made, the other is small, delicate and natural. But which of these is at the crest

of the last hill, the baler or the strawberries? Or both? The implications of “last hill” are interesting, and the middle line cleverly modifies both the first and the third, but in this case I’m confused by the imprecision of the image. Not to mention the participle form of crunch that opens the poem; the –ing verb is one of Laurie’s bad habits.

Some of the haiku come very close to success. For example,

In the dark garden
she touches a hidden thorn
a scent of roses.

Here, touching the thorn reveals the scent of roses—in itself a nice balance of pain and pleasure. But the irony would be greater if the pleasure came first:

A scent of roses
in the dark garden
She touches a hidden thorn

If the scent of roses is what brings her into the garden, then the rebuke of pain is more intense.

In this example, Ms. Laurie comes quite close again:

A black crow lands
On the weathered cow fence
Winter fog rolls in.

Again, it’s redundant to modify “crow” with “black” (have you ever seen a blue crow?), but you can get the image, which calls to mind several canonical haiku. The middle line is fairly sound, and, in evoking both the passing of time and physical containment, creates an interesting tension (although “cow fence” is a bit awkward). Unfortunately, the last line slips into the cliché of “fog rolls in.” (Why does fog always roll, anyway?) Some small adjustments—deletions, in this case—would sharpen the poem considerably:

A crow lands
On the weathered cow fence
Winter fog.

I found myself doing rewrites with almost every poem. Each haiku in *Seasons Rising* has potential, but as it is, the book is rife with half-thoughts, ambiguous images, and inconsistent punctuation; clichés (e.g., “deserted graveyard,” “seagull symphony,” “whistling wind,” “angry blizzard”); and what often is referred to as “Tarzan-talk” or “caveman-talk,” language that abjures definite articles (*Rain-glistening grass / Feeding birds fly quickly / Tiger cat stalks*). *Seasons Rising* feels more like novice work than that of an experienced writer. With a little editing, any of the haiku in this book could become better. Ms. Laurie needs an editor.

Matthew M. Cariello was born and raised in New Jersey. He currently lives in Bexley, Ohio, where he works in the English Department at the Ohio State University. His poems and haiku have been published in or are forthcoming in *Poet Lore*, *Artful Dodge*, *The Journal of New Jersey Poets*, *The Evening Street Review*, *Frogpond*, *Heron's Nest*, *Daily Haiku*, and *Modern Haiku*. He has also published stories and reviews in *The Long Story*, *The Indiana Review*, *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *The Cortland Review*, *The Cafe Review*, and *The Journal*.

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Two Reviews

By *Bruce Ross*, Maine

Gill, Stephen H., & Maeda, Okiharu (eds.), **Talazawa, Akiko & Miyazaki, Hisashi** (trans.), **Kawakoe, Yoshio** (illus.). *One Hundred Poets on Mount Ogura, One Poem Each*. Kyoto: Hailstone Publications, 2010, 136 pp., perfectbound, 8 x 6. ISBN 978-4-9900822-4-6, 12 USD sea/15 USD airmail, <<http://hailhaiku.wordpress.cpm>> .

An Ecological Poetics: Dreams of the Past on Poetry Mountain

There are two aspects to this charming and well-designed collection of 68 haiku and 32 tanka. One is the historical background, the *Hyakunin isshu* (“one hundred poets, one poem each”), a traditional Japanese anthology form with versions into the modern period. The most well-known version is the *Ogura Hayakunin Isshu* (1162-1241), collected by Fujiwara no Teika (1162-1241). One of the poems (*waka*, classical tanka), number 26, celebrates the maples of Mount Ogura for their autumnal beauty. This mountain, associated with the presence of acclaimed poets, including “Toru, Saigyō, Teika, Tame’ie, Bashō, and Kyorai,” (114) became in recent time a dumping ground for refuse. The second aspect of the current collection relates to this latter issue. Stephen Gill, one of its editors, lived near the mountain in Kyoto. He knew a little of its literary and cultural history, but felt that the “mountain itself suggested” the current anthology because it looked “pathetic, unloved” (personal correspondence 10/31/2010). A result of this feeling was to make the mountain’s condition a matter of public concern, to establish an organization, PTO (People Together for Mount Ogura), to remove the refuse and attend to sprucing up foliage, trails, etc., and to produce the current anthology (some of the sales received will support the mountain’s clean up).

