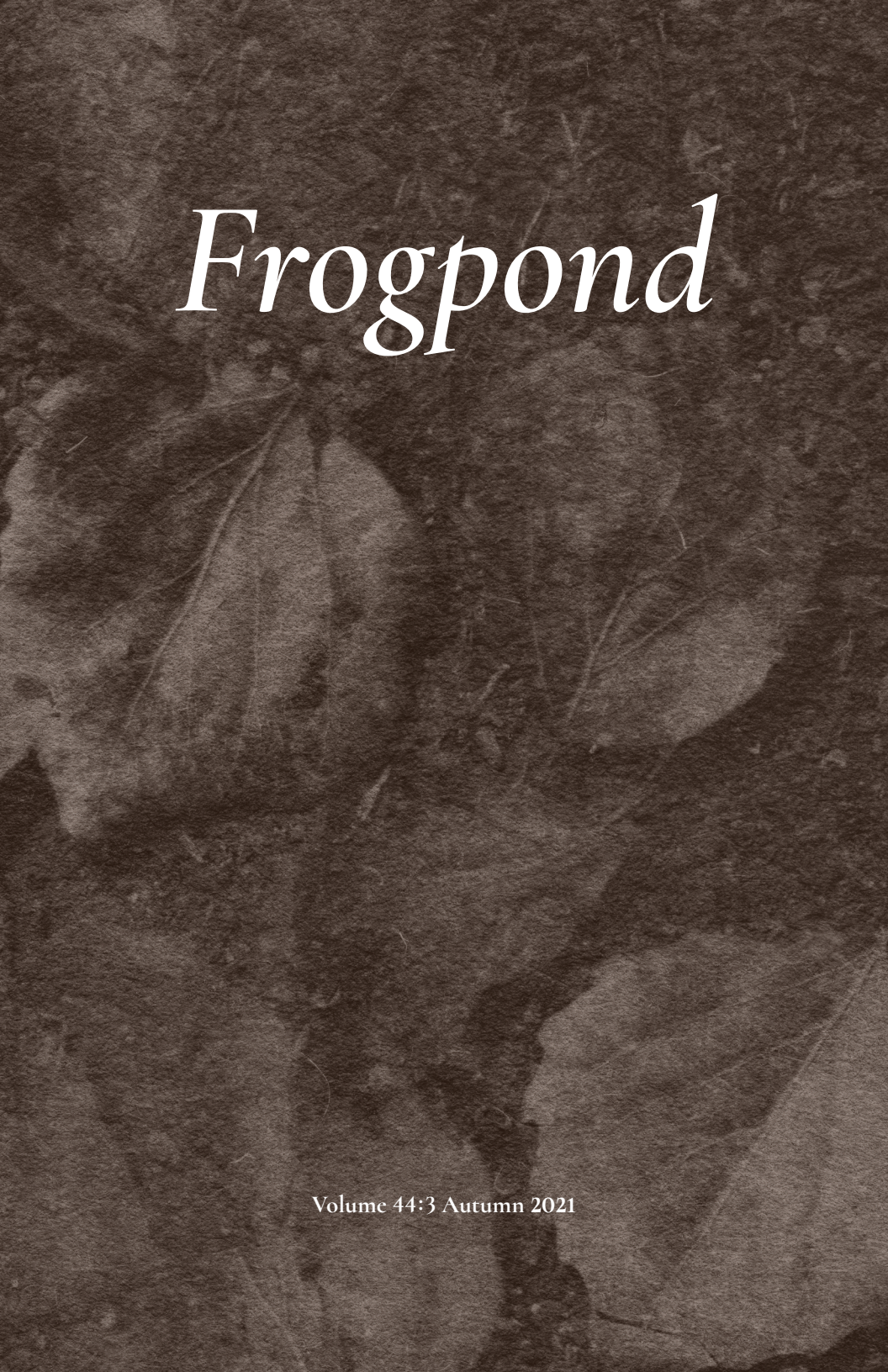

Volume 44:3 Autumn 2021

Frogpond

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Frogpond **Volume 44:3**

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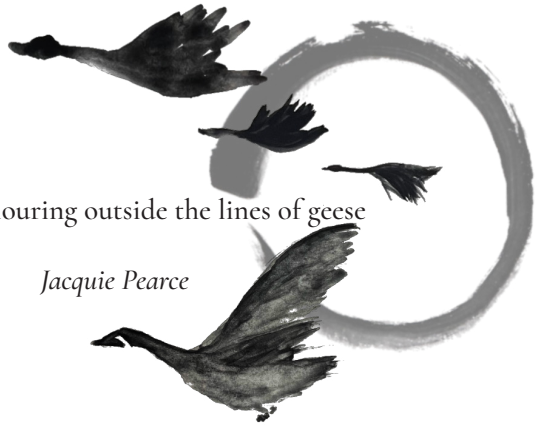
Best of Issue *Frogpond* Award

Voted best haiku in *Frogpond* Volume 44:2
by the HSA Executive Committee



sunset colouring outside the lines of geese

Jacquie Pearce

Haiku and Senryu

match strike
we kiss
with our eyes open

Michelle Schaefer

thinking in metaphors no batteries no jumper cables

Adam T. Bogar

fireworks festival
a variety of ifs
between the darknesses

Ryoko Suzuki

a sunflower field Van Gogh would've swirled

Marilyn Appl Walker

tremors in her voice
wind-touched foxtail
along the riverbank

Joyce Clement

wolf pack
our social glue
u n s t i c k s

Debbie Strange

in the small hours
a dead campfire reignites
Indian summer

Jim Kacian

an omitted apostrophe second day moon

Polona Oblak

Ouarzazate
a little sand
in my tagine

Agnes Eva Savich

side effects include hummingbirds just before dawn a heartbeat

Scott Metz

moonflower
this daughter
I'll never have

Lori A Minor

all day silence
the tough love
of trees

Michele Root-Bernstein

autumn shadows
long, and longer
new apartment

Jeannie Martin

a leaf skims
the broken cobblestones—
don't say goodbye

Evan Coram

your voice in the wind in the wind chimes

Renée Owen

a maple spinner
traveling back
in time

Christopher Patchel

bright morning
through the unmarked envelope
a debit card's stiffness

paul m.

getting together
with friends in person
the tang of pickled daikon

Hannah Mahoney

have a nice day after most of it had

David Jacobs

Zoom funeral
each of us
in our own box

Peter Newton

shadow
not out of myself
but beside myself

Christine Eales

waiting for a bus
with strangers
bird song I should know

Jacquie Pearce

spring rain
the snort snuffle-snuffle
of pigs

Patricia J. Machmiller

before
they were my daughters . . .
wildflowers

Meredith Ackroyd

he hasn't changed a bit of chaff in the wind

Jackie Maugh Robinson

bouquet of wild asters:
I carry the evening
home

Michael Battisto

can't leave it alone
black-eyed-susans adorn
my sister's coffin

Matthew Cariello

she hums
her way to
her inner world

Chris Gordon

long light
watching gulls
become sky

Madelaine Caritas Longman

breaking even
her acceptance
of rejection

Jenny Fraser

homecoming
the hearse exits
the interstate

Tom Painting

elaborating
a maple leaf lying
in my open palm

Suzanne Niedzielska

morning dew
a condolence card marked
return to sender

Michael Henry Lee

my fingers
on his fingerprints
fountain pen

Victor Ortiz

i know it
when i see it—
narcissus

Sondra J. Byrnes

for a moment
blocking the moon
luna moth

Ferris Gilli

the planet wobbles
stars tug
at their moorings

Francine Banwarth

returned from war
the only one he talks to
his tiny niece

Mary McCormack

adding ellipses
to the darkest night
winter stars

Hifsa Ashraf

dragonfly—
where the morning
takes me

Bill Kenney

low-tide beach
the creek emptying
into sunset

Rick Tarquinio

remains
of the castle moat
21st century reflections

Gary Hotham

shark and jellyfish warnings . . .
we take our chances
with the sun

Scott Mason

beaches closed again
old seashells
on my desk

John J. Han

jets
from the important states
fly over us

Chris Gordon

plagued by masking the truth

David McKee

almost dusk
my neighbor tilts
his Venetian blind

Dee Evetts

moonlit draining board
the quicksilver
of cutlery

Erica Ison

new year's day
I start to appreciate
them more

Gregory Piko

mark as unread
owl tracks
in snow

Aidan Castle

open casket
the fly on
everyone's mind

Mike White

still waiting
to outgrow my freckles
silver oaks

Annette Makino

mountain night
a lone car downshifts
into the next valley

Michael Baeyens

early as I am the deer precede me

John Martone

steady snowfall
sediment settles
in the Nigori sake

Mary Stevens

the we
in a towhee's call
earth day

Sarah E. Metzler

cold rain
from a dark sky
as if there were no stars

Billie Wilson

post-peak pandemic
all the off-ramps
renumbered

Jim Laurila

the child's excitement
at clouds
shaped like clouds

Margaret Malochleb

meteor shower no one minds the puppy

Anne Elise Burgevin

winter doldrums
parking in someone
else's ruts

Bryan Rickert

spring morning
the old red rooster
doubles down

Robert B McNeill

first warm day
I hide the lone cloud
with my thumb

Susan Constable

blue hour . . .
the day's heat
inside the grape

Paul Chambers

thunderclap—
the cool surface
of a stovetop

Pragya Vishnoi

a crack in the ancient code summer lightning

Hemapriya Chellappan

quantum mechanics
he's uncertain
my car can be fixed

Colleen M. Farrelly

wind as a tutor
learning to read
mustard blossoms

Fay Aoyagi

thumping melons
her hours spent
on dating sites

Maya Daneva

clear sky
this lump
in my throat

Martin Duguay

minted dust
in the Altoids tin . . .
the night we met

Tanya McDonald

August heat
sitting on the floor
doing math problems

David Grayson

summer reading butterfly wings

C.D. Marcum

dog ears
we hurt the ones we love
the most

Benedict Grant

new moon
a higher standard
of solitude

Elmedin Kadric

after the will
a division of land
deeper than wide

Lori Becherer

suddenly rain suddenly stops

Denise Fontaine-Pincince

ebb tide
she asks about
his libido

Sharon Rhutasel-Jones

overcast morning
my lure
beyond the clouds

Stuart Bartow

scrambling my way
through talus slopes
white columbines

Wakako Miya Rollinger

dining alone
the slippery coolness
of briny oysters

Adelaide B. Shaw

seaside concert
a moonlit buoy's
adagio

Richard L. Matta

cloud smudged moon fox kits

Nancy Orr

summer rain
on the walk home
each street's song

Frank Hooven

dinosaur bones . . .
the length
of my shadow

Jacob Salzer

ocean view
a beginning of
the rest

Quendryth Young

slow river bend
an aurora of mayflies
eddies the light

John Hawkhead

after work
the sun's reflection
on a ripe tomato

Frank Hooven

bearing my angst
chopping board

Teji Sethi

weeding . . .
a wheelbarrow full
of past lives

Jennifer Hambrick

tired and hungry
after yoga class
leftover tagliatelle

Cynthia Gallaher

desert monsoon—
the new green
of cheatgrass

Cynthia Anderson

summer meadow
a froghopper outjumps
my expectations

Tomislav Sjekloća

calling for rain Mom's big toe

Alexis Rotella

empty chair
I don't know how to cook
for one

Betty Naegele Gundred

lazy afternoon
slowly eating the cold
seedless watermelon

Bob Lucky

happy hour
if only
for the irony

Aaron Barry

waiting out the downpour
slow blue notes
of a saxophone

Kristen Lindquist

his and her
    bookmarks
leapfrogging
        through Bly

Julie Schwerin

the path by starlight a mockingbird's song

Jenny Ward Angyal

take-out for one
the nasty scar
no one sees

Ignatius Fay

quilt squares . . .
rearranging her life
to fit her memories

Angela Terry

Mother's Day
she savors the taste
of leftovers

Justin Brown

thundershowers—
the ceiling fan
comes to a stop

Michael Dylan Welch

plywood facades
a summer full
of verdicts

Ross Neher

proficiently sporadic butterfly flutter

Shayne Neumann

side view mirror
you and I closer
than we appear

Alvin B. Cruz

fall
the city
gets even bigger

Kamil Plich

mammogram
the squeeze
of fear

Patricia McKernon Runkle

becoming a wren nothing you own turns into a tree hole

Réka Nyitrai

stringing a garland
I rearrange my thoughts
season-wise

Pravat Kumar Padhy

repairing
the repairs
old wedding quilt

Marita Gargiulo

foreplay
she cooks
i clean

Rich Schilling

nuts and bolts jar
all the things
they held together
replaced

Steve Dolphy

bologna sun scrolling through social MEdia

Susan Burch

clowning for a coyote—
it too
strikes a pose

Brent Partridge

trampoline moss last summer's laughter

Sherry Grant

mid-morning sun
trying to shake off
your cold words

Fran Witham

first frost . . .
the slow drip of coffee
through the filter

Laurie D. Morrissey

snowscape—
the newborn's
wide-open eyes

Bonnie Stepenoff

stormwater runoff
all the ways
to leave a farm

Dan Schwerin

pecan pie
a piece of the Old South
chokes me again

Robert Moyer

barn fire
the moment when the cows
went silent

Edward J. Rielly

a weak sun dries
the few raindrops
on the hearse

Noel King

derecho
every stalk of corn
laid low

William Scott Galasso

I know her
scream
waterslide

James Schlett

tug of war
poor child, your kite
belongs to the wind

Adjei Agyei-Baah

h
a
l
f
the flag billows
m
a
s
t

Greg Schwartz

dusting off
my sister's snake boots
pumpkin harvest

Deborah Burke Henderson

woodsmoke
the orchard
warms the room

Marilyn Ashbaugh

sun
sundown
sundowning

Debbie Olson

taking
a pause
across the room with me

Mark Teaford

lightning strike . . .
just a look
to arouse the heart

Keith Polette

blackthorn blossom the thicket's fairytale

Alan Summers

doll house
where my real family
still lives

Barbara Sabol

bumpy log
the millipede
stays in step

Frank Higgins

solitude
and society
a cross-country train

John Stevenson

not wanting to be
around other people's kids—
thistle in bloom

P M F Johnson

dusk erases the spaces between us

Alan S. Bridges

trudging along
in the gravel
flowering speedwell

Ruth Holzer

news
travels quickly
horseflies

Jeff Hoagland

morning
the wetness
on an overturned stone

Robert Witmer

daily jog
an abundance
of may

Helen Buckingham

two short, one long
the language
of trail scat

Jim Chessing

summer afternoon
I beef up my poem
with a larger font

Jackie Chou

reading myself to sleep
i read too late
to sleep

Nancy Shires

bird by bird
the toddler kisses
her storybook

Carol Raisfeld

snow-capped bittersweet
the sparrows have left
so many y's

Randy Brooks

where we won't kill anybody
driving lessons
at the cemetery

Doug Wilkinson

farthest jump
from the backyard swing
YELL
OW
Jackets

Ruth Yarrow

Ferris wheel
the shy child
near the moon

Saumya Bansal

Milky way . . .
one by one I unfriend
my dead classmates

Pragya Vishnoi

clear sky
a new backswimmer
in the cattle trough

Lew Watts

future blackberries
the wing sheen
of a bumblebee

Tanya McDonald

an earwig
inside the rose's petals
midsummer sunlight

Paul Cordeiro

nothing to see here
my life
in concentric circles

Carolyn Hall

still
as if your life depends on it
night heron

Beverly Acuff Momoi

with the wasp
in a pitcher plant's throat . . .
yesterday's rain

paul m.

rainbow . . .
a snail crosses
the path crack

David He

across the strand
the college's water tower
mushrooms out of mist

Maeve O'Sullivan

holding it in
before exhaling
spring peepers

Mark Dailey

not just a trail
a trail all together wild
with blackberries!

Robert Epstein

summer solstice
right after dinner
my second med

Bruce H. Feingold

lake breeze
the slow spin
of a red leaf

Jay Friedenberg

a
belly
full of coins
plastic buddha

Rick Jackofsky

even the moon
heard my no
date rape

Vandana Parashar

contact tracing a lifeline amid the scars

Kelly Sauvage

park bench
a skipper butterfly
sits awhile

Deborah P Kolodji

slash pines
the fog's
haiku

Barry George

low-tide estuary
a foster child digs
bottles from the mud

Norman Silver

wishing pool
a bent penny
tricks the light

Jeffrey Ferrara

night stroll lilacs guide me home

Kim Klugh

heat wave—
the shadow of the ladder
against the house

Joseph P. Wechselberger

mango dusk . . .
the fading jingle
of an ice cream van

Hemapriya Chellappan

mid-fall
she splits an apple
into stars

Pippa Phillips

Music Highway—
a hay truck sways its way
to Nashville

John Zheng

the arc
of a crow's call
hill-to-hill

Neal Whitman

rain flood—
a car slides downstream
with such speed

Lenard D. Moore

rear view mirror
a teenage dancer
adjusts his headdress

Dottie Piet

first date—
neither of them taking
the last fry

Linda Ahrens

last night's raindrops
slide down the banana leaf—
the morning cuckoo

Kanchan Chatterjee

feuillemort—
the color
of his voice

Corine Timmer

hot lecture hall
instead of flying
the fly walks

William Hart

fingertip signing a little blip in his flat line

Tom Clausen

same road
same stories
new grave

Susan Farner

dry heat
the open mouth
of a gargoyle

Ernest Wit

but today
he's twirling his cane
meadowlarks

Bob Redmond

plum blossoms—
the orchestra
begins to tune up

Mary Kendall

in my hand
as if it could last . . .
hailstone

Kath Abela Wilson

all-night diner
eggs over
eavesdropping

Diane Tomczak

not the one beside her twilit roads

Glenn C. Coats

limpkin cries
the corkscrew curls
of an orchid

Bill Cooper

middle child
the long shadows
of sunflowers

Louise Hopewell

crepe myrtle bark
drops in clumps
morning chemo

Joan Canby

Cumulus sleeves
the full moon—
a wound slow to heal

Rebecca Lilly

crossing a bridge
venus slips into
the forest

Sandi Pray

temple bells
a lone cow
lows into the dusk

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

even smaller
against the waxing moon
saw-whet owl

Margaret Tau

toddler teeters forward
hands softly cupped
around a firefly

Jamie A. Muth

wearing
her wellies already
tomorrow's rain

P. H. Fischer

first day of summer . . .
seaweed glyphs
in wet sand

Tony Williams

mussel shell
in my palm
blue twilight

Elizabeth Black

shoreline
the buoyancy
of a red bucket

Carol Judkins

full count
both pitcher and batter
take deep breaths

John S Green

three digits
again today
jalapeño blossoms

Ann K. Schwader

art class model
a little shy
charcoal and pastels

Peter Barnes

in July
no place to hide—
her old tattoo

Maureen Lanagan Haggerty

end of lockdown
the alluring scarlet
of poison oak

J. Zimmerman

desert ruins . . .
hawk's feather chasing
a dust devil

Roman Lyakhovetsky

summer's end
smoothing over the picnic
table cloth

Jamie Wimberly

moonscape
not only / but also
mountains

Kat Lehmann

midnight rolls around the bottom of a beer bottle

Tyler McIntosh

winter solstice
I curl
into a dream

Chen-ou Liu

spring wind singing down the idle fireplace

Nathanael Tico

yellow winding the scent of gorse with goat bells

Jo Balistreri

meadow trail
simply being
a part of this

Joanna Ashwell

last call
he drinks
his history

Pat Davis

morning fog
tourists at the vista
study the guidebook

Marsh Muirhead

staycation—
exploring all
her hot spots

Rob Scott

warm rain
father pencils
secrets

Ramesh Anand

breakfast in bed—
the cooing
of a collared-dove

Paul Hendricks

falling blossoms
the near distance
of her

Gregory Longenecker

fiddleheads
her little fingers
curling around mine

Antoinette Cheung

zucchini summer
he wakes up
taller than his dad

Mimi Ahern

a book of poems
face down on the bench
afternoon moon

Angela Terry

headlamp
above the coal seam
slate flakes

Gideon Young

unseasonable breeze—
the doctor's orders
out the window

Crystal Simone Smith

bedtime
she kisses a future
into her daughter's cheek

Lorraine A. Padden

water striders
that summer the family
was still together

David Watts

a vague shape
through the crashing waterfall
your voice, my name

Maxianne Berger

winding

through
the
sheep's
skull

bird's-
foot-
trefoil

John Barlow

outdoor shower
a shiver in
the cricket's song

Terri L. French

red roses in red roses in a row

Susan B. Auld

falling leaves . . .
my wedding band
too tight to remove

Paul Murray

afterwards
the lingering notes
of the encore

Michael Ketchek

starlight
the journey
to your lips

Ben Gaa

Nature's Classroom

Bibliophilia: An Interview with Jeff Hoagland

Questions Provided by Tom Sacramona

When did you first hear the call of the wild? Was nature a voice you heard growing up? Can you pinpoint when in your life this interest in nature became a love affair?

"Love affair" is such an appropriate phrase. I believe that there is an attraction to nature and its inhabitants right from the start of our lives. E.O. Wilson calls this biophilia. Modern living and culture divorce the vast majority of us from this affinity, but for me, thanks to some attentive parenting, the luminosity never dulled. Those memories go back to my toddler years (!) where I watched my sister have a tulip tug-of-war with a gopher, a fence lizard basking on a fence post, and a mushroom appear overnight after a rain. This love affair has been omnipresent from those earliest days, and I am lucky to work largely outdoors as an environmental educator, sharing my passion for the wild with others.

My writing life has been fueled by memories of several locations in the past, including the tiny suburban yard in Modesto, California, where I was just a toddler, and that magical coast of California. I continue to travel when I have a chance—across this country, exploring a wide range of habitats and national parks. I hear the desert calling. However, I live in an area lush with wild spaces that beckon continually—the Delaware Valley, the Sourland Mountains, and mostly, the Watershed Reserve. For 37 years, I have worked on the nearly one-thousand-acre Watershed Institute Reserve in Pennington, New Jersey. I know this landscape intimately and feel part of the community of life that lives there.

You are a naturalist by profession. What exactly does a naturalist do for a living?

My first job title in this profession was "interpretive naturalist." My work as an environmental educator has diversified and evolved dramatically over the years. As a culture, our knowledge, understanding and practice of science, and our ability to think critically have eroded at a time where these skills are critically needed. Topics like sustainability and climate change are a huge part of my educational work. While my work "home" is the LEED Platinum-certified Watershed Center, my classroom extends outdoors onto the Watershed Reserve—almost 1,000 acres of field, forest, stream, pond, and wetlands.

The naturalist component remains not just valid but an important part of the equation, especially during the COVID era. With more people than ever heading to the wild for solace, there is tremendous value in understanding our neighbors and our place in nature. This has led to a blossoming of public programs, focused largely on the rhythm of the natural world and the diverse cast of characters that people simply didn't notice until these trying times. Insect safaris, frog slogs, firefly hikes, and stream assessments are just the tip of the iceberg.

Our work with schools was dramatically curtailed by COVID, which is unfortunate. In addition to expertise in science and nature, we also have unique resources that schools lack, namely our Watershed Center and Reserve. Both provide an excellent platform for addressing sustainability and climate change as all the components of the natural world are likewise affected.

Ultimately, I view my role as a naturalist as Loraxian—speaking for the trees, insects, streams, etc. If people see all these elements of the environment as neighbors and *home*, then we will build a tremendous sense of empathy. We sew and fertilize the seeds of stewardship, promoting positive action on behalf of our planet.

What advice do you have for others who aspire to learn more about their environment? How do they become more aware of the wildlife surrounding them and better stewards of the land?

The most important thing that one can do to learn more about the environment is to get *out there*. Immerse yourself in your environment, whatever it may be, and open up your perspective and awareness to the natural world which creeps into all human habitats. Take a walk without an agenda, with a quiet, attentive mind. I refer to my time in nature as communing—sometimes walking down a path, sitting by a stream, or hanging in a hammock off the trail. There truly are things that call to me out there—a hoverfly nectaring, a kingfisher measuring a river, a squirrel finding a nut it buried in a different season. These things all appear luminous to me.

Developing this sense of kinship and belonging fuels our desire to make things right. Watch out for the news—much of it is just bad, which can make one feel hopeless. Approach stewardship one step, one topic at a time. Compost. Grow as many plants as you can. Eat less meat. Collect rainwater. Reduce, reuse, recycle. There are so many simple steps people can take to reduce their impact and become better stewards.

What is your favorite haiku by another writer right now?

I have to say that I have two favorite haiku from two masters that are simply lodged in my heart:

skylark
sings all day
and day not long enough

Bashō[1]

borrowing my house
from insects
I slept

Issa[2]

I spend time reading modern haiku poets—in journals, anthologies, and books—and likewise find resonant voices. Some of these

reaffirm my relationship with the natural world while others challenge my haiku sensibilities in a good way. I read haiku like you might sip a favorite beverage—letting it linger, noting and enjoying its specific tasting notes, then letting the offering make a general impression. As an associate editor at *The Heron's Nest*, my reading is even more focused. I think my role is to find the possibility in every haiku submitted.

Are there books you keep as references on plants, animals, or locales in which you live and write?

The naturalist's curse is the same as the poet's—a vast accumulation of books. While there are plenty of online resources that can be used as references for the world of nature, I prefer the old-school tactile journey presented by books. I have a great many field guides, and these are complimented by a collection of natural history books. I love insects and keep discovering more insect books that I "need," and likewise, I have lots of books on wild edible plants. My favorites of these collections are must-read classics: *Life on a Little Known Planet* by Howard Ensign Evans and *Stalking the Wild Asparagus* by Euell Gibbons.

Besides books, what other methods have helped you learn more about the plants and animals you encounter?

As a lifelong naturalist, much of my knowledge, and of course inspiration, comes from spending an inordinate amount of time observing nature. While in my profession, I share nature with others, my solo time in nature is an intimate love affair and a great opportunity to learn from the world around me. The naturalist community is much like the haiku community—warm, welcoming, and inspiring. This network of like-minded souls is a constant, invaluable resource.

Can you provide two or three examples of your haiku (published or unpublished) that were inspired by your research into specifically terming a plant, animal, or natural phenomenon?

In terms of my own haiku, I tend to favor those moments of simple observation. Maybe you don't know about the water strider's never-ending search for food (or a mate), the woolly bear's end-of-season search for a place to hibernate, or the very brief life of the adult mayfly, but if you are attentive, these are things you will likely encounter out there. If you have that attentive heart, these observations may cause you to drop to your knees.

water strider
a constant state
of prayer[3]

woolly bears
that moment
in autumn[4]

no time
like now
mayflies[5]

On the other hand, there are moments that do require some insider knowledge—for instance, the omnipresence of the water bear, a virtually indestructible, bumbling, microscopic creature present in moss *everywhere*.

the silence
of moss
water bears

Notes:

1. Lucien Stryk and Takashi Ikemoto, trans. and comp., *Zen Poetry: Let the Spring Breeze Enter* (1991)
2. Ibid.
3. *The Heron's Nest* XXII.1 (March 2020)
4. *Frogpond* 44:1 (Winter 2018)
5. *DailyHaiku* Cycle 19

A lifelong naturalist with a passion for the wild, Jeff Hoagland is the education director at the Watershed Institute. He practices haiku to stay in tune with the real world. Jeff's haiku can be found widely in haiku journals and anthologies. He is an associate editor for The Heron's Nest.

Haibun

Elegy

Anna Cates

for my mother

her hand
warm and palsied—
final hours . . .

She died the Fourth of July, a week shy of her seventy-seventh birthday, the raspberries ripe along the bike trail behind the hospital, the mulberries just beginning to turn . . .

only for a moment . . . black butterfly

Black Hole

Alan Peat

This morning, I awoke with an ocean inside me. The faint cries of gulls gave the game away; that, and a gentle lapping at the back of my throat.

With every breath, salt air filled the room; shoals of fish swam in my belly; sharks slept; the calls of whales boomed deep within me; kelp waved behind my eyes.

All was well until lunch when the cramps began. By evening, I had no choice but to take a taxi to the hospital.

The doctors ummed and ahed; the nurses frowned. I guess they'd never seen a man with an ocean inside him before. The senior doctor buzzed for a surgeon who had once saved a mermaid. Immediately upon seeing me, he plunged his arm deep into my mouth and down until I felt his bony fingers clasping inside me.

He pulled out a child's ball, rubbed by the sand until it was as white as an eye. He pulled out plastic bricks, a spoon, a hosepipe, credit cards, a beat-up bath duck. Then, quite suddenly, he raised his scalpel and sliced me open. A wave of water bottles spilled upon the floor. Puffins circled.

"Now," he shouted, and with all the medical staff assisting, a net was hauled from the deepest part of me; a net so large that it stretched from my ocean to an ebbing time: before ice retreated back up mountains; before junk fell from the vacuum above; before we all ran headlong into waves.

day moon . . .
footprints still
in its dust

Decline

Sean O'Connor

The God of Water speaks in the sussuration of a stream, saying *Silence is a friend*. I listen, numbness ebbing in the whispering quietude. In my drunkenness the stony ground feels soft and almost salving. I can open one eye, my face all swollen and bloodied; in my mouth, the metallic taste of blood. Broken boned, I know I'm dying.

Over fields, frost forming, distant shouts, the flashing of torches. But no-one comes.

blackberry ripe—
through a tangle of briars
the belt of Orion

not sleeping on deck ...

David J. Kelly

not soothed by the somnambulant sea not enchanted by the magnificence of an astral tapestry framed in a dark dark sky not cooled by the light shore breeze as it plays over sheets and halyards not distracted by a fractured comet's fragments blazing into oblivion overhead not bewitched by the bioluminescence below simply stuck with the gnawing knowledge of a space between us

signal blackspot
our awkward silence
growing

Closer to Home
Glenn C. Coats

Every day around four, Johnny and his mom come out of the house. They stand side by side and look down the street. Johnny's mother is always dressed up, hair teased, a pretty dress. Sometimes, when I stop by on my bicycle, I can smell her perfume. When Johnny's dad pulls in the drive, she will take hold of his arm as they walk to the front door. "It looks like love," my mother says.

old apple tree
that hollow place
inside

Johnny's father has a shepherd dog. She paces round and round the chain-link fence. Snarls and barks, tries to stick her nose through the diamond shaped links. My mother says no one needs a mean dog. "You kids keep away from there."

wind enough to slap a door purple martins

One day, Johnny is playing with a neighbor boy in the front yard. I watch them toss a ball high in the air then try to catch it. The next time I pass by on my bike, the boys are gone. Soon there is an ambulance and fire truck coming down the terrace. Neighbors line the road as if a house is on fire.

the porch rocker talks back moonlight

Johnny's mom stops waiting outside for her husband to come home. The road is quiet like it is covered with snow. The neighbor boy is still in the hospital, and barking has stopped down the street. "Some things are hard to fix," my mother says. "This will take time."

between
the thwack of mosquitoes
lightning bugs

Coming Clean

Tom Painting

I can't wait to see you again she says, and I find myself thinking what's the hurry. It's been more than forty years, yet still not long enough for me to forget why we broke up in the first place. Her mother had it figured out. She caught us kissing in the kitchen; or rather her mom kissing me. Before dying, her mother confessed the set-up, claiming it for her daughter's own good. Mother knew best.

rehab
the washer cycles
through spin dry

Collage

Bob Lucky

I painted a self-portrait when I was young and looking for myself. I cut off my beard and glued it to the painting. It didn't look like me. I cut off my hair and glued that to the painting. It still didn't look like me, but at that point neither did I.

another birthday
piecing myself together
in a cracked mirror

The Writer and Artist, Long Exiled
Michele Root-Bernstein

from his native country, left bits of his soul in every wayward word that led him to this place. Now he makes a point of inserting the I, you, and he of himself in every abstraction of his making.

wandering
an ink wash mountain
the lonely figurative

Damaged
Pris Campbell

Broken diamonds fill the sky. Wild horses thunder past on the beach. Surf drenches my calves. I want him back but the gulls cry *no, no* as they flap across the fading horizon. His loss washes over me until I want to give up, be carried helplessly out to sea with the mermaids. I collapse into the tidal pools until the sky turns pink again. Dying starfish wash up to shore. His ash settles over me, warming me.

autumn winds
the empty nest
blows away

Murakami's Writing Desk
Matthew Caretti

A statuette of a famous Japanese baseball player, but no cats. A paperweight, but no bowl of pasta. No hints of the half-eaten leftovers often found on the desks of the lonely. Though there are the souvenirs from his many travels. The coffee mug and talismans. A ceramic peanut, a marble wasp and a spidered foot from Laos.

the taste of
a second language
chamber music

Near the end closest to his extensive collection of vinyl, a closed book. Another, *The High Window* by Raymond Chandler, open to page 31. Annotated. Underlined passages and circled words. In pencil. The many on hand—all sharpened with exacting precision—perched pointy-end-up in two glasses next to the tchotchkes.

palimpsest
scribbles in the margins
stretch time

I imagine him ambling among worn tourist shops, happy for the company. Surmising stories on the subject of the other sightseers. The old couple arguing over postcards raises the question of love. A child begging for the license plate featuring her name calls to mind identity. These few might become estranged lovers or a monkey raised by humans.

that one spot
where dust gathers
homecoming

Turning Tricks
Colleen Farrelly

She slides into the passenger side stilettos first, her red dress shimmering in the streetlight. He slips the cash into hands that are as cold as black lipstick. He offers to turn up the heat. *Whatever you want, Baby.* As they finish, she kisses his neck and grabs the wallet.

first hickey . . .
the fangs
sink in

Filler
Terri L. French

No one mentioned the bruising and swelling—you'd have thought they'd warn you about that. And it didn't happen immediately. It was only when I looked at my face the next morning that I saw the side-effects of the injections. I looked like a puffer fish that had been beaten with an ugly stick. My upper lip was three times its normal size, and various shades of purple wreathed my mouth. I reached for my phone to call my best friend and confess what I'd done. The phone didn't recognize me.

vanity mirror . . .
another jar
of promises

Paan
Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

You planted a dream inside my mouth once; it tasted of burgundy. And when you left, I let my tongue bathe in the sky's pool of light until the last of the stars had faded.