The authors of the tanka and haiku range from established poets to those who were writing one of their first poems. All

but a few of the poems, collected over six years, were composed while the authors were hiking on or working to clean up the mountain. Despite the collection's slight unevenness of quality, given the admirable intent of the poems, along with the playful paper cuttings adorning the collection's pages (the front cover alluding to the mountain's cultural heritage and natural beauty; the back cover whimsically portraying a mound of collected refuse), it makes for inviting reading.

The volume contains: two maps of the mountain, including contour lines, trails, and cultural identification points; an index of the poets; 12 poems of 100 written by Gill while hiking the mountain one day in 2003; a foreword by Okiharu Maeda; and an afterword by Gill. Each poem in the anthology proper has its own page with kanji and kana of the poem, including the author's name, at the top; the English translation of the poem (which is always clear and often poetic) and the author's name in the center, and relevant cultural and natural allusions and associations at the bottom.

The association with the past, here Bashō's disciple Kyori (Ei Oishi), the Manyōshū, the earliest court poetry anthology (Kazue Hirosawa), the memory of autumn and earlier poets' celebrations of the maple's beauty (Hiroyo Kamata), and the mountain where earlier poets visited (Ayako Ito), occur often:

At the foot of Mount Ogura
Kyorai's gravestone surrounded—
wild camellia (37)

Noon, and I've become
a person from Manyō times—
double rainbow (76)

Green maples—
hanging somewhere in the light,
the invisible past (58)

A new shrine has been built
along the ancient path
where once our poets walked:
the wind that blows,
same now as long ago (107)

The association with the present, the ecological project, also occurs often, here in a poet's observation of natural beauty during the project (Yusuke Yokoshima) and a seven-year-old girl's prayer for restored Earth (Minori Kuwabara):

Putting in order
the trash collected—
a glance at the young leaves (97)

We clean up this mountain:
our whole Earth, too
please become clean! (100)

Mount Ogura has been called Japan's Poetry Mountain because of its long association with the Japanese poetic tradition. This wonderful collection, however simply expressed at times, justifies this claim through poems finely crafted in celebration of natural beauty that is at the heart of an ecological poetics and the spirit of Japanese lyric poetry, whether in an allusion to a well-known classic haiku (Akiko Masaki), a painterly landscape-like rendering of the mountain's environment (Moya Bligh), the synchronistic qualities of nature (Reiko Hayahara), or the universal essence of human feeling connected with the natural world (Yumi Ochi):

Mount Ogura,
scattered showers far and near...
walking with friends,
each one feels
a different autumn (20)

Through the trees, a boat;
glimpse of another world (36)

No breeze:
a flock of birds brings down
more cherry petals... (101)

Neither Japanese, nor English...
this sound of
treading the fallen leaves (99)

All in all, this collection is a poetic touchstone relevant to our times.

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Rees, Lynne & Pacsso, Jo (eds). *The Unseen Wind: British Haiku Society Haibun Anthology, 2009*. Spalding, Lincolnshire, England: Hub Editions, 2010, 78 pp., perfect bound, 8.5 x 6. ISBN 978-1-903746-84-4, 7.00 £; 10.50 USD
<www.britishhaikusociety.org>

Privileging the Link: On a Poetics of Haibun

This collection of haibun is apparently the third biennial haibun anthology put out by the British Haiku Society. It is not clear how the haibun in the collection are related to the BHS haibun contests. Nor is it clear how the haibun were ordered (they are not alphabetical). The two editors were given a group of anonymous haibun to choose from and comment on. The editors declare they are simply haibun practitioners themselves without authoritative or academic knowledge of haibun (1), and created what they call “a teaching and learning tool.” (2) Thus, accompanying the 25 haibun taking up 33 pages, are comments by each editor on each preceding haibun taking up 39 pages.