I ended up using it so often, my teeth became stained with Autumn. No one told me that too much chewing would render my dream flavourless, discardable.

A burgundy needs the right amount of light and air, sweat and soil to deepen it to a fine shade of desire. Done correctly, it will blossom in the veins. Incorrectly, and all that's left is rust.

Watch as I take my dream down to the river. Watch as I wash it in wine, and let it breathe. Can you taste it now? Can you?

bitter moon—
a bag of old grapes
not yet raisin

When Days Have Wings
Claire Everett

look for the garnet throat, the flash of sea blue iridescence, tail feathers that when not in flight, are sleek and sure as hairpins.

drifting clouds . . .
the perching swallow stills
its chatter

Continuance
Janice Doppler

smoking rubble
on the tv screen
a sunlit gull

Thirteen days pass before numbness lifts enough for me to pick up binoculars. I join bird-club friends at Mount Skinner. Television news trumpets that the Air Force base below is a likely site for launching bombers in retaliation for the 9/11 attacks. We scan runways. No movement. No apparent signs of war. Not today. Tomorrow?

Eventually, we turn our attention to searching the sky for migrating hawks. A chocolate brown merlin flashes across the sky. A sharp-shinned hawk dangles its feet for a few seconds as it passes. Throughout the day, broad-winged hawks stream by – about 1,500. Kettles of birds rise on thermals, then melt back into the flow.

Vanishing Point
Lorraine A. Padden

My husband asks if I happen to know why the distance between the World Trade Center Twin Towers was slightly greater at the top than at the bottom of the two buildings.

from the couch to the floor

He says, "You can't see it, but the towers were actually designed that way."

they close their eyes

I flash back to a memory of standing in Tobin Plaza, craning my neck to follow the lines of the tower as far as I could. Then it hits me. "The curvature of the earth."

and jump

deus ex machina
Jim Kacian

if you need proof, you admit you have no faith

if you need faith, you admit you have no proof

what if both are beside the point?

the dark of the sky
meets the dark of the waters—
light in the offing

Leap of Faith
Francine Banwarth

Where there is great love, there are always miracles.—Willa Cather

a new dawn
cardinals sing you
into the light

When we learn in the spring of 2020 that our daughter's third pregnancy is at risk, I begin talking to a tree in our backyard that has never blossomed. A few days later, the tree blossoms, then bears one apple. The apple clings to its branch in the tree through summer, fall, and most of winter. The night of the seventh month after her newborn's death, the apple vanishes.

snow moon
her mother's last ounce
for the milk bank

For Irene Leigh Rossman, July 26 – July 29, 2020. A few months after Irene's death, we learned about the life of St. Irene and her apples. Her name day is July 28. This year the tree blossomed again and bears eighteen apples.

Renku

Rivers to the Sea
Kasen renku with Patricia J. Machmiller as sabaki

jo

droplets gather
like rivers to the sea
ocean fog — *Roger Abe*

the sound of soft laughter
in morning coolness — *Carol Steele*

by each elbow
a separate linen napkin
for every guest — *J. Zimmerman*

in our own way
on our own time — *Alison Woolpert*

a watchman
makes his rounds under
the hunter's moon — *Patricia J. Machmiller*

the innocent tremble
of rattlesnake grass — *J.*

ha

in the defensible space
around the cabin
a four-point buck — *Carol*

"I wanna know what love is
I want you to show me" *Roger*

lifting a champagne glass
the bride's mother
offers her toast *Alison*

we dig in
to the bowl of chocolates *J.*

a giant skull
excavated from
the Paleolithic *Roger*

after twenty years
leaving Afghanistan *Carol*

the cold moon
won't ameliorate
another night of fear *Alison*

snow falls
on the stone Jizo *Roger*

the pilgrim's cloak
ruffles
with every step *Roger*

glub glub glub
of percolating coffee *J.*

daily
the budding of blossoms
spreads northward *J.*

a spotted gull chick
hops to the cliff edge *Alison*

at the end
of a serpentine trail
hilltopping butterflies *Carol*

the Pentagon wants
better UFO data *Roger*

right away
the ball
hits the gutter lane *Alison*

British Boris gambles again
on herd immunity *J.*

hold on tight!
we'll catch a ride
on Comet Swift-Tuttle *Patricia*

he traps a gopher snake
among the topiary *J.*

scurrying
from the homeless camp
before the bulldozer *Carol*

"¿Quién vale más
tú o yo, mi amor?" *Alison*

a foreign
double agent falls
for her handler *J.*

the presidential couple
fête their 75th *Roger*

from the gondola
singing to the moon
and its reflection *J.*

purple-striped jellyfish
pulse to their own beat *Roger*

kyu

ticking leaves
together
down the alley *Alison*

a puma roams
the deep crevasse *Roger*

the darkness
grinds itself out
of the inkstone *J.*

her camera
captures it all *Alison*

across the field
cherry blossoms
in flight *Alison*

soap bubbles
grab the updraft *J.*

Linked Verse

Rengay, Sequences, and Tan-Renga

Genetic Counseling

Terri L. French and Bryan Rickert

23andMe
I share my dad
with someone new *Terri*

Siblings Day
this longing for more *Bryan*

twice removed
a cousin
comes back *Terri*

dividing the estate
skeletons crowd
mother's closet *Bryan*

thicker than water
until it's not *Terri*

one thousand miles
the distance between us
just right *Bryan*

Tokyo to Kamakura
Michael Dylan Welch

fading sunset—
all the Skytree visitors
on the Fuji-san side

November fog—
a passing shinkansen
pressurizes our cabin

oh, Kamakura—
I step inside
the Great Buddha's emptiness

billowing leaves . . .
I hold my bow a little longer
over Blyth's grave

thoughts of autumn—
rain on the train window
changes angle

North Wind
Wilda Morris, Alex Fyffe, and Jacob Salzer

deepening snow
the boy's mittens
disappear *Wilda*

one more scoop of marshmallows
in the hot chocolate *Alex*

home alone
the steady drip
of an icicle *Jacob*

under the Winter Triangle
howls of a wolf pack *Wilda*

warm breath
drawing faces
on the window *Alex*

the last words she said
north wind *Jacob*

Laptop by the Liberating Window
Matthew Caretti

death scroll a kettle of vultures on thermals

not finding the right emoji summer sky

clickbait the lone angler a sundial on the pond

ghosting my true self tik-tok clock

Distant Echoes
Bryan Rickert and Kat Lehmann

the memory
of mother's voice
autumn bird calls *Bryan*

the sky she left
undone moon *Kat*

feathered clouds
just the whisper
of a lullaby *Bryan*

first morning
my children and I
learn to walk *Kat*

snow melt
her crocus returns *Bryan*

watercolor plum
a shift in sunlight
lands on my finger *Kat*

Hemapriya Chellappan and Brad Bennett

sunset lake
without any hurry
the cormorants *Hemapriya*

we slow our walk
as we near the end *Brad*

Brad Bennett and Pragya Vishnoi

moonlight
falls on moonlight
the crash of a wave *Brad*

a crab becoming one
with the dark *Pragya*

arrival
Chandra Bales and Alice Frampton

a hawk lands
in still air
spring migration *Chandra*

rose petals
on the luggage carousel *Alice*

thunderstorm
the puppy finds
our bed *Chandra*

from the bus window
a welcome sign
New Year's Eve *Alice*

the small fist
secures his mother's finger *Chandra*

starlight . . .
we come to a Y
in the road *Alice*

Moods
Jackie Chou

the pros and cons
of bipolar disorder
lunar phases

IQ scores
the myth of the mad genius

crooked tulips
we talk about
thought distortions

self-esteem
I censor myself
out of the room

easier said than done
psychotherapy

the drone
of the therapist
motivation group

Ouroboros

A Hexarengay in Honor of Garry Gay

Tracing
in the dust
the river's route

circling the oxbow
an abandoned runt
duckling

the spiral
of an antlion larva
lookin' for a home

grilled brook trout
in the wisps of smoke
cottonwood fluff

vanishing contrails and
a lazy gyre of vultures

the gin-only martini
dribbles down his
double chin

silver feather
the stretch and bounce
of an ear lobe

"no, I'm straight," he says
flashing a funny little
crooked smile

long tresses almost gray
but still her sexy wiggle

Over the railroad tracks
the slow motion
of a snake

First and sixth verses by Garry Gay, first published in *Woodnotes 5* (Spring 1990), and 2nd Place winner in the Harold G. Henderson Awards 1997, respectively.

Other verses by
Lew Watts and *Charles Trumbull*

Two Bric-Rengay

Lost or Strayed

one oarlock missing . . .
hung up in a willow
beyond the bend

her summer dress
taken off by the ragpicker

ringing his little bell
the village copper topples
into a ditch

pub night
feeling a little dizzy
from the pils

in her cups
a scrunched-up Playboy

costume party
by the Sabbath-eve coven —
all the witches come . . .

Charles Trumbull
Lew Watts

Falò delle vanità

tornado warning
the family basset hound
paces nervously

at the words ". . . to the vet"
that same pain in my groin

after the snip
a chill wind blows
across his tonsure

vanity mirror
drawn to the conceit
of mascara

first mustache
for a stroppy lad

decisions, decisions . . .
as her mother touches me
sound of a siren

Lew Watts
Charles Trumbull

* The bric-rengay, a 12-link form worked out by Lew Watts and Charles Trumbull in June, 2021, emphasizes the renga/renku technique of "verse capping." In renku, verses of three and two

lines alternate, with the second of any two verses not only linking to the preceding one but creating with it a full, five-line poem (i.e., a tanka). The innovation of bric-rengay is that a second verse or link is *laid over* the preceding one, much like shingles on a roof. Verses (or shingles) in this format are said to be "imbricated"—hence our shorthand designation "bric."

Both poets contribute to each verse. In "Lost or Strayed," for example, Charlie provided the first line. Lew completed the three-line first verse, then added another line that became both the third line of a new haiku and the first line of the second link, and so forth. The first four lines, therefore, should be read in two ways:

one oarlock missing . . .
hung up in a willow
beyond the bend

and

hung up in a willow
beyond the bend
her summer dress

When the last two lines of the poem combine with the first line of the poem to form a verse, the bric-rengay can be seen to comprise 12 imbricated links.

Essays

The Poetry of Pain and Its Meaning in the Age of COVID-19

by Michael Freiling and Shelley Baker-Gard

In late 2017, Shelley Baker-Gard was presented with a manuscript of poems, all in Japanese. They were brought to her by Duane Watari, a *sansei* (third-generation) Japanese American. Mr. Watari had discovered them among his mother's keepsakes and believed the poems were written by his grandfather, Masaki Kinoshita, who wrote under the pen name of Jonan.[1] Shelley brought the manuscript to Michael Freiling and together we examined its contents.

As we opened the manuscript and began to study it, we were surprised to discover that these poems had been written in an unexpected context: the Wartime Civilian Control Administration's (WCCA) North Portland Assembly Center, where Japanese Americans were incarcerated in the months after Pearl Harbor while they waited for their transport to camps farther inland, such as Heart Mountain in Wyoming and Minidoka in Idaho. The manuscript was, in fact, a journal of senryu poems composed by multiple senryu poets at the Assembly Center in August 1942.

Senryu poems are different from haiku. Although both Japanese poetic forms follow the traditional 5-7-5 structure, their focuses of attention are different. Haiku tend to be meditative observations springing from the contemplation of nature. Senryu, by contrast, tend to be earthier, occasionally acerbic commentaries on human life, relationships, and behavior (including misbehavior). Life in the WCCA Assembly Center, with its attendant uncertainties and anxieties, was naturally the focus of attention for the senryu recorded in this journal.

The poems were composed at a series of *senryu-kai* held regularly at the Assembly Center. *Senryu-kai* and *haiku-kai* are social gatherings where the members each contribute their own poems. The poems are sometimes composed independently and sometimes in a sequence. Quite often, contests are held where winning haiku or senryu are selected by a designated master or judge, or sometimes by a vote of the present attendees.

Gatherings at the WCCA Assembly Center were organized by the internees themselves. Their purpose appears to have been twofold: (1) to maintain morale by holding social events that would provide both enjoyment and shared experience, and (2) to give the internees an outlet for expressing their feelings.

Jonan, who was already an experienced poet in 1942, served as one of the key organizers, as well as the secretary who recorded the poems in the journal. This must have entailed a certain amount of risk because the possession of documents written in Japanese was generally forbidden. One internee was not even allowed to bring with her a copy of the *Man'yoshu*, a classic anthology of poems from the earliest period in Japanese literature.

Many of the poems in this clandestine manuscript were written by Jonan himself. We have also been able to identify several other prominent poets who had published independently or organized local Japanese-language poetry groups in the decades prior to WWII and after. Poets we identified include: Shinjiru Honda, Kaoru Kurokawa, Kyokuo Iko (Yakima, WA), Toyoko Tamura (Powell Valley, OR), Katsuhiko Shimizu (Yakima, WA), and Hisako Saito (Portland, OR).

The poignancy of uncertainty and anxiety was quite palpable, even in the very first poem we looked at, which turned out to be one of Kurokawa's:

汽車が出る迄を淋しく笑ひ合ひ
kisha ga deru made wo sabishiku warai ai

melancholy laughter
helps us pass the time
until the train departs

We were touched by these poems from our very first encounter. The writers of these poems are ordinary people trying to make the best of the unbearable. Instead of the delicate themes typically associated with Japanese haiku, feelings are often expressed directly in senryu, with a raw and sometimes caustic intensity. But this very intensity is what makes them so relevant today and presents the opportunity for us to share deeply in the emotions experienced by those Japanese Americans nearly 80 years ago.

Our experience working with these poems evolved against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the emotions expressed in these poems take on a new urgency during this unprecedented time in history. The most apparent parallel with 1942 and today has been the unfortunate tendency to blame ordinary Asian Americans for the catastrophes caused by COVID-19.

Beyond this sad parallel, however, the poems also highlight some of the shared, universal human experiences, though it is important to note that last spring's pandemic lockdown in no way compares with the injustices and discomforts experienced by the incarcerated Japanese Americans during WWII. We offer the following brief excerpts from the journal in hopes of better understanding the life that Japanese Americans led during their incarceration, as well offering us guidance on how to navigate our own set of challenging circumstances as we battle the pandemic—be it in the form of isolation, confinement, or even outright prejudice.

Looking Back

In this collection of senryu poems, there is a sense of loss and nostalgia for what the poets were forced to leave behind during their incarceration. Occasionally, this nostalgia relates to specific places, as when two internees from the same hometown in Japan encounter each other:

your neighborhood?
from the same hometown –
memories

Hisataro

Even sight of the world beyond the Assembly Center is enough to produce nostalgia for their former freedom:

beyond the barbed wire
a glow of neon lights –
tears in my eyes

Jonan

More often, however, the nostalgia relates to friends and family whom the internees fear they will never see again, often with good reason:

no longer heard
their so happy sounds –
dad's drunken songs

Jonan

Nearly all Japanese Americans treasured photographs of loved ones as a way of keeping their memories alive. Some would express their heartbreak through reference to these photos:

my husband left
and now I talk to him
in his picture

Jonan, quoting another resident

Perhaps most poignant is the loss of contact with children and grandchildren:

only this photo can hold
the child we talk about –
until peacetime comes

Goichi

Life in the Center

Life in the Wartime Civilian Control Administration's North Portland Assembly Center was unpleasant. The Center itself was a re-purposed livestock exhibition facility, and internees were herded into small stalls originally designed for horses and livestock—not for human beings.

Preparation of the facility by the military was a haphazard affair at best, which compounded the discomfort. In one infamous episode, the residents were forced to endure an infestation of flies attracted to the manure-laced dirt under the Center's hastily-assembled plywood floor.

Of course, life for Japanese Americans did not stop simply because it was uncontrollable. Babies continued to be born. Mangers, which were still present in several of the stalls, were used by some families as cribs in a painful parallel with the events of two thousand years ago that was not lost on the internees themselves:

grandmother too
awaits the baby's first cry
all on edge

Jonan

As normal, there were the usual conflicts between parents and their teenagers. These tensions were two-sided, as the younger members of the Assembly Center were forced to adjust to the expectations of their more traditional parents in such close quarters:

my mother says
things are not so simple –
duty beckons

Jonan, quoting another resident

There is even time for a game or two. Tennis matches and baseball games were popular:

hot summer day
the pitcher wipes sweat
off his face

Jonan

Fears and Anxieties

Uncertainties are often harder to bear than clearly defined hardships. And the Japanese Americans interned at the Assembly Center were faced with countless uncertainties. The greatest uncertainty, of course, was that they did not know when the war would be over or when they would be able to return to their homes.

More immediately, they did not even know where they would be shipped off to for the remainder of the war. And for some who

were considering repatriation to Japan, decisions like this were just too difficult to make:

stay forever or return home
the day of decision never comes –
just too much to bear

Roshyou

Heightening all the internees' already-pervasive anxiety, one of the military police on guard shot and killed one of their own cooks, mistaking him for a thief. This incident may very well have been the impetus for the below poem:

my daughter –
I watch more closely now
since it happened

Jonan, quoting another resident

Friendships made in the Assembly Center might not even survive the next few weeks:

accepting that
we may not meet again –
I squeeze your hand so tight

Choubou

The accumulated anxieties caused some Japanese Americans to express their readiness even for worst-case scenarios:

ten thousand miles I've come –
to be with you, ready
to die with you

Shousui

And some of the older residents began to despair that they would never see the light of freedom again:

it doesn't matter –
father has already written
his final wishes

Mokugyo

Reactions to Their Situation

Internees found many different ways to cope with the conditions in which they found themselves. Some found distraction in everyday activities:

now I know why
she snuggles with baby –
troubles vanish

Jonan

Some attempted to express their feelings with humorous irony:

even autumn
comes on command here
at the assembly center

Jonan

While others resorted to more cutting and sarcastic commentary:

their free movie
such generosity
escapes me

Jonan

Some envied childhood when methods for coping with stress were more intuitive:

for the toddler
security from a thumb –
a peace I need

Jonan

Some sought consolation in looking beyond the internment to a time when even the internment itself would yield memories:

someday after –
Center name cards just might
become nostalgic

Jonan

It is quite common in *senryu-kai* for different personalities to take completely different approaches when considering a question. Two poets here offer different opinions on the question of why they were ordered to leave their homes in the first place. The first appears to more or less take the U.S. military's stated reasons for incarceration, looking forward to exoneration:

cleared of suspicion
for the sake of this country
a new life for me

Jonan

The second, not without good reason, takes a more cynical view of the entire affair. Unstated, but implicit in the poem, is the distinct possibility that ulterior motives were at work in the decision to round them up in internment camps:

they never asked
suspicious or not –
just put us away

Sen Taro

Resolution and Peace

Several of the most uplifting poems in this manuscript illustrate the ways in which the Japanese Americans came to terms with their circumstances and achieved a certain peace and optimism:

have come to this point –
accepting what will be but still
holding on to hope

Hikari

In some cases, we even see signs of what might be termed an interior transformation in the face of great obstacles:

peace overtakes my heart –
allowing events to follow
the course that was ordained

Goichi

In Summary

Many of these poems display cultural values that are often attributed to the Japanese people: perseverance, patient endurance, and doing what duty requires. But what also clearly stands out in the variety of individual expressions is a kaleidoscope of basic humanity. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all of us around the world. Our reactions to these new circumstances have become similar in many ways—we have good days and bad days, positive and not so positive feelings, and yet somehow, life continues. In

that light, these poems represent a tribute to the human spirit in its near infinite adaptability and its willingness to find a way to nurture and sustain life, even during the worst of circumstances.

We wish to thank Ms. Satsuki Takikawa, who assisted in producing the initial translations of these poems. Mike would especially like to thank the late William Morlock, his high school teacher, who first brought this tragedy of the treatment of Japanese Americans to his attention.

Notes:

1. The translations in this essay are excerpted from our forthcoming book, which will be *They Never Asked: WWII Senryu Poetry by Japanese Americans at the Portland Assembly Center*, an anthology of WWII Japanese American senryu poetry written at the North Portland WCCA Assembly Center. It will include a wider selection of poems from the Assembly Center, as well as many notes on the historical background and translation details required for understanding some of the poems.

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Waterfalls[1]
from *A Field Guide to North American Haiku*[2]
by Charles Trumbull

When it comes to waterfalls, what most impresses Japanese haiku poets, both classical and modern, is their sound and, to a lesser extent, their physical appearance and refreshing coolness. 滝 *taki* in Japanese refers to cascades and rapids as well as full-fledged waterfalls. *Taki* is a *kidai* (seasonal topic) for all summer and has spawned a number of daughter *kigo*, such as 滝見 *takimi* (waterfall viewing); 滝見茶屋 *takimi chaya*, a teahouse for waterfall watching; 滝風 *takikaze*, breeze from a waterfall; and 滝の音 *taki no oto*, sound of a waterfall.

Under the headnote "Nijikō"—the name of the rapids on the upper reaches of the Yoshino River, known for its torrential current over the rocks—Bashō composed this *hokku*:

ほろほろと山吹散るか滝の音
horohoro to yamabuki chiru ka taki no oto

petal by petal
yellow mountain roses fall—
sound of the rapids

This translation is by Makoto Ueda in *Bashō and His Interpreters*. Three of the five interpreters Ueda cites suggest that, in one way or another, the sound of the rapids *caused* the petals to fall. Three commentators believe that Bashō actually witnessed falling petals, while two think he was just exercising his imagination. One lauds the master for "putting something lovely and delicate in the foreground to screen a powerful, violent force of nature," yet "nevertheless succeeded in giving full expression to that force."[3] Note that 山吹 *yamabuki* (Japanese globeflower or *kerria*), a late spring *kigo*, overrides 滝 *taki*, and so provides the seasonality of this haiku.

Bashō wrote similar haiku about other things going over the falls, such as green pine needles and moonlight, borne on the surface of a cascade.

Buson, too, composed a spring haiku about petals (i.e., "cherry-blossoms") in the rapids that is intended to suggest the transience of youth and beauty and, in the translation of W. S. Merwin and Takako Lento at least, the suggestion that the cascade of blossoms transmogrifies into the river rapids. There is no mention here, however, of the sound of roaring rapids:

玉川に高野ゝ花や流れ去
Tamagawa ni takano no hana ya nagare saru

Mount Koya's cherry blossoms
cascade into the rapids
of Tamagawa and are carried away

Buson, trans. Merwin & Lento[4]

水一筋月よりうつす桂河
mizu hitosuji tsuki yori utsusu Katsuragawa

The Tonase Waterfall

One strand of water is moonlight
on its way to
the Katsura River

Buson, trans. Merwin & Lento[5]

In another verse, Buson seems to suggest that a practical use could be found for the rapids on the swift Mogami River:

毛見の衆の舟さし下せ最上川
kemi no shu no fune sashi kudase Mogamigawa

Steer the farm inspectors' boat
onto the white rapids
on Mogami River

Yosa Buson, trans. Merwin & Lento[6]

Chiyo-ni also composed a haiku about cherry trees and a waterfall:

影は滝空は花なりいとざくら
kage wa taki sora wa hana nari ito zakura

cherry blossoms
against the sky—
waterfall shadow

Chiyo-ni, trans. Patricia Donegan & Yoshie Ishibashi[7]

Issa's most-translated waterfall haiku takes as its theme the cooling effect of the falls, an important and welcome attribute during the hot, humid Japanese summer:

一尺の滝も音して夕涼
isshaku no taki mo oto shite yūsuzumi

a one-foot waterfall
splashes too . . .
evening cool

Issa, trans. David G. Lanoue[8]

Issa's attention to a tiny waterfall might also be seen as typical of his emblematic concern for the unnoticed and underprivileged, usually directed at small creatures.

Shiki also was impressed by the coolness that emanates from waterfalls:

すゞしさや瀧ほとばしる家のあひ
suzushisa ya taki hotobashiru ie no ai

coolness—
a mountain stream splashes out
between houses

Shiki, trans. Janine Beichman[9]

大声で話す涼みや滝の茶屋
ōgoe de hanasu suzumi ya taki no chaya

loud talking
enjoying the cool
waterfall teahouse

Shiki, trans. C. Trumbull[10]

Returning to the sounds of waterfalls as recorded by Japanese haiku poets, we have this chilling description by the eighteenth-century poet Kyokusui:

寒き夜や淘に落ち込む瀧の音
samuki yo ya umi ni ochikomu taki no oto

A cold night!
The sound of a waterfall
Falling into the sea.

Kyokusui, trans. R. H. Blyth[11]

and this one by Masaoka Shiki, who finds his imagination and loneliness stimulated by sounds in the night:

瀧の音いろいろになる夜長哉
taki no oto iroiro ni naru yonaga kana

Long night,
when the waterfall
makes all kinds of noises

Shiki, trans. Burton Watson[12]

Santōka's reaction to waterfalls was more immediate and personal:

飲みたい水が音たててゐた
nomitai mizu ga oto tatete ita

Thirsty for a drink of water—
The sound of a waterfall.

Santōka, trans. John Stevens[13]

as is Gary Snyder's:

Hiking In The Totsugawa Gorge

pissing
watching
a
waterfall

Gary Snyder[14]

Waterfalls are a recurring theme in the surreal work of modern haiku poet Ban'ya Natsuishi, but it is difficult to grasp the significance of his waterfall image. For example, take this, one of his most famous haiku:

未来より滝を吹き割る風来たる
mirai yori taki wo fukiwaru kaze kitaru

From the future
a wind arrives
that blows the waterfall apart

Ban'ya Natsuishi, trans. Natsuishi & Kacian[15]

or this one from his Flying Pope series:

天の滝より法王落ちて飛び始む
ten no taki yori hōō ochite tobi hajime mu

Falling from a waterfall
in the sky
the Pope begins to fly

Ban'ya Natsuishi, trans. Natsuishi & Kacian[16]

Ban'ya's vision of a waterfall escapes me, but perhaps the following haiku, which he selected for inclusion in his anthology *Haiku Troubadours 2000*, might provide a clue:

滝の影
天地
円く
寂れつつ
taki no kage tenchi maruku sabiretsutsu

Shadow of waterfall—
both heaven and earth
round about
becoming desolate

Kei Hayashi[17]

"Waterfall" in all these haiku might make sense if the image were taken as a representation of the clamor and chaos of twentieth-century life. Here are two other enigmatic waterfall haiku by contemporary Japanese poets:

滝風に息を閉ぢても死にもせず
taki-kaze ni iki o tojitemo shinimosezu

waterfall wind
I hold my breath
but do not die

Suzuki Akira[18]

kawa no se ni shiwasu no oto no nagarekeri

Running shallow
with a year's end sound:
river rapids.

Arimaru[19]

and one by an American poet in the same vein:

listening to the waterfall
a thousand year nap
begins

John Sandbach[20]

Western haiku poets also write about the sounds that waterfalls make, especially when they challenge the human voice or conversation. For example:

angling from
waterfalls
white music.

Guy R. Beining[21]

passing train
its sound expands
the waterfall

Helen J. Sherry[22]

Out from the falls
from the waterfall's sound ouzel fledgling

vincent tripi[23]

silent deer the sound of a waterfall

Lenard D. Moore[24]

from the bend in the river
to the sound of the falls
her silence

Nick Avis[25]

How ridiculous!
my keeping silent
around the waterfall

vincent tripi[26]

To hear it,
not to hear myself,
waterfall

vincent tripi[27]

A little dog barks
At a roaring waterfall
That swallows his voice.

Richard Wright[28]

waterfall—
the man with a booming voice
stops talking

H. F. Noyes[29]

the closer we get . . .
losing my friend's heart-to-heart
to the waterfall

D. Claire Gallagher[30]

no sound
from the waterfall;
winter solitude

Emily Romano[31]

Many poems in Western literature mention waterfalls, but not many actually feature them. Here are some of the more interesting examples that we encountered:

the spirit of Goethe
lifts my soul up the waterfall
to Heaven

Susumu Takiguchi[32]

Takiguchi's haiku refers to Staubbach Falls in the Berner Oberland region of Switzerland that was memorialized by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in his poem "Gesang der Geister über den Wassern" (Song of the Spirits over the Waters). LeRoy Gorman alludes to another literary waterfall in Switzerland, the Reichenbach Falls, where Sherlock Holmes and Professor Moriarty fought to their death:

not Reichenbach
but the water is thunderous
even at Christmas

LeRoy Gorman[33]

The name Minnehaha, Hiawatha's lover in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1855 epic poem, is purported to have been taken from a waterfall and was said to mean "laughing waters" in English translation.

An idea that the waterfall moves water (and time) forward irreversibly is the theme of New Zealand poet Lauris Dorothy Edmond's poem "Waterfall" (ca. 1984). The final lines of the poem read:

suddenly then I love you with a quick
intensity, remembering that water,
however luminous and grand, falls fast
and only once to the dark pool below.[34]

Haiku poets find inspiration, mystery, and even divinity, in waterfalls:

waterfall
I find a voice
for this longing

Renée Owen[35]

Ambition

The drop of water
falling, falling
dreaming of Niagara

José María González de Mendoza[36]

unicorns
pale shadows in moonlight
behind the waterfall

Elizabeth Searle Lamb[37]

mist from the waterfall wrapping us in stars

Alexis Rotella[38]

Waterfall, so small—
but every drop
having its own rainbow.

Foster Jewell[39]

gift of the spirit in tongues speak waterfalls

Johnny Baranski[40]

the Indians would make offerings
to the spirit of the falls

Cor van den Heuvel[41]

神にませばまこと美はし那智の滝
kami ni maseba makoto uruwashi nachi no taki

Because it is divinity,
Divinely beautiful is
The Waterfall of Nachi.

Kyoshi[42]

niagara God in my ears

Jerry Kilbride[43]

after death
my shadow will back
to its waterfall

Johannes S. H. Bjerg[44]

And speaking of inspiration, waterfalls are often associated with love and, at least in the case of Niagara Falls, marriage:

searching for a coin
by a Niagara Falls telescope—
lone young woman

Carolyn Archibald[45]

the waterfall
where he proposed
drowns out her crying

Bob Gates[46]

honeymoon
detailed directions
to The Falls

John Stevenson[47]

postcard from Niagara
the years
fall away

kjmunro[48]

waterfall
her body
shaping water

Jeff Hoagland[49]

Poets everywhere may name or allude to a specific location in their haiku. Ideally this practice, which the Japanese call 歌枕 *utamakura* (famous place), assumes that the reader will be able to associate with the named place. In this way, the meaning of the haiku is amplified. If the place is not widely known, however, by mentioning it specifically, the poet runs the risk of creating what might be called "tourist haiku," poems that flaunt the names of places they have visited, or a "Kilroy haiku," after the graffito "Kilroy was here" inscribed far and wide by American GIs returning from World War II. None of the haiku featured in this article, of course, are "tourist haiku" or "Kilroy haiku," but in reading haiku, it's good to consider whether they rely excessively on "place stamps."

Niagara Falls, which straddles the Canadian–U.S. border, is certainly the most often mentioned waterfall in English-language haiku. There are many examples in the previous section of this essay. The second most popular is probably Yosemite Falls in California. Among many others, these three top-flight American poets have written haiku documenting their visits to the falls:

At Yosemite Park

Cataract's white sheet
Cleaves the lush foliage
Many a hundred feet!

Shōson [Kenneth Yasuda][50]

snow-covered pines
Yosemite Falls
in white water plumes

Jane Reichhold[51]

Yosemite Falls . . .
the old zen master
sleeps upright

Michael McClintock[52]

Patrick Pilarski describes Athabasca Falls near his home in Alberta, which are noted for the large volume of water coursing over stone shelves:

Athabasca Falls —
this empty bowl
of winter stone

Patrick M. Pilarski[53]

In 2014, Canadian haikuist Luminita Suse compiled a collection of haiku written on a *ginkō* at Hog's Back Falls in Ontario. A small sample:

hushed by roaring
my eyes drift down its path
Hog's Back Falls

Sheila Bello[54]

the zen moment
lost
in the waterfall roar

Ann Goldring[55]

exercising stillness
by the waterfall
a solitary heron

Luminita Suse[56]

a small tide pool
amidst the torrent
her love

Mike Montreuil[57]

one side tranquility
the other chaos
Hog's Back dam

Sandra Stephenson[58]

Irish poet Gabriel Rosenstock commented on a waterfall in Scotland:[59]

Coire Shalach — Coire Shalach / Ugly Hollow
a hainm á ghlanadh — the waterfall
ag an eas — clears its name

Ernest J. Berry viewed Angel Falls in Venezuela on horseback:[60]

Angel Falls
my horse pauses
for a pee

Keith A. Simmonds waxed poetic over the sights he saw in Ghana:[61]

Boti falls . . .
a rainbow festival
merging with the light

On the other hand, some poets take a "so what?" view of natural wonders, even the instantly recognizable Niagara Falls:

so this
is Niagara Falls
look the moon

LeRoy Gorman[62]

at great expense
watching streams of people
Niagara Falls

Zinovy Vayman[63]

selfies
not one shot
of the falls

Ann Goldring[64]

urologist's office
a framed photograph
of the falls

Tom Clausen[65]

If the Japanese masters wrote about cherry blossoms, pine needles, moonlight, and such poetic things going over the falls, American poets are often more down-to-earth:

water falls all over itself over the falls

Marlene Mountain[66]

a stick goes over the falls at sunset

Cor van den Heuvel[67]

a tire floats from the falls

Alan Pizzarelli[68]

nothing,
at the moment,
flowing over the falls

John Stevenson[69]

But Pamela Miller Ness wrote a verse very much in the spirit of those Japanese masters:[70]

cry of a crow ~
its shadow passing over
the waterfall

Poets are fascinated by the dynamics and transformations that a river undergoes as it approaches the rapids, goes over the falls, and then placidly continues its course. The same goes for the phenomenon of the water changing from flowing freely to freely falling to pooling. The same also goes for the seasonal changes in rate of flow, from gushing to trickling, or physical state—liquid, frozen, and even dry depending on the season.