The editors state: “There are no definite criteria for the haibun in English; it is an evolving genre which bears little resemblance to the original Japanese form whose name it bears.” (1) They then list eight favorable qualities of haibun, though they chose the haibun by reading them aloud and not having any preconceived criteria other than those apply to writing in general. They recognize, though, haibun’s “unique form: the effective blend and juxtaposition of poetry and prose.” (1)

My thoughts are that haibun is characterized by a flow of sensibility and privileging the haiku (or tanka) link to the poetic prose of the haibun, both an inheritance of Japanese poetry. Thus, when the editors suggest haibun should “transcend anecdote and/or personal experience” to be of “relevance to a wider readership” (2), they are subverting key elements of the form.

A number of years ago someone on *haijinx* online haiku journal expressed the numerous possibilities of the haibun form, a form considered classical in Japan and rarely practiced there today. The potential was already there in Japanese travel journals, nature sketches, diaries, and fiction, even short essays without haiku. The flow of sensibility I mentioned, in Japanese haibun, is personal and highly affective in emotion tone, a kind of atmosphere of feeling, sometimes charged with wit or humor. The “unique form” for non-Japanese literary production centers on privileging the link, a key element in almost all Japanese poetic forms. Therefore, haibun should probably be appreciated for the author’s sensibility and nuance of poetic linking. Mimicking western genre through the haibun form would probably be a misstep. As I said to one prominent haibun editor, much of these attempts would never be accepted in the specific genre journals if submitted without the haiku.

The editors comments are low key and a bit “airy”: “This is a very concentrated haibun.” (10); “successful rhetorical device of repetition” (12); “A wonderfully positive piece of writing that avoids any hint of sentimentality.” (15); “This haibun is enfolded in the weather as a metaphor for emotions.” (19);

“This is haibun writing at its best...the way it has been crafted and edited by its author...is one of delight, empathy and insight.” (31)

The authors of the haibun are mostly from Great Britain with a few from Canada and the United States. Some familiar names are included, though not necessarily their best work: Cheri Hunter Day, Doris Heitmeyer, Graham High, Ken Jones, Doreen King, Ray Rasmussen. There is a superb haibun by Graham High, “Spring Burial,” where an elegiac tone is nuanced by exactly right haiku links. Doreen King’s “Having Been Thrown Out” is a subtle expression of an artist’s sensibility. Ruth Franke’s “The Sea In Their Blood” has perfectly crafted links to its look at family history. Other attempts at profundity or humor seem to fall a bit short, as do the few nature sketches. There are more than a few haibun on infirmity, calamity, social discomfort, and the like, overburdening these subjects with the current mode of emotional confession. That said, there is some decidedly good work in the collection.

A wonderfully promising form, yes. In its infancy worldwide, yes. A receptacle for all possibility, or the current fads of emotion, no.

Bruce Ross, past president of the Haiku Society of America, is editor of *Haiku Moment, An Anthology of Contemporary North American Haiku* and *Journeys to the Interior, American Versions of Haibun*. He is the author of *How to Haiku, A Writer’s Guide to Haiku and Related Forms* and *If Not Higher, Lectures on the Poetics of Spiritual Presence and Absence*.

Briefly Reviewed

by *George Swede*, Ontario

Antonini, Jean. *hé! géranium blanc / hey! white geranium / hé! witte geranium.* Den Bosch, Nederland: 't schrijverke, 2010, unpag. perfect softbound, 3 x 4. ISBN: 978-94-90607-04-3, 12 USD, <<http://www.redmoonpress.com>>. As two of the 30 persons from 19 countries invited to the international haiku festival in Ghent, Belgium in September, 2010, Anita Krumins and I heard poet/physicist Jean Antonini read his 40 haiku about geraniums in his native French alternating with Holland's Max Verhart who read the English versions. The poems in French were hypnotic, but, in English, they sounded a bit dull at first. Eventually, however, the unavoidable repetition—flowers, geranium, petals, white—also created a state of reverie. It was as if the repetition forced an awareness of the importance of flowers to human well-being. Now in print with French, English and Dutch versions on each tiny page, the effect is similar. Readers who persist in reading all 40 poems will experience an accumulative, spellbinding effect: *While we are eating / the geranium spreads its leaves / in the light; The geraniums / have gradually taken root / in my life; The white flower / nothing more to say / the white flower.*