Chiyo-ni, for example, composed a haiku about the sound of the waterfall having diminished enough that cicada cries can be heard. Both the following translations are by Patricia Donegan and Yoshie Ishibashi, but between their two collections of Chiyo-ni's work, they revised their opinion about whether it was the waterfall or its sound that diminished (糸 *ne* means "thread"). The left-hand version is from 1996, and the version on the right is from two years later:

滝の糸も細るや峰に蟬の声
taki no ne mo hosoru ya mine ni semi no koe

waterfall diminishes—	sound of the waterfall
cicadas' voices	diminishes in the peaks—
in the mountains[71]	cicadas' voices[72]

滝涸れて夜々の月光巌に泌む
taki karete yo-yo no gekko iwa ni shimu

Waterfall dried up,
moonlight
drenched the rocks.

Nakajima Takeo, trans. Lucien Stryk[73]

Nakajima's haiku might remind readers of the following haiku, written aboard the first ship bearing Japanese immigrants to Brazil, when they saw the brilliant reflection of a dry waterfall on the *antiplano*:

A nau imigrante
chegando: vê-se lá no alto
a cascata seca

The immigrant ship
arriving: visible on the hill
the dry waterfall

Hyōkotsu
[Shuhei Uetsoka]
trans. C. Trumbull[74]

Modern poet Masajo finds a metaphorical meaning in the diminished energy of a winter waterfall:

冬の滝音を殺して落ちにけり
fuyu no taki oto wo koroshite ochi ni keri

waterfall in winter—
it quiets itself
and falls

Suzuki Masajo, trans. Lee Gurga & Emiko Miyashita[75]

New York poet Bernard Lionel Einbond is more literal in remarking the spent energy of his local river:

after waterfalls
just the Bronx River again—
Crestwood Lake no more

Bernard Lionel Einbond[76]

A frozen waterfall is a dramatic sight:

滝壺に届かざるまま凍りけり
takitsubo ni todokazaru mama kōrikeri

its shape
before reaching the bottom
a frozen waterfall

Igarashi Yoshitomo[77]

plummeting
into a silent pool
the frozen waterfall

Wally Swist[78]

Capturing the image of a waterfall in a visual or concrete poem is hard to resist, be it simply, as by Bob Boldman:[79]

f
a
l
l
s

or more metaphorically by Shane Gilreath:[80]

mountain stream's
liberation ...
w
a
t
e
r
f
a
l
l

One can even imagine a horizontal visual haiku:

Woman's hair in a dream smooth rapids

Robert Lord Keyes[81]

Who has composed the most extreme vertical waterfall haiku, you ask? The tallest we have found are featured on the next two pages.

Misty
w
a
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r

Lorraine Ellis Harr[82]

These placid woods;

b
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k

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w p
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t l
e
r u
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m
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i
n
g

L. Stanley Cheney[83]

Notes:

1. More information than anyone could possibly want to know about waterfalls, with photographs of dozens of them, can be found on the *World of Waterfalls* website: *https://www.world-of-waterfalls.com/what-makes-a-waterfall-a-waterfall/.*
2. "A Field Guide to North American Haiku" is a long-term project along the lines of a haiku encyclopedia-cum-*saijiki*, a selection of the best haiku in English arranged by topic and illustrating what it is about a given topic that attracts poets to write. When complete, the Field Guide project will comprise multiple thick volumes keyed to the several topics in traditional Japanese *saijiki* (haiku almanac) and Western counterparts, notably William J. Higginson's *Haiku World: An International Poetry Almanac* (1996). These topics are: Season, Sky & Elements, Landscape, Plants, Animals, Human Affairs, and Observances. The haiku in this essay are selected from my Haiku Database, currently containing more than 480,000 entries. "Waterfall" presents haiku selected from 1,200 haiku indexed under "LANDSCAPE: waterfall": 950 haiku originally written in English, 219 translations from Japanese, and 35 translations from other languages. Publishing these miniature topical haiku anthologies is an experiment to test the feasibility of the larger Field Guide project. Critique and suggestions, supportive or critical, are warmly invited; please comment by e-mail to *cptrumbull|at|comcast.net*.
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82. *Haiku Magazine* 3:1+3 (Summer/Fall 1969).
83. *Modern Haiku* 1:3 (Summer 1970).

Charles Trumbull is a past president of the Haiku Society of America and recipient of its Sora Award. He edited Modern Haiku (2006 to 2013), and was honorary curator of the American Haiku Archives in 2013. A haiku chapbook was published in 2011, and his book of New Mexico haiku, A Five-Balloon Morning, in June 2013. A History of Modern Haiku followed in 2019. Trumbull helped organize the Chi-ku haiku group in Chicago and the Santa Fe Haiku Study Group; the biennial Midwest—Cradle of American Haiku conferences, and two Haiku North America conferences (1999 and 2017; and two international conferences in Kraków, Poland (2003 and 2015). For more than 30 years he has been collecting haiku for his electronic Haiku Database, which currently contains almost a half million entries. His latest project is Haikupedia, an online encyclopedia of all things haiku (www.haikupedia.org).

Contests

2020 HSA Haiku Awards

Judged by Deborah P Kolodji and Bryan Rickert

We would like to thank the Haiku Society of America for the honor of being asked to judge more than 1,100 poems in this year's HSA Haiku Awards contest, Chuck Brickley for coordinating our efforts, and Charles Trumbull for double-checking our selections against his haiku database. The poems spanned the depth and scope of what members of the haiku community considered their best work, and it was a journey of discovery to read through all of the submissions several times before winnowing the field down and eventually deciding on this year's award-winning haiku. There were a few poems which we would have loved to recognize that we felt better belonged in the Brady Senryu contest, which also helped us narrow down the selections.

FIRST PLACE

the heft
of a cast-iron skillet
autumn deepens

Mary Stevens

We kept coming back to this haiku, and our appreciation for it grew with each reading. It is one of the few haiku in the contest that used a sense besides sight. The use of "heft" in line one gives us a sense of the weight and effort needed to simply lift the skillet. We feel how tired the poet must feel. It brings us to a moment when things have labored on and we are nearly done, whether it is the turning of autumn in our lives and things are heavier than they used to be or a kind of tired where life has just worn us down to

the point where lifting that pan is just another chore to struggle through. The use of "cast-iron" in line two sets the stage for this poem. We can relate to this in a concrete way. Maybe it is us or our mothers or our grandmothers who labored with the cooking every day. The use of the classic kigo, "autumn deepens," is perfect for we can feel the heaviness of autumn descending, the leaves falling, a person in their autumn years struggling to lift themselves up, and this new heaviness after summer when the night and its darkness start to lengthen, each day growing heavier as it grows shorter. We are happy to bestow first place upon this fine haiku.

SECOND PLACE

evening news
junipers consume
the moon

Kat Lehmann

We both liked the directness of the fragment and phrase, as well as the mystery of many possible readings. Do we take this poem at its face value? Is the viewer truly only watching the moon while watching TV and noticing how, over time, the junipers outside the window have grown over the moon view? Or is there a deeper meaning about the negative content on the news and how it has consumed us from seeing the beautiful things, like the moonrise, around us? Junipers can grow up to 130 feet tall, so over time, the moon could become more and more obscured as the evening news continues its litany of negative events. Moon is an autumn kigo, so as the junipers grow taller, the hours of night grow longer.

THIRD PLACE

whether or not
you come home
spring peepers

Carol Ann Palomba

Some of us have never lived in a place where frogs chorus in the spring, but such a reader can imagine that if they did, the peepers would return every year. So, regardless of the uncertainty of this relationship—whether a significant other has left or works late again—there is something undependable here which contrasts with the expectation of the returning spring peepers. Spring also evokes joy after a long winter, so there's a sense of hope here, regardless of whether or not they return.

HONORABLE MENTIONS (IN NO SPECIFIC ORDER)

gibbous moon
she circles the baby's
due date

Marilyn Appl Walker

A gibbous moon is less than a full moon, but more than a third quarter semicircle moon. We don't know for sure whether it is waxing or waning until reading the rest of the poem where the anticipation of a baby's birth brings forth the realization that it is a waxing gibbous moon. Although this poem can be taken in a very literal sense, when the reader sits with it for a while, the emotions of anticipation become consuming. We can feel the roundness of the mother's belly as her hands caress the baby inside her and as she circles the upcoming date on the calendar. It is a powerfully emotional poem for expectant parents and anyone who has ever been a parent.

casting off
all self-doubt—
prize trout

Clifford Rames

"Don't overthink it," Bryan's dad used to say. "Think it just enough." He could have been talking about fishing. Besides the obvious word play in this haiku, we believe it can speak to the act of fishing where a fisherman casts his line, letting go of ego and lack of confidence. If you are fishing, you may even need to let go of yourself if you are going to catch that prize trout. The prize trout doesn't even need to be the biggest or the best, just the one you caught at just the right time and place. Fishing also evokes a sense of summer, a sense of growing into yourself. The haiku is a beacon of hope because far too many of us become consumed with self-doubt, and the act of casting it off allows us to achieve much more.

2020 HSA Senryu Awards

Judged by David Grayson and J. Zimmerman

For the HSA 2020 Senryu Contest, 703 poems were submitted. We were thrilled to read through all the senryu, giving each poem individual attention. We then focused on poems that met our criteria, particularly emphasizing human affairs, offering fresh images, saying something original, and preferably being layered and open to multiple readings. Humor was a plus, though not essential; pontification was a minus. Poems about aspects of current events, such as the COVID pandemic (masks, sheltering-in-place, etc.), were subject to those same criteria; they did not get a pass.

We pruned the poems on each wave of re-reading until we each eventually reached a shortlist with top choices. We shared and merged our choices, finding partial overlap. We discussed every poem in our combined list, and we both modified some evaluations. Over several days, we discussed the possible winners. We emphasized, but did not limit ourselves to, senryu that both of us selected. As part of our process, we drafted our comments on the candidates along the way. The entries were a wonderful window into the breadth and depth of English-language senryu.

FIRST PLACE

a hole
in the fence, mostly
on their side

Tony Williams

This delightful senryu caught the immediate attention of both of us. While it splendidly encapsulates our small-scale human troubles with our neighbors, it is very much of the moment and resonates more widely. The blame-game subtext is present

throughout life, from toddlers to politicians. The word "mostly" shows the poet claiming to be reasonable by recognizing that some (of course, only a tiny portion) of the hole must be on the poet's side. The punctuation supports its sense, with a cheeky comma in the middle of line two, interrupting the flow—just like the hole in the fence. This senryu was the only one that appeared in both of our independently-selected "best" lists, and we are enthusiastic to award it first place.

SECOND PLACE

insomnia—
lying under fleece
counting wolves

Suzanne Niedzielska

This is a well-layered senryu with strong images and sharp vocabulary. The opening gives us the exhausting situation of failing to sleep, an experience suffered by many. The second line ameliorates the situation by placing the person beneath "fleece," a lovely word that suggests softness and comfort. The third line completes the poem beautifully, not only avoiding the cliché of counting sheep but also resonating with Aesop's tale of a wolf in sheep's clothing, which is maybe what the would-be sleeper recognizes in what they count. Perhaps they count the wolves at their door. Perhaps they count people (wolves) that have swindled ("fleeced") them. Or perhaps they are an insomniac wolf-enthusiast. We admire the possibilities.

THIRD PLACE

she died peacefully
according to family
whose views
she detested

Barrie Levine

The four-line form is rarely used or mastered, but it is perfect for this material. Each revelation appears in its own time. For both of us, "detested" was a surprise on initial reading. "Detest" is a strong verb, and on re-reading, it was perfect. We imagine the deceased held strong views of her own, such as excluding some or all of her family from her will. There is pleasing ambiguity: given that she detested the views of family members, they might or might not have been present at her death, they might wish they had reconciled with her before her death, they might feel guilt or regret, and they might be unreliable narrators. A rich poem.

HONORABLE MENTIONS (IN NO SPECIFIC ORDER)

x plus x
chromosomes
she loves algebra

Jerry Levy

The mixture of seriousness and lightheartedness in this senryu charmed us. Its bold use of not only the words "chromosomes" and "algebra" but also the single letter of "x"—the unknown—gave this poem expansiveness. It offers a portrait of a blossoming high school student learning about the mysteries of biology, algebra, and love. The alternate interpretation of "x" as a kiss makes us smile. One of us would have preferred this as a one-line poem to encourage a greater variety of interpretations of what is loved.

haiku gathering
a whole lot of shakuhachi
going on

John Stevenson

We love this poem's contrasting tongue-in-cheek resonance with the title of the rambunctious and popular song "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On." Many of us have attended haiku readings

introduced by a delicate shakuhachi flute, inviting us to pay attention and settle down for a session; this poem is a contrast. We also thought of gossip frothing at haiku gatherings and evenings of sake-lubricated renku parties: this poem could be describing one of those events. We applaud the sly use of the word "haiku" in a senryu; and the words "haiku" and "shakuhachi" are apt acknowledgments of our cultural heritage. This is a laugh-out-loud senryu in the longstanding humorous historical style.

horrormones

Julie Schwerin

This senryu is part of a long word-play tradition. It fully captures the jolt of hormonal meltdown one might have experienced oneself or witnessed in one's child, one's beloved, or even a stranger. The "horror" and the "moans" of embarrassment resonate with us.

2020 HSA Haibun Awards

Judged by Terri L. French and Lew Watts

We would like to thank the Haiku Society of America for the opportunity to judge this year's contest and, as importantly, all those poets who submitted haibun. With 150 haibun entries, this was certainly a bumper year, and it was an honor to be able to review such a large amount of quality work. Our approach to judging was made easier by an almost total alignment in what we were looking for. For us, the prose, haiku, and title have always been equally important—if one is weak (and we had two submissions without titles), then the haibun often fails to work.

Prose styles can vary enormously in haibun, and this was indeed the case with this year's entries, but we were particularly interested in hearing the poet's voice as well as the poem's tone and uniqueness (as an example, try reading aloud "Pandemic Power Walk," one of three honorable mentions). We sought prose that was compelling, used a variety of techniques to capture and convey emotion, and brought a sense of closure through accomplished writing. A number of this year's entries employed haiku that merely reiterated a subject or theme from the prose. Those that caught our attention, however, stepped away from the prose, but did more than simply "link and shift"—they created new space and depth to explore, often emotionally. It was clear from some entries that the title was almost an afterthought or a summary of what was to follow.

The majority of titles that appealed to us invariably "made sense" only after reading the prose and haiku in a sort of delayed "aha" moment that created yet more space. We believe the winning haibun entries show all three elements of prose, haiku, and title working with each other to create something more compelling.

FIRST PLACE

Brambles

by Chris Bays

Dusk-like darkness appears to narrow the forest path. Though noon reigns beyond the pine and oak, across the moss shadows deepen. My step-grandfather and I are searching for blackberries as we often do. He is quieter than usual as we trek downhill toward growing darkness. When I bring up the Battle of Verdun—trying to awaken stories of how he leaped from trench to trench as a messenger and watched Big Bertha cannon blast day into night—he stays silent. Even the mention of his wife, Lina—his true love—only brings the sound of shuffling feet. When we trek uphill toward some flickering light, and I say his name, "Peter," he mutters, "Who are you? Why are you talking to me?"

dark snow
the stories hidden
in a brain scan

Prose: *At its simplest level, this is a story about the writer taking a walk with their step-grandfather, a WWI war veteran. When the writer asks about their step-grandfather's experiences during the war, the veteran "stays silent," immediately creating tension for the reader. This is accentuated by the lengthened, complex sentences that follow until we arrive at the harrowing "Who are you?" There is a tragic irony here between the old man's position as a messenger in the battle of Verdun and his growing inability to receive messages in his battle with dementia. What becomes obvious on repeated readings are the literary hints to the veteran's final days, starting in the first line where the "darkness appears to narrow the . . . path." Later, the darkness grows, yet we hope, in vain, that stories can be awakened in the "flickering light." In the final piece of dialogue, this hope dies.*

Haiku: *The haiku is devastating. The link and shift from dementia takes us to dark snow—is the snow in darkness or more likely contaminated? The stories are now hidden, far from our sight, in a brain scan.*

Title: *At first sight, this simple title seems almost passive. Brambles—that rough, prickly shrub—could well apply to the old man. Yet, its tangled branches mean so much more after reading the prose and haiku. Here we see inside a tangled brain, one unable to answer or recognize, where the sweetness of blackberries is a distant memory.*

Overall: *A gem of a haibun. Although this is, unfortunately, a familiar story, the three key elements here work together to create a work of art, something greater, and more memorable.*

SECOND PLACE

Clothes To Go Out In

by Margaret Chula

My father, who cared nothing for clothes, was embalmed at the funeral home and laid out in his coffin dressed in a dark suit with a light blue shirt and perfectly-knotted tie. Still, his second wife was upset. "Where are his glasses? He doesn't look right without his glasses." When Mother died ten years later, she was wrapped in a white shroud and cremated. No elegant clothes or accessories. Even her rings were gone—removed and laid aside for her granddaughter and me. I wish I had been there to dress her in a cashmere sweater and wool pants, to wrap a matching scarf around her neck, and clip on her favorite pearl earrings. At the end, her feet were too swollen for shoes. I would have slipped on a pair of soft slippers so she could go lightly into the next world.

how easily
the snake sheds its skin
then disappears

Prose: *There are two stories in this prose—of the writer's father and mother—linked together and contrasted. We are told the father was attired for burial in a formal style of clothing he would not have chosen. Was this ordered by his second wife who, in perfect show-don't-tell, reveals so much in those two short sentences of dialogue? One can almost feel her haughty, irritated manner, with the repeat of the word "glasses."*

The writer's mother also was not dressed in death as she was in life where, we are told, she wore cashmere, a scarf, and pearls. We are left wondering why the writer was not there to dress their mother—perhaps this was how the mother chose to go. The prose leaves enough space for reader speculation.

Haiku: *Clothing, like skin, is temporary. How we "Go Out," what we leave behind, is of little significance once we are gone. The snake, after shedding its skin, is still alive—is this a hint, or hope, for the afterlife? The space created between the prose and the haiku allows for these questions and more. Our only reservation is that we wished there was more space created within the haiku through use of a cut.*

Title: *Here we have a title that sets up an expectation—perhaps a story about a fun night out—only to dash any hint of brevity in the first line of prose. The words "Go Out" work well against both prose and haiku, though part of us wished for more of an "aha," that the title had taken a further step away from the prose and haiku.*

Overall: *Very strong and compelling prose set up by an intentionally misleading title and opened up by a haiku that allows further speculations and questions.*

THIRD PLACE

Sustenance on Mulberry Lane

by Doris Lynch

"Can I breastfeed your baby?", asks my good friend, Alice, who has never had children. 'Hmmnn,' I think. 'Kristen's three months old,

will she freak out? It's a strange request, but what harm could it do?'

"Sure," I say more confidently than I feel. "But if she starts crying..."

"Of course, I'll stop right away."

fontanelle
my heart beating
in time to hers

Alice heads toward the bedroom with Kris snuggled contentedly in her arms. The baby just nursed before we came. What harm could it do? Under the poster of Santayana, I meditate on the living room rug. A sparrow flies to the window and taps the metal of the windchime, once, twice, a beautiful pinging sound. Searching for food also?

bedroom chortle
two spots spread
across my blouse

Prose: *Straight away, we're taken off guard by the strangeness of the request from the writer's friend. What sustenance can the baby receive suckling a non-lactating breast—can this really be called "breastfeeding?" Or, unsettling as this may seem, is Alice the one having her needs met, gaining substance from the baby? The mother's discomfort is palpable—the self-question "What harm could it do?" is repeated (the first should be "can it do"), and again, we ask who could be harming whom? Two small quibbles: The Santayana poster is interesting, but not explored. Finally, we wish the prose ended with "pinging sound." The search for food is implied.*

Haiku: *The two haiku work well with the prose, albeit with little space created. We particularly like the contrast between the two haiku—in the first, the bonding of mother and child, and in the second, the separation of mother and child.*

Title: *We found ourselves taken in immediately by the title—"Sustenance" seemed a strange word choice, and we wanted to know more. Yet this strangeness also worked to negate any expectations of the prose—in other words, the story wasn't telegraphed, even though, in retrospect, the title was indeed descriptive. The "aha" for us was in leaving open who was being sustained.*

Overall: *"Sustenance on Mulberry Lane" is a well-constructed haibun centered on a strange episode and told in a way that amplifies ambiguities and questions.*

HONORABLE MENTIONS (IN NO SPECIFIC ORDER)

Winter Chill

by Margaret Chula

Omitsu's comb cracks beneath Buson's bare feet, leaving an imprint on his heel and a dent in the tatami. So here it is, his wife's treasured boxwood comb with hand-cut teeth and inlays of pearl. Shaped into a sickle, it glowed like moonlight in her dark hair. The comb must have slipped out as she lay dying, her tresses tangled—not from lovemaking—but from delirium.

Buson cradles the broken comb in his palm. Inhales the scent of camellia oil. He gently begins to remove the long black hairs snarled in the teeth. Wrapping them in a cloth, he carries them outside into the garden, the garden that gave them so much pleasure through every season. Kneeling on the cold ground, he arranges his dead wife's hair—strand by strand—into the character for love. Black against white in the new snow.

deadwood
a crow carries back twigs
to build its nest

The Car in the Petrol Station Lot

by Matthew Caretti

The old Toyota hatchback never leaves its space. The spot next to the restrooms, nestled close to the chipped and graffitied wall. Hoarding the nighttime shadow. The daytime shade. This is when she sleeps. Hidden behind foil-faced sunshields. Behind the peeling film of tinted windows cracked just enough.

spring rain
the puddling
of old asphalt

The weeds grow through the granulating tarmac. Encroach from the verge. Tangle into the wheels. Match the rusted coil springs in their helical ascent. Just as the old car sprouts odd sunset shadows, she emerges to wash herself in the restroom. To stroll the narrow alleys between nearby shops. To visit her favorite 24-hour mamak.

the neatness of clouds
scooping rice and dahl
her hennaed hands

This is where we first met. Or where I first glimpsed her and she caught me glimpsing. Then some weeks later where we first shared a smile, rising simultaneously from our plastic stools to depart. No words and different destinations, yet a lingering smile. But from my flat's balcony, I caught sight of her again. Connected her with the old Toyota. And later to the métier she there practices.

coupling
the lone jetliner
tows in the storm

Since then, we have crossed paths more regularly, as if my discovery of her trade in midnight visitors has connected us in some way.

We pass in alleyways that are familiar to us both. And at that same mamak. Her light skin and almond eyes suggest a Peranakan lineage, but her dress and adornment are loosely Tamil. Whatever her ethnicity, she pulses the world around her with her presence. The metric foot of her life an iamb to be sure—the grandeur of her beauty preceded by the dull ache in my heart.

half stolen
by the morning sky
lovers' moon

NOTES: *Mamak are open-air food establishments serving a unique Indian-Malaysian cuisine. Peranakans are an interracial ethnic group descended from the first Chinese settlers on the Malay Peninsula.*

Pandemic Power Walk

by Jennifer Hambrick

concrete sidewalk grid of tree-lined days all out of phase
in droplet haze lives stopped cold on hold behind closed doors
walk through the neighborhood past locked-up park past school gone dark
to worn dirt trail break a sweat behind a mask of cotton caution
jet black sneakers kick up dirt heart beats fast mop up sweat
walk and walk earbud talk of healthcare mess don't get sick
old man leans on walking stick walk faster faster
don't get sick walk faster walk around through graveyard
still with cold hard ground with death-mask grin around again again
kick buckets of dirt sweaty mask sweaty shirt breathing fast
and hard and heavy through that mask through that mask
we might just live
forever

empty street
a family of deer
keeping their distance

2021 HSA Merit Book Awards
For Books Published in 2020

Judged by Ce Rosenow and Bryan Rickert

We would like to express our appreciation for all the poets who sent in their books. It was our delight to be able to read such fine work. Due to the large volume of quality submissions, it was incredibly difficult to decide on whom to award the praise. It was indeed a great year for high-quality haiku books.

HAIKU FIRST PLACE

***The Years That Went Missing* by Susan Antolin**
(Backbone Press, Durham, NC: 2020)

Every poem in Susan Antolin's *The Years That Went Missing* is of exceptional quality. Not a single poem in this collection can be seen as filler. Every poem, in sequence, creates a seamless rhythm and tone that pulls us through the book with ease. Yet, at the same time, many of the poems arrest us and make us linger more in the depths of their meaning. This book demands multiple readings and delivers something new time and time again.

HAIKU SECOND PLACE

***Cricket Dust* by Carolyn Hall**
(Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2020)

Carolyn Hall once again amazes the reader with the skills of a poet who has been creating beautiful haiku for decades. With poems that are deceptively simple, yet profoundly revealing, *Cricket Dust* opens our eyes to the multiple meanings short poems have and to the clarity and precision of the haiku moment.

HAIKU THIRD PLACE

***Light Packing* by Elmedin Kadric**
(Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2020)

In this collection, Elmedin Kadric opens the reader to exploring new avenues of expression in the nature of haiku and the nature of being a poet. With innovative and unique juxtapositions, *Light Packing* takes us on a journey through the familiar in a new and unfamiliar way.

HAIKU HONORABLE MENTIONS (IN NO SPECIFIC ORDER)

***Her Fading Henna Tattoo* by Hifsa Ashraf**
(Human/Kind Press, Wilmington, DE: 2020)

Her Fading Henna Tattoo is an important book that uses well-crafted haiku to address domestic violence and give a voice to those who often have none. Ashraf's book could be mistaken as addressing a situation limited to another culture; however, in truth, these poems delve into the stark reality of many women all around the globe.

***In the Curves* by Alan S. Bridges**
(Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2020)

Alan Bridges's exceptional book *In the Curves* gives the reader a delightful collection of unique and well-written haiku. His concise and direct style opens us to haiku moments that reflect a wide variety of life experiences.

The Language of Loss Haiku & Tanka Conversations
by Debbie Strange (Sable Books, Greensboro, NC: 2020)

True to its name, Debbie Strange's *The Language of Loss* explores the many facets of loss and survival using both haiku and tanka. One

haiku and one tanka are paired beautifully on every page. Never predictable and always revealing, this book delivers consistent quality from start to finish.

HAIBUN FIRST PLACE

***Pilgrimage* by Keith Polette**
(Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2020)

Keith Polette's *Pilgrimage* is filled with intensity, imagery, and artistry. He draws us into his work using descriptive and poetic language, making us feel the moment with all our senses and immersing us into a fantastic and sometimes surreal world. It is an excellent collection of haibun.

HAIBUN HONORABLE MENTION

***Journey* by Zane Parks**
(Lulu.com: 2020)

Zane Park's *Journey* is a fun and insightful exploration of one man and his life. Told in vignettes, these haibun, when put together, tell us a greater story about the author that is unique yet touches on many universal truths and situations of love, life, and family.

ANTHOLOGY FIRST PLACE

The Haiku Hecameron: Gratitude in the Time of COVID-19
edited by Scott Mason (Girasole Press, Chappaqua, NY: 2020)

During the tough beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Scott Mason's idea to produce a collection of work that focuses on haiku moments of gratitude produced a collection that will likely become timeless. *Gratitude in the Time of COVID-19* is not simply a

collection of COVID-19 poetry, but a collection of poems about all the things that have sustained us through the pandemic. It is certain Scott Mason did not know that, nearly a year since the book's release, this pandemic would still not be over, and we the poets and the readers would still be searching for safe harbor in these rough waters.

ANTHOLOGY SECOND PLACE

Wind Flowers: The Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku **edited by Jim Kacian & the Red Moon Editorial Staff (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2020)**

The yearly release of *The Red Moon Anthology of English Language Haiku* has become a must-read tradition and continues to provide the reader with an amazing sampling of the finest haiku, haibun, and essays from any given year. This release, consisting of works from 2019, is no exception.

ANTHOLOGY THIRD PLACE

Haiku 2020 **edited by Lee Gurga and Scott Metz (Modern Haiku Press, Champaign, IL: 2020)**

This is a small and compact collection of work that certainly packs a punch. No fluff and no filler, this anthology presents the more avant-garde realm of haiku today and gives us a sample of what has become a consistent approach to haiku in the past two decades.

ANTHOLOGY HONORABLE MENTIONS (NO SPECIFIC ORDER)

The Wanderer Brush **edited with haiga by Ion Codrescu (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2020)**

Ion Codrescu's book *The Wanderer Brush* is an eclectic, global anthology that not only includes haiga but critical insights into, and information

about, the poets themselves. The stunning calligraphy and inkwork bring the fine poems to life in new and unimaginable ways.

All This Talk edited by Charles Trumbull (Yuki Teikei Haiku Society, San Jose, CA: 2020)

All This Talk gives us a wonderful and well-rounded look into the Yuki Teikei Haiku Society (YTHS). With beautiful haiku, haiga, and articles, this inviting anthology chronicles a year in the life of a thriving haiku community and its members. The historically significant overview of the Society's annual retreat at Asilomar is a wonderful way to cap this celebration of YTHS's forty-fifth anniversary.

2021 HSA Haiku Awards

Judged by Julie Schwerin and George Swede

FIRST PLACE

a year at most . . .
we pretend to watch
the hummingbirds

Tom Bierovic

A poem which juxtaposes the human condition with one of nature's small wonders and leaves room for the reader to experience at once both the despondency and the joy.

365 days can be too long to feel real urgency, yet not long enough to accomplish all one had hoped. The slipperiness of time and the futility of it can result in a paralysis of sorts. What does it matter what I do? Is it worth it? Did I accomplish anything worthwhile while I was here? Will I be remembered? How will I be remembered? Is there more? It is the wonder of haiku that ten simple words can lead to such existential questions and ponderings. The ellipsis at the end of line one allows the reader to pause and consider these questions along with the poet.

The second line is intriguing, as well. "we pretend to watch." The reader is not told who "we" is or why they are pretending or who they are pretending for. This is the openness that allows the reader to enter in and fill in the blanks. For me, it was my mother's terminal diagnosis with pancreatic cancer. Conversations with my parents and brothers had come full circle. There were times it felt as if we said all that could be said, and to avoid re-treading the same conversational ground, we turned our attention to other

things; sometimes a television show or a sporting event or the dog's antics. Well, I know it wasn't really my attention. I would stare in one general direction, but would be so deep in thought that I saw nothing. Yes, it could be said I was pretending. And we all pretended not to know the others were pretending, too.