Dee, Billie (ed.). *an island of egrets: 2010 Southern California Haiku Study Group Anthology.* San Diego: Southern California Haiku Study Group, 2010, 107 pp., perfect softbound, 5.5 x 8.5. ISBN: 978-0-9829847-0-3, 9.95 USD, <<http://haikuanthology.info>>. This anthology is a forceful reminder that not all haiku come from the northern part of California. It makes clear that the south also has many talented and adventurous haiku poets. While the anthology's emphasis is on haiku and senryu, it also includes 11 haibun, as well as an addition not usually found in northern publications—an English-Spanish section devoted to six poets from Tijuana. Editor Billie Dee is to be congratulated for this exuberant showcasing of the haiku arts that proves there is more to L.A. and environs than Hollywood glitz.

Poyck, Marian. *HAIKU*. Oldenzaal, Nederland: Self-published, 2010, 18pp., 2 x 3 (a 9.3 x 6.5 sheet folded into a 2 x 3 mini-booklet tucked into a cover). No ISBN, 4 USD; 3 EUR, <marianpoyck@hotmail.com>. A graphic designer as well as a member of the editorial board of the thirty-year-old Dutch haiku magazine, *Vuursteen*, Marian Poyck has self-published a tiny collection that could be described as a print version of a Rubik's cube; that is, she has folded a sheet of paper into nine separate pages each of which holds a haiku in English. While at first the focus might be on the ingenious production, the haiku soon start to share the limelight: *death looks cheerful / in the glass case / full of butterflies; they complain—the rain / so much begged for / is cold and wet.*

Sedlar, Slavko. *Takboct 3/Suchness 3*. (Saša Važić, ed., trans. & Jovo Sedlar, illus.). Vršac, Serbia: Tuli, 2010, 269 pp., perfect softbound, 5 x 8. ISBN: 978-86-913829-0-2, 20 USD, <vazicsasa@gmail.com>. Since the haiku of this collection continue in the same zen-inspired style as *Suchness* and *Suchness 2*, readers are referred to reviews of the first two books in *Frogpond* 32:3 & 33:3, respectively. Sadly, Slavko Sedlar died on October 24, 2010 at the age of 78.

Yachimoto, Eiko (ed.). *Wind Arrow 2: shishan anthology*. Yokosuka, Japan: Association for International Renku (AIR), 2010, 58 pp., perfect softbound, 8 x 11.5. No ISBN, 900 yen; 11 USD, <yeiko@peach.ocn.ne.jp>. The organization that published this bilingual anthology, better known by its acronym, AIR, has as its aim to promote international interest in renku, a collaborative linked form that has several classical varieties (see *Frogpond*, 33:1 & 33:2) and newer versions, some of which have been invented only recently (see *Frogpond*, 33:2 & 33:3). Centre-stage in this anthology is the 12-stanza shisan renku created in the 1970s and considerably shorter than the 16th-century kasen renku which has 36 stanzas. This book contains 22 shisan chosen from a total of 148 composed by members of AIR since 1994. Needless to say, the shisan are excellent.

* *

Re: Readings

Of Issue 33:3—All by *Robert Epstein*, California

On *Tom Painting*: *year's end / I give the graveyard / a passing glance*. As someone who has immersed himself in death awareness poems for the past year and a half, I was delighted—and moved—by Tom's one-eyed look at his own mortality. Unlike many who maintain that it is morbid to meditate upon death, I feel that such musings actually deepen my appreciation of life. Still, it ain't easy to do! Tom acknowledges that, with the passing year, he can turn just so much attention to death; but, of course, death is not impatient. It could very well be that, as he was glancing at it, the graveyard was glancing back.