How striking to juxtapose this state of numbness and inactivity with hummingbirds; little birds who lives in the fastlane with 1,260 heartbeats per minute, whose lifespan is only five years, whose days are spent flitting from one food source to another just to survive. I imagine as the poet watches the activity at a feeder or flowers, he reflects on the times he spent bustling here and there, filling his time with activities and distractions so as to avoid the big questions. A terminal diagnosis, whether our own or a loved one's, has a way of placing things in perspective. Faced with the unthinkable, sometimes all we can do is watch the world go by, realizing for the first time perhaps that it will keep going even after we are gone. —*Julie Schwerin*

SECOND PLACE

Mars landing—
cardboard softens
the subway grate

Scott Mason

What makes a good haiku? Foremost is an unexpected juxtaposition that creates wonder. Next is aptly-chosen vocabulary. "Mars landing" possesses these qualities. This second-place haiku surprises us with an association between an element of nature (Mars) and poverty (homelessness), thereby making us question where our resources should go—for rockets or to the unfortunate among us. —*George Swede*

THIRD PLACE (TIE)

daisies—
learning to live
in a crowd again

Tony Williams

"daisies" also possesses the qualities of a great haiku and belongs on the podium. This haiku reveals an unforeseen association between daisies and the human need for the company of others, thus reminding us how the COVID isolation caused mental health problems for many. —*George Swede*

THIRD PLACE (TIE)

open meadow
a monarch hinges
on a milkweed

Brad Bennett

A timely and important poem for our days. This haiku seems to hinge on the word "hinge" in the middle of the poem. What a delightful verb and gentle wordplay. The poet presents a strong visual image of the monarch's wings opening and closing. Perhaps it has just emerged from its chrysalis and is drying its wings, pumping fluid into them, gathering warmth from the sunlight. As milkweed provides the primary food source for monarchs in their larva stage, one can literally say that their very existence hinges on milkweed. There seems to be a gentle nod to the butterfly effect in this poem, as well. The butterfly effect is a property of chaotic systems (such as the atmosphere) by which small changes in initial conditions can lead to large-scale and unpredictable variation in the future state of the system. The concept is imagined with

a butterfly flapping its wings and causing a typhoon. In this case, the loss of open spaces leads to the loss of milkweed, and subsequently, the loss of monarchs which we know are wildflower pollinators and an important food source for birds, small animals, and other insects. The decrease of monarchs parallels other declining pollinator populations, which in turn impacts human food systems and our planetary health. I can't help but hear an echo of William Carlos Williams, as well; so much depends upon a milkweed plant. —*Julie Schwerin*

HONORABLE MENTIONS (IN NO SPECIFIC ORDER)

blossom to blossom
a bee tips the fate
of the world

June Rose Dowis

There is an immediacy and freshness in the movement in this poem. And similar to our third-place winner above, this poem suggests that the fate of the world and the food we eat rests in a honey bee's pollination. As bees are found on every continent except for Antarctica, in every habitat on the planet that contains insect-pollinated flowering plants, this is hardly an exaggeration. —*Julie Schwerin*

sand dollars
all that's left of
her summer job

Margaret Tau

A tongue-in-cheek reference to Bashō's "summer grasses" poem, "summer grasses / all that remains / of soldier's dreams." Perhaps the subject of this poem was a lifeguard or concession worker or part of the beach maintenance staff. Regardless, the job was temporary

and likely didn't pay much. There is something refreshing in being completely spent at the end of summer, but still holding a wealth of memories. —*Julie Schwerin*

whether or not you forgive me—forget-me-nots

Laurie D. Morrissey

I appreciate the proximity of "forgive" to "forget" and the space in the poem for hard choices. I feel a bit of hope knowing that forget-me-nots are self seeders. Whether or not they are intentionally replanted, they will likely be back next spring regardless to serve as a reminder and perhaps a second chance at forgiveness. —*Julie Schwerin*

2021 HSA Senryu Awards

Judged by Kelly Sauvage and Mike Rehling

When asked to judge the Brady Senryu Contest, we were both thrilled—for both the honor of being selected as judges and to have the pleasure of reading the high quality of senryu submitted to HSA contests over the many decades. We were not disappointed! It was very hard to select from the over seven hundred poems submitted. We enjoyed reading them, and the variety of topics covered was amazing. It was tough to winnow the entries down to the list below. Thanks to all of the poets for submitting your best work to this year's contest.

FIRST PLACE

brooding
over world events
cicadas

Amy Losak

Among the multitudinous aspects of senryu that capture our imagination and affirm our existence on this planet, it is the form's invitation to see ourselves as a part of nature rather than apart from it that the poet brings to life in this year's top entry. By juxtaposing the universal concern over "world events," the historic challenges presented by COVID, social justice violations, political tensions, etc., with the emergence of Brood X, we recognize that we are not the only species experiencing flux.

With the word "brooding" in the first line serving as a uniquely-placed pivot, we begin the poem cogitating upon our own concerns, only to find ourselves surprised by a masterfully-executed double meaning pertaining to the life cycle of cicadas. However, it is the humor accompanying the surprise that humbles us and puts into perspective the interdependent nature of life on Earth.

The economy of language implemented here also enhances the power of this poem. The poet refrains from explanation, diatribe, or sentimentality, allowing us to discover on our own this depth of connection amid trying times and to embrace a bit of much-needed levity. These five words are a gift that will not soon be forgotten.

SECOND PLACE

rainbow flag
there is no color
for who I am

Alvin B. Cruz

The poet shares a moment of epiphany and reflection that provides a space for everyone to grow into. Buddha said, "Know who you are; be what you know." The first step to freeing others of preconceptions is to free yourself in the same way. We are all unique and yet all of us are connected in a universe where the smallest of things are part of the limitless whole. This poem invites us all to be ourselves and accept fully everyone else on this small planet we inhabit. It often may seem like an unattainable mission, but it is one we must take for ourselves as well as others to be free of the delusion of differences.

THIRD PLACE

home movie
my parents mute
the sex scene

Spyros Mylonas

Watching movies at home with mom and dad. Even as we grow older, they still make moves to protect us from some very inevitable

truths. In this poem, though, are we watching movies created of family events? Has the presentation entered an unexpected area that the parents had forgotten about?

HONORABLE MENTIONS (IN NO SPECIFIC ORDER)

another fight—
the roses from last time
still blooming

Greg Schwartz

conspiracy theories why you won't return my calls

kjmunro

crushed by guilt
cicadas

Amelia Cotter

election night seabirds switch to the other landfill

Matthew Markworth

estate sale
a bargain
on bedpans

Spyros Mylonas

falling leaves
the unexpected weight
of her ashes

Helen Ogden

travel ban
I stroke her hair
with my cursor

Alan S. Bridges

world hunger
the emptiness
of emojis

June Rose Dowis

2021 HSA Haibun Awards

Judged by Margaret Chula and Bob Lucky

We received a record 173 entries this year, which shows an increased interest in writing haibun. Submissions in this year's haibun contest included everything from rhymed quatrains and rap to free verse and prose poetry, from flash fiction to brief travel accounts. Our process was slow and thorough. We had the added challenge of being in different times zones—the Pacific NW and Portugal—eight hours apart.

We were both in agreement on the necessity for synergy between the prose and haiku, as well as the importance of a unifying title. For the prose, we looked for a unique voice and emotional resonance. For example, we were impressed by the short dialogue at the end of "Air," which enlivened the prose. Present tense can also bring a sense of immediacy, inviting the reader into your story. Using strong verbs and a few well-chosen adjectives also serve to create effective prose. Nouns that do double duty, such as "bristlecone" and "lobelia," bring other associations to mind. All the haiku in the winning haibun contained a reference to nature. They expertly shifted away from the prose, adding new meaning to the narrative.

Interestingly, all three of the top prize winners had one-word titles. After re-reading the entries several times, we each compiled a shortlist of fifteen. Happily, many of our choices overlapped. We then winnowed it down to eight and defended the ones we differed on. The top three winners changed daily. In the end, we chose haibun that we found ourselves returning to for enrichment, insight, or pleasure.

We would like to thank the Haiku Society of America for inviting us to judge this contest and Chuck Brickley who guided us through the process. Most importantly, we would like to thank all of you

who offered your haibun to be judged—an act of courage and trust that we admire.

FIRST PLACE

Afterlife

by Dru Philippou

I always take good care of them, removing the laces and brushing off the dirt with a soft bristle brush. Applying beeswax paste with the back of a spoon, I smooth it into the leather cracks until their espresso color revives. I give the gusseted tongue special attention, reaching those hidden places, and opening the boots fully to air.

resting
under a bristlecone pine . . .
weighing my options

I wear them after the traction is gone, trying to beat out a few more miles although I can feel every rock, every stick through the rubber. On rainy days, the mud sucks them off my feet. The paleness at the toes reminds me of all those steps kicked into the slopes. They are holey, misshapen, speckled with guano, but I don't want to let them go. At one point, I even re-glue the parting sole.

boot planter
the heavenly blue
of rambling lobelia

Prose: *"Afterlife" begins with activity: the loving care given to the boots. Each prose segment ends with a strong image. "Opening the boots fully to air" resonates in the final haiku when we learn that the boot has become an outdoor planter. Word play on the phrase "parting sole" brings to mind "departed soul." The spare and focused description of the boots evokes all our senses.*

Haiku: *After the activity of the prose, the first haiku begins with "resting," which takes place in an outdoor setting. Bristlecone pine, known for its long life in harsh conditions, is an excellent choice of tree. "Weighing my options" refers to the writer's indecision—whether it's to get rid of the boots or deciding which way to go. The final haiku offers a surprising shift—the metamorphosis of the boot into a planter. Once again being of service, but now to the beautiful ("heavenly blue," hinting at an afterlife) lobelia. Lobelia is a climbing plant and the boot enables it to ramble, as it once did for the owner.*

Title: *"Afterlife" intentionally misleads the reader to imagine a person when it's actually about the life (and afterlife) of a boot. This succinct one-word title is perfectly chosen to illustrate its meaning of "a period of continued or renewed use."*

SECOND PLACE

Roulette

by Barbara Sabol

When I was nine, our extended family traveled to visit my great aunt and uncle. My cousin, Mary Ann, a year younger, and my best friend, explored the house with me—closets, storage cubbies, basement recesses.

cloud cover
hollowing into the bole
in Pop's old oak

I drew open the top drawer of a large bureau in the bedroom we shared. Under a chamois cloth lay a pistol. Large, black, gleaming.

The curved handle shaped to a palm's grip.

Wide-eyed, we looked at each other. I reached in and lifted it. The

gun's unexpected weight in my small hand yanked my arm. Then the shot. A throbbing silence spread in concentric circles.

Even when my uncle came running naked from the shower, shock-faced, yelling, I heard only the bullet's echo. Mary Ann and I stood frozen.

The gun in a slow spin between us on the hard wood floor.

after the storm
the whip crack of thunder
pulses the air

Prose: *The opening prose establishes the young girls' innocent search for adventure and their fascination for the forbidden. The drama unfolds in cinematic scenes of discovery, leaving us to wonder what they will find next. Once they find the gun, we know from Chekhov's dramatic principle that it has to go off. And it does. The prose ends with the dropped gun spinning on the floor between the girls as we, too, hold our breaths.*

Haiku: *Both haiku are strong and can easily stand alone. The first one takes us outdoors to a hidden place in nature (the oak bole). This exceptional, haiku links both visually and emotionally to the dark, interior places the girls have explored in the house. It is also foreboding, foreshadowing what's to come. In the final haiku, we are outside again, where nature's own drama is taking place. That sound of the gunshot reverberates in the "whip crack" of thunder.*

Title: *Once again, a title that sets up an expectation and then surprises us. "Roulette" brings to mind a casino and a gambling game, people making bets on where the ball will drop. But once the gun goes off, the story takes on a darker context. Russian roulette. We know that one bullet's already gone off—but is there another? Neither the girls nor the reader know, which adds to the suspense.*

THIRD PLACE

Air

by Jennifer Hambrick

Sunset angles grays and golds on the sterile white walls. A thin plastic tube drapes off the bed and glows for a moment in the sinking light. Amid a cluster of drooping mylar balloons, a monitor keeps vigil in a mantra of beeps.

She lies napping in a deep slot, blankets billowed around her. Watching her chest rise and fall with each breath, I realize I've been holding my own breath in fear.

What must her life have been like? Ninety-four years of bouncing babies and wiping noses and cooking meals, of baking casseroles for church potlucks and organizing bake sales, of knitting Christmas stockings and making birthday cakes and going to her children's weddings and their children's weddings and bouncing more and more babies through the generations. It's unfair, cruel even, that all of it — every tear wiped and skinned knee kissed, every family photograph and precious moment, all that love and time and, heaven help her, patience — must come to this withered evening in an overheated hospital room.

dusk
snipping the last thread
of the story quilt

Her eyes open, flicker a few times, then land on me. I stand up from the Naugahyde lounger and step to the side of her bed.

"You had a nice snooze there, Gran," I say, wiping the tears that rim my eyes. "How are you feeling?"

She jerks her head up off the pillow.

"Are you still here?" she blurts. "What are you still doing here? What am I still doing here?"

I watch gape-mouthed as she drops back down onto the pillow and rocks her head from side to side.

"Jeez-o-Pete, let's get on with it," she croaks. "I never thought I'd be alive this long."

end of autumn
a child lets go
of a balloon string

Prose: *"Air" begins with a depressing scene of a sick room, watching a grandmother sleeping as dusk falls. The description is a bit long and repetitive, but perhaps it's meant to illustrate her long and ordinary life. The prose comes alive with the dialogue between the speaker and the dying woman—the irony of her asking "Are you still here?" and the outdated expression "Jeez-o-Pete" illustrate the personality of this still-feisty woman.*

Haiku: *The "story quilt" is finished as the grandmother's story comes to an end. An apropos haiku as quilts are often made for hospice patients to comfort them in their final days. Evidently, someone made a quilt with remembrances of her long life. The "drooping balloons" in the sickroom at the beginning are finally released into the sky, a metaphor for the grandmother's release from suffering and the speaker's letting go as the haibun comes full circle.*

Title: *Air appears throughout the haibun: as a plastic oxygen tube, in the rise and fall of the grandmother's breath, in the held breath of the narrator, and, at the end, as the wind that carries the balloon into the sky. This haibun is an example of how a mundane title can expand through well-written prose and haiku.*

HONORABLE MENTIONS (IN NO SPECIFIC ORDER)

Dragon Boat

by J Hahn Doleman

"Stretch out!" The drummer's elongated vowels sweep across the water, her voice filling the humid air. Bending forward with arms extended, I plunge my paddle into the lake. Somewhere beneath us swims the spirit of exiled Chinese poet Qu Yuan.

sweet sedge swirls
in the churned up mud
my reflection

"Reach for it!" The drummer's job is to keep the rhythm flowing, to ensure an equal balance of power. The team's objective is to hover the hull just below the waterline while propelling it forward. A difficult task when loaded down with 22 bodies, each weighing between 120 and 250 pounds. "Stroke! Stroke! Stroke!"

warm breeze
a damselfly floats
across our bow

"Lift! Pull! Lift!" All around me my teammates are a blur of heads and torsos. We draw our handles along the gunwales, gouging perfect furrows into the surface, then raise our blades straight up and out of the water, only to repeat the cycle, over and over, long after our shoulders go numb. "Dig in! Deeper!"

shimmery shore
the form of a cormorant
drying her wings

"Paddles up!" When the drummer finally gives the call to rest,

there is an eruption of whoops followed by sighs and laughter from everyone. As our wooden skiff slips past a pocket of reeds, I listen to the ripples recede and expand and watch the wake behind us fold back into itself.

gliding through
the reflection of sky
a golden carp

Hungarian Rhapsody

by Matthew Caretti

I arrive in Budapest. Just before New Year's Eve. But the pandemic has taken its toll. Instead of fireworks, chimney smoke. We wake to the sag of wet confetti. Decide on a walk to shake out the remaining cloud of palinka.

noon bells losing count of the steeples

On the way out, we pocket spare coins for the beggars. Head to the underground. Just one old man in the car. Reading the Bible. Then up St. Gellert's Hill. Lichen on rock provides an old map of the new city. A distant streetcar moves amber into twilight clouds.

winter rain shortcuts through the dark city

Weeks pass. Months. Then a warm wind through sere branches brings the hope of spring. We discover more parks during our urban treks. The city sun twisting an old birch into long shadows. Six million leaves on the elm. I lose count. Again.

after the snowdrops spring

We listen to Swan Lake. The Balaton becomes a thought. A reality, despite winter's brief reprise. Some brave locals go for a polar

bear swim, while their dogs demur. Even with the cold and the re-imposed lockdown, the business of ducks here is still afloat.

she points out mute swans mate for life

Mornings on the lake are still. Only swan bottoms bobbing. After the village stop, a train tilts toward tomorrow. Merges with a flock low over the lake. Pulls with it my thoughts. Of the almond blossoming and how her father moves to restore the old shaker.

tumbling down from the pine lithe shadows

All around there is renewed work. With the harvesting of thatch and the labor of spring moles. Basalt cobbles slick in spring rain lead to the vineyards. The tending. I rouse myself from this long slumber. Organize a bike. Late onto the path, I ride into my breath.

twilight language the slow roost of rooks

What Hides Beneath

by Marietta McGregor

sparrow-pecked chisel cuts a thief's cipher

Between my aunt's house and an empty reservoir stands an electricity substation, its walls slung with liana tangles of high-voltage wires studded with insulators like exotic fruit. The whole thing drones, a steady low-voiced monotone. Beyond it, the reservoir lies hollow and echoing, its stone-flagged floor littered with broken glass, split tennis balls and other trash. Slime-green seepage graffities walls of monumental sandstone blocks quarried and shaped by convicts. A rusted metal ladder hangs by an arm from one side like a half-drowned swimmer. After school I hear shouts and *pock-thwacks* of balls bouncing off the reservoir's walls. I ask if I can go and play too. My childless aunt and uncle are

protective. No, they say – a bad place. The reservoir once held water pumped from Hobart Rivulet for a prison settlement. Until British troops dispossessed and slaughtered Tasmania's Palawa people, the stream was for thousands of years a migratory trail and fresh water source for the South East Mouheneenner band.

as if yearning to belong bunched catkins

Some days we walk along Cascade Road. Sparks crackle from overhead wires of trolley buses that trundle past the substation, making us jump. In English cottage gardens shaded by silver birch trees, climbing Black Boy roses blossom purple-bruise dark over white picket fences. At nightfall when buses stop the valley goes silent, save for downslope winds off Mount Wellington keening like lonely ghosts in the substation's lines and transformers. Fast forward half a century. Electric trolley buses are gone, substation demolished. A badminton centre rises over the reservoir's shell. Its concrete vault resounds to grunts and *pop-pops* of whacked shuttlecocks. But the reservoir has the last say. Rising damp warps the playing courts' floors. The sports centre closes. There's talk of a rebuild with a viewing window onto the colonial sandstone walls. An interpretive display highlighting the skills of convict masons. No mention of the Mouheneenner. No one says *genocide*.

bare winter skies a high tension of ravens

2021 HSA Rengay Awards

Judged by John Thompson and Jacquie Pearce

It was a pleasure reading through the 44 rengay submitted in this second year of the HSA Rengay Contest in honor of Garry Gay. We were delighted with the many strong and intriguing sequences. The difficulty in our task came in narrowing down and selecting the winners. Although several rengay rose to the surface as our personal favorites, the quality of those not selected was also very high.