On *R. P. Carter*: *I chucked the urn too*. At the risk of being (mis)labeled Mr. Mortality, I admire R. P. Carter's encounter with non-attachment. From the vantage point of impermanence (quintessentially embodied by death), there really is nothing to hold onto—not even the urn that the ashes of a beloved relative or companion animal come back in. At the same time, I don't think that we can really will ourselves to “let go,” notwithstanding this commonplace expression in and outside the therapy office. If one realizes—makes real—the wisdom that accompanies true freedom, chucking the urn is an act of loving intelligence.

On *Ian Marshall*: *snowshoes on the wall / twenty years now / going nowhere*. I found this poem personally painful to read. My partner and I, who were once healthy and physically active, had to give up many activities that we greatly enjoyed—cross-country skiing, tennis, bike riding, canoeing, hiking—when we both became chronically ill. The poet doesn't say why the snowshoes have been immobile for the better part of two decades: busy schedule or other priorities, aging, loss of interest, illness? A world of winter walking has been lost; the snowshoes on the wall are a quiet symbol of loss, which all of us must face, sooner or later.

Harold G. Henderson Haiku Contest for 2010

Judged by

Fay Aoyagi, California & *Lenard D. Moore*, North Carolina

We have enjoyed judging the 2010 Henderson Contest. This year's contest received 834 haiku from seven countries.

First Place (\$150) *Michele L. Harvey*, New York

All Souls Day...
my name called
from the front gate

This haiku pulls the reader inside the body of it with its first line, offering a time for prayer for those who are deceased. One of the persons, who arrives to pray, hears his or her name. Who calls the person's name? Is it someone from the other world or afterlife calling? There is mystery embedded in this haiku. Yet, this haiku ends with a concrete detail that gives a locale to it. Moreover, this haiku resonates with assonance in each line. Haiku can be written in simple words and open a door for the deeper world.

Second Place (\$100) *Tish Davis*, Ohio

autumn
an empty booster seat
in the barber's window

This haiku opens with the season and enables the reader to bring his or her own experience of the autumnal world. Then there is the juxtaposition of the things of the human world. Of course, autumn symbolizes the changing of the natural world, especially the colors of leaves, plants and grasses. It also signals migration, especially of birds.

So, the aging process deepens. This haiku evokes the feeling of loneliness and its specificity strengthens its emotional appeal for the reader.

Third Place (\$50) *Michele L. Harvey*, New York

hunter's cabin:
of the woods
not of it

This haiku enables the reader to see the cabin and woods immediately. The reader knows that winter is the setting of the haiku. Although the woods are cold and silent, there is the hunting that happens during this season. Moreover, winter symbolizes death and desolation. Furthermore, this haiku embodies a depth of meaning and moves from smallness to vastness. Yet, this haiku is mysterious and original. Thus, the reader wonders about the harmony in which humans should live with the natural world.

First Honorable Mention *Margaret Chula*, Oregon

end of the walk
returning the crow's feather
where I found it

This haiku goes full circle as the person returns to his or her starting point after walking. Perhaps the person has an awareness that the crow connotes that which is ominous. Why does the person pick up the feather? After contemplation during the walk, the person puts the feather back in its place because he or she knows the natural world has a way of recycling itself. Consequently, the last line of this haiku carries the impact.

Second Honorable Mention *Adelaide B. Shaw*, New York

cafe for sale—
outdoor tables rusting
into autumn

Maybe the slowing economy causes the customers to linger at the cafe. To that end, the owner puts it on the market. Although the weather helps with the rusting process, it is time that extends or deepens what the reader experiences in the haiku. The last line, however, is such a surprise that it enhances the effectiveness of the haiku. In short, there is an ongoing movement in the line. Yet, there is the beauty of autumnal colors and a sense of loneliness.

Third Honorable Mention *Caroline Hall*, California

day lilies
another death date added
to the family tree

This haiku exhibits a number of day lilies that are blooming. In contrast, there is the death of someone and the date of his or her passing is significant in the family as it is in any family. However, the person's family becomes smaller while the day lilies seemingly multiply. Moreover, the blossoms do not live long, though there is temporary beauty. In short, this haiku embodies the cycle of life.

*

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Gerald Brady Senryu Contest for 2010

Judged by

Linda Jeanette Ward, North Carolina & *Marsh Muirhead*, Minnesota

As judges who've never met, live more than a thousand miles from one another, and are of dissimilar gender and background, we were very pleased to have arrived at close to the same top twenty senryu in our initial separate surveys of the hundreds of entries. This year's contest received 525 senryu from writers in seven countries. After exchanging thoughts on our favorites, putting them aside for several days, then considering them again, we found our top ten to twelve were, again, very similar. Agreeing on our top three and four honorable mentions took a few more days of re-reading and thoughtful consideration. The results are as follows:

First Place (\$100) *Garry Gay*, California

my skeleton
going for a walk
in the cemetery

The first-place senryu offers a very fresh image, funny, animated, containing both the cartoon image of a literal skeleton, jauntily walking through the cemetery, and on a more serious note, the poet's contained skeleton on his or her own walk—that skeleton, the one which will possibly inhabit this place in the future, reminds us of our final end.

Second Place (\$75) *Roberta Beary*, District of Columbia

mother's day
she puts me
on hold

Mother's day: So much said, the moment so understood in just seven words. (Our 7 senryu averaged only 7.5 words and 12 syllables each.)

Third Place (\$50) *Cathy Drinkwater Better*, Maryland

final note
my g-string
too tight

Again, with just a few words, the reference to music is quickly noted, followed by so many funny possibilities for the other image of "g-string."

Precision, concision, and cleverness of image—an image the reader is able to fashion in innumerable variations—again made these our next favorite poems, the honorable mentions, *in no specific order*:

Honorable Mentions

wishbone
as we pull it apart
I change my mind

Gary Gay, California

my blind date
disarming the alarm
she invites me in

Neal Whitman, California

graveside service
no one wants to leave
first

Julie Warther, Ohio

soothsayer
by appointment
only

Roland Packer, Ontario

Corrections

p. 5:

The last two poems on the page,

untold insights
and emotions
this brain in my hands

these tiny muscles
brightened many days
with smiles,

should be attributed to *M. Franklyn Teaford* (not Mark Teaford), Maryland, who wrote to us the following:

Many thanks for the placement on the first page! One thing though, I try to use M. Franklyn Teaford as my pen name.... It's important to me because it's a tribute to my dad, who shared my middle name & always encouraged me in studies, arts, anything.

p. 24:

The last poem on the page,

not reading the postcard
addressed to my neighbor
reading it,

should be attributed to *Elizabeth Nordeen* (not Liz Norden), Oregon.

pp. 119-122:

The correct spelling of the name of the author of *cloud calligraphy* is *Stephen Addiss* (not Adiss). The reviewer, *Nick Avis*, apologizes for the error.

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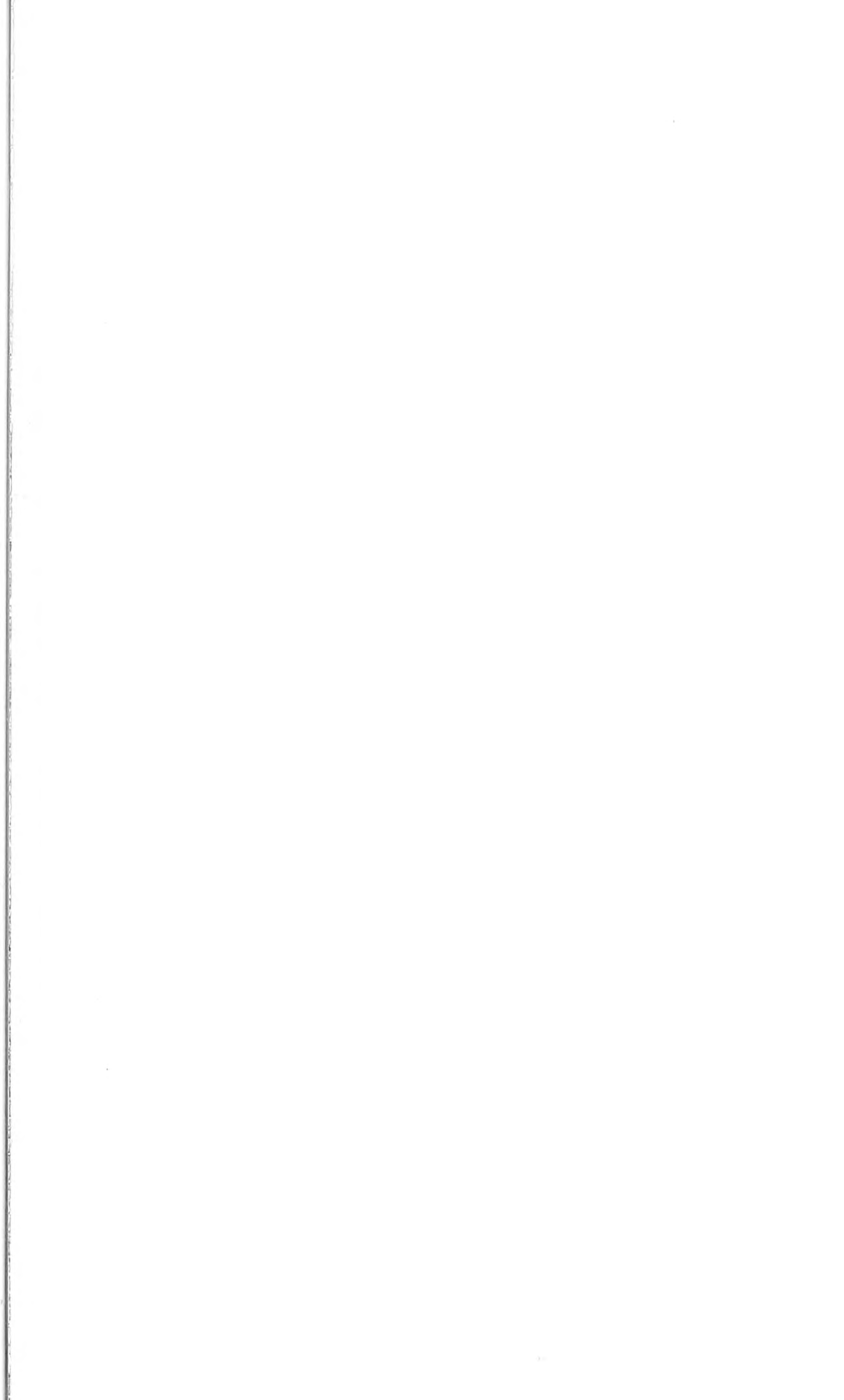
From the Editors

The articles of this issue have an underlying theme that was unintentional—no thematic guidelines were announced. Yet, somehow the seven of them share a common focus most clearly expressed by the title of the essay by Randy Brooks for the regular feature, **Revelations Unedited**: “Genesis of Haiku: Where Do Haiku Come From?” For Brooks, a haiku is not the result of an earth-shaking epiphany, but rather of an everyday experience meant to be shared. In **Essays**, Gerald St. Maur argues that a haiku should be the product not only of the visual sense but also of the auditory. Yoàv Tenenbaum contends that the haiku emerges from feelings distinct from those that create photos or paintings. Ruth Yarrow thinks that more haiku should reflect current social conditions, while David Grayson believes that they should better reflect the place in which most of us live, the urban environment. David Cobb takes another angle—that haiku should arise from and signify the history of a time and place. Finally, Ian Marshall digs deep to propose a philosophical basis for all haiku—the phenomenological. This confluence of concerns indicates another stage of growth in the maturation of our poetic genre.

*

Last year, on a haiku conference book table, we discovered anthologies with work that had first appeared in *Frogpond*, but whose editors had not credited our journal. These editors said that they did not ask for prior publication details, that they assumed it was up to the contributors to specify. Such an editorial stance surprised us and now that we know it exists, we ask you to ensure that *Frogpond* is credited with prior publication. After all, we went to the effort to select your work from over 16,000 submitted items per year. Anthology editors have a much easier job, having to choose the best from among only hundreds.

George Swede, Editor
Anita Krumins, Assistant Editor



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