What made our top rengay choices stand out was originality and consistency of theme, as well as strong individual verses that worked together to create a single poem with a flowing sense of movement, or arc. We also looked for sequences that contained more than one theme, which engaged us intellectually and emotionally and which deepened with each subsequent reading.

FIRST PLACE

Plein Air
by Joan Fingon and *Orense Nicod*

first rays of light
through ripening raspberries
mixing colors

palette of blue
six eggs in a robin's nest

thunder showers
stippled droplets on roses
watercolor scent

charcoal smudges
in sunlit storm clouds
a fingerprint

staccato reflections
beneath my brush sounds of rain

so full
the moon among shadows
my inkwell spills

This winning rengay engages all the senses while seamlessly weaving together several themes. There is a sense of gradually accumulating colors and nature images observed throughout the day as the artist adds paint and brushstrokes to the progressing painting, as well as movement from sunlight into rain, from morning to night, and from light to building darkness. But it is not an ominous darkness (at least not in our interpretation). In the final verse, "so full" seems to refer to more than the moon. There is a sense that the inkwell is full and spilling over, and the artist/poet is also joyfully full and brimming over with the day's experiences and the creative process. The act of seeing and creating becomes a kind of light in the darkness, or a "fingerprint" on storm clouds. The verses work individually and also link and shift to compel the reader through the almost cinematic story of an artist's day of outdoor painting.

SECOND PLACE

Bending the Light
by Julie Schwerin and *Angela Terry*

holding back tears
the fullness
of a gibbous moon

those ghosts I know
I have to live with

the orchid stems
after the bloom
longest night

each star
as if second chances
were real

the bend of light
through water

morning as it opens
a new window
of hope

This rengay took us on an emotional journey, moving us through a long night of tears, loss, and self-reflection into the first light of morning and a new sense of hope. What caused the poets' pain is left unsaid, which leaves room for readers to layer their own experiences into the rengay. We recognize and respond to the emotional struggle, which has the capacity to empty us and also fill us with a new awareness and appreciation for life. The voices in this rengay blend gracefully together as they explore and affirm the personal and universal experience of deep grieving and recovery. The mystery and haunting quality of the writing and imagery also tempers the darkness, showing us that we need shadows to recognize the light.

THIRD PLACE

Perseverance
by Deborah P Kolodji and *Billie Dee*

backyard bird call
Perseverance
lands on Mars

blast of solar wind
the dank of withered reeds

Venusian clouds
a biplane circles
the sky above me

the half-moon betta
sipping air
Europa's hidden seas

cardinals at the feeder
snowfall on Pluto

Kepler's star
the iron in my blood
blood red

This audacious dual-theme rengay stretches our imaginations across the universe, yet at the same time keeps us firmly grounded on our home planet—a brilliant mix of science and poetics full of intriguing leaps and links. The verses combine an objective scientific tone with underlying emotional tensions associated with the contemplation of the diverse possibilities of life. There is also a sense of playfulness with the surprising comparisons and images. "Venusian clouds" are juxtaposed with a circling biplane, an already antiquated technology that represents one of the first steps in our reach for the stars. A fish with a stellar-sounding name (a "half-moon betta") leaves its water environment to momentarily "sip air," perhaps suggesting that we are like fish out of water in our journey into space, or that there may be mysteries to uncover in the hidden seas of Jupiter's moon. At the same time, it subtly reminds us (whether intentionally or not) of our own evolutionary history of arising from the sea, evoking a sense that we are just at the beginning of our journey. The rengay concludes with "Kepler's star," a supernova that would have produced heat and chaos so intense it may have created new elements such as iron, which is a basic part of our bodies and of our environment (used in the

creation of tools of war and other technology). The references to "iron" and "blood" (with its red color and associations with blood-loss) return us to Mars, the planet of the first verse, and the god of war. Chaos can either be an end or a beginning. Perhaps, as we reach for the stars, we need to recognize that the stuff of stars is already here around us and inside us.

HONORABLE MENTIONS (IN NO SPECIFIC ORDER)

There were so many strong rengay, we felt unable to limit the honorable mentions to just three. We selected five equally compelling rengay and could easily have included two or three others. While we were not asked to comment on the honorable mentions, we wanted to honor each one with a few words.

A Fading Memory

by Marilyn Ashbaugh and *Jeanne Cook*

pen and paper
not where i left them
forget-me-nots

a word for maple seeds
takes flight

her face
so familiar
rosemary or lavender

our day
to visit cherry blossoms
missing keys

dandelion clock
time drifts away

thieving sprites
borrow my bouquets
twilight thickens

A poignant yet playful handling of the theme of memory loss, which allows the reader to engage deeper by reading between the lines, laughing at ourselves in recognition and sympathy.

Embodiment
by Lori A Minor and *Joshua Gage*

solstice moon
his planchette roams
my ouija board

each kiss summons ghosts
from the secrets of her curves

endless moans
the rise and fall
of our sheet

deepening shadows
the lights flicker
to our rhythms

on the wall
handprints linger

shuddering orgasms . . .
we exorcise
our inhibitions

Splices together supernatural motifs with a sexual encounter, both building to a parallel "climax"—campy fun, full of smart wordplay and double entendre.

Golden Joinery
by Kristen Lindquist and *Alan S. Bridges*

the path we follow
marked with deer droppings
first moccasin flowers

seed bombing
a vacant lot

rosy sunset
clouds above the smokestacks
just clouds

the warmth
of the Earth on our backs
Lyrid meteors

a trash bag bulging
with roadside returnables

kintsugi
piecing our broken world
back together

An insightful theme of beauty and positive actions emerging out of negative, following the metaphor of the Japanese tradition of mending broken pottery with gold. A lovely concluding haiku that emphasizes the theme.

Letting Go
by Carol Judkins and *Lorraine A. Padden*

apron strings
the tender undoing
of knots

his kite unfurls
in the wind

spring break
sailboats on the bay
meander at cruising speed

macrame hammock
the shape of a day
measured in margaritas

water rings
on the burlwood table

enough for dinner
he loosens the slipknot
on the smallest perch

Clever and subtle insertion of the "knot" theme into each verse (including knots in string, wood, and boat speed) while giving a sense of a life moving from childhood through youthful independence to a kind of maturity as the adult lets the small fish go.

The Eye of a Loon
by Kristen Lindquist and *Alan S. Bridges*

spring in the blood
a spruce grouse drums
on a mossy log

abandoned orchard
sap wells ring an apple tree

wild strawberries
the waxwings have left
a mouthful

in breeding plumage
a scarlet tanager sings
in the canopy

two cranes bend their heads
to the fresh-cut hayfield

a long yodel
the autumn sun sets
in the eye of a loon

Very strong nature haiku focusing on birds through the seasons of spring to autumn, subtly threading the color red through the verses with a skillful and rich use of language, rhythm and word sounds.

Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY RANDY BROOKS

Witness Tree *haiku by paul m. (Snapshot Press, Ormskirk, UK: 2020). 96 pages, 5" x 7.75". Two-color card covers, perfect bound. ISBN 9781-903543-51-1. Available from snapshotpress.co.uk or $20 USD from the author at modernhaiku@gmail.com.*

An experienced author and editor of *Modern Haiku* magazine, it is not surprising that Paul Miller has a clearly-established understanding of his own approach. This is his eighth collection, and in the introduction to *witness tree*, he explains:

> While haiku can be speculative, or even surreal, my haiku tend toward the realistic. The simple explanation is that I continue to be awed by the world we inhabit, with its subtle relationships, emphasis on the present moment, and personal meaning. I intend my poetry to be a bridge—a way to reconcile myself to a larger creative nature.

Make no mistake, these are not merely nature poems. They are miniature stories bearing witness to life. Miller's haiku are chronicles of interaction with nature. For example, feel the enthusiastic urgency in this haiku:

> daffodil tips
> the tensions
> in her leash

And the sense of discovery in this one:

> with a hop
> a tree frog reveals itself
> glacial valley

This haiku starts with the tree frog hop, but expands into the life of the valley, shaped eons ago by a glacier.

Other times, Miller chronicles a more immediate change:

honeybee
acre after acre
of burned forest

In the introduction of *witness tree*, Miller explains that he seeks to engage the world with a "beginner's mind" . . . "a state of perception that focuses on the here and now, without preconception, without judgement." Here, Miller admires the serendipity of a butterfly:

field of yarrow
a butterfly's path
could be more efficient

Sometimes, the interactions require a soft touch in order to not cause harm:

replacing
it
more
gently

than
I
picked
it
up

sea
star

While Miller appreciates the wonders and gifts of nature, he also bears witness to the limitations of our own natures as in this haiku:

cancer spreading . . .
my cell phone's
single bar

And this one, too:

bulbs dividing underground
we talk of children
we cannot have

Miller notes:

> The term 'witness tree' describes trees that have witnessed significant events, such as the Sickles Oak, which saw brutal fighting at Gettysburg in the American Civil War; or the Ankerwycke Yew in Berkshire, England, which witnessed the signing of the Magna Carta . . . However, the term originally referred to trees that helped surveyors map property boundaries when a more permanent marker couldn't be placed because the boundary existed in a lake, marsh, or on other impermanent ground.

Here is the title poem:

extended drought
a staghead
on the witness tree

He further notes:

> The poems in this book are my witness trees and, as such, they serve both definitions. Some act to solidify a particular

> moment in memory that continues to reverberate strongly for me. Others mark more tenuous discoveries, where—if I may borrow from Spiess again—'language falls into silence and thinking has no way to follow.' These poems are intuited relationships.

Several of the haiku from the last portion of the book deal with death and dying, such as the following:

> grave shopping . . .
> the one with a nearby tree
> for climbing

The book ends with a sense of stories the witness trees could tell beyond our short lives. My favorite from this collection is this haiku of the power of bearing witness to life:

> an inch of snow
> a story about my father
> I've not heard before

A New Resonance 12: Emerging Voices in English-Language Haiku *edited by Jim Kacian and Julie Schwerin (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2021). 176 pages, 5.5" x 8.25". Four-color card covers, perfect bound. ISBN 978-1-947271-79-1. $20 from redmoonpress.com.*

A New Resonance 12 features the works of seventeen poets who represent a variety of approaches and individualistic voices. Below is a brief sampling of one haiku by each poet.

Mary Jo Balistreri is a musician and painter. Her haiku celebrate the joys of creative perception:

> harmonizing
> with the hemlock wind . . .
> winter wren

Susan Burch's senryu sneak up on you with an everyday, aw-shucks conversational tone. Then, they turn and give you a good kick to wake you up out of complacency:

a hand-me-down
from his father—
wife beater

I enjoyed Jenny Fraser's haiku of loss and absence. She has a gift of noticing what's not there:

chairs
just as they left them
old friends

Simon Hanson is a gardener, and several of his haiku explore the mysteries of growth that come with time and the powers beyond our immediate recognition. He writes about "time passing" and how things come out of the darkness, out of the past, out of our ancestors:

by the same moon
to this very well . . .
our foremothers

As a naturalist, Kristen Lindquist pays attention to the life surrounding her in Maine. Her haiku show an intimacy with this environment:

bare branches
the skeleton
in us all

Hannah Mahoney's haiku often express a contentedness in the world, as the editors note, the "Japanese aesthetic of *jinen*," which "values the gentle way of things."

a cluster of mushrooms
the snake's quiet
leavetaking

Matthew Markworth finds significance in ordinary things encountered in everyday life. He invites the reader to make the emotional connections hinted at in his haiku:

deepening snow . . .
the last sleeve
of thin mints

Lori A Minor, editor of *Femku* magazine, has a strong feminist voice and holds no punches in her haiku and senryu. Beneath that bravado lies a sensitive, caring, and sometimes hurting woman who seeks to make the world a better place:

family dinner
adding salt
to my own wounds

Matthew Moffett writes nature haiku despite all of the limitations of our man-made observational windows: a speeding car, cellophane, snapshot cameras, bone scans. Many of his haiku convey an urgency of life rushing by:

stepping into) sunshine (the day's agenda

Michael Nickels-Wisdom likes language, texts, and artifacts of communication, and his haiku revel in the ways we like to stretch and pull words like taffy as wordsmiths:

the me of me;
crumpled white paper
atop smooth

Keith Polette writes haiku that "conjure sadness." He writes with an intimacy that puts us into the middle of these losses and hurts:

returned letter
i cut the bruise
out of an apple

Bryan Rickert writes haiku that are full of action . . . haiku of doing and noticing how busy the world is around us. Many are also about touching and connecting, even if briefly:

as they pass
touching for a moment
two ants

I was so glad to see that our new editor of *Frogpond*, Tom Sacramona, was included in this anthology. I found that several of his haiku excelled in expressing new or changing relationships, and I also enjoyed the sense of exploration evident in several, such as this one:

trail map
finding the way
it refolds

Robin Anna Smith (GRIX) writes poems that convey a mythical struggle of becoming and of resisting the paths or molds so often provided in our culture. These are poems that distrust our complacent pronouns and language of identity because they fail our self-creative needs:

a clay goddess I mold the mythology of self

Mary Stevens writes haiku of connections and awareness. She provides us with just enough change to appreciate the passing time that has resulted in this moment, now:

borrowed book
a rust stain
where the paperclip was

Debbie Strange is a master at setting a scene, then inviting the reader to settle in for a story. She doesn't provide the end of the story, but just enough to get us anticipating or imagining possibilities. We get the gist and feel the feeling of the tale:

porch swing
songs where we least
expect them

Last, but certainly NOT least, we get a sampling of haiku by Stephen Toft. The editors note "the presence of social, religious, and natural constraints" in his haiku:

a snowflake
just out of reach
of the prisoner □■

REVIEWED BY KRISTEN LINDQUIST

The Language of Loss Haiku & Tanka Conversations *by Debbie Strange (Sable Books, Greensboro, NC: 2020). 38 pages, 5.5″ x 8.5″. Matte cover, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-7333671-2-7. $12 from sablebooks.org.*

Debbie Strange is a widely published, award-winning Canadian poet from Winnipeg, Manitoba. Her book, *The Language of Loss Haiku & Tanka Conversations*, was the winner of the 2019 International Women's Haiku Contest, judged by Roberta Beary, as well as an honorable mention in the HSA 2021 Merit Book Awards (see page 146), judged by Ce Rosenow and Bryan Rickert. Strange's experience shows in this thoughtfully curated, assured, and masterfully evocative collection of 32 tanka/haiku pairings, arranged one pairing to a page.

As a poet, I couldn't help but wonder at the time and creative effort that must have gone into putting together this exquisitely well-crafted collection. The tanka and haiku were presumably not written together or to specifically go together—I know I've seen some of these haiku, for example, published on their own in various journals—so every pairing gave me pause as I parsed it from a technical standpoint and imagined what went into each choice Strange must have made as she constructed this book.

As a reader, I found myself marveling with each turn of the page at the layers of meaning and emotional resonance created on at least three different levels: first, the conversation between tanka and haiku in each pairing on the page; then, the internal juxtapositions within each poem *per se*; and finally, for all but the first and last pairings, the associations made with the pairing on the opposite page. There's so much going on here, and it's a great pleasure to spend time with each page-spread to let it all sink in.

The theme of loss echoes relentlessly, yet beautifully, through this most aptly titled book, giving it a thematic and emotional consistency that hits us in the heart and in the head. For example, Strange pairs these two poems on one page:

> farm auction . . .
> we have nothing
> left to lose
> except these thistles
> rooted in our hearts
>
> empty nest
> on the for sale sign
> mourning doves

One could write an entire essay discussing the swirl of images and feelings present in each of these two poems, as well as between

them, culminating in why "mourning doves" is the perfect fragment for the haiku and the best possible final line for this pairing. We pick up on failure of a way of life, the loss of home, a sense of shared family pain, an image of a fallow field overgrown with thistles, grief . . . and then we move on to the pairing on the facing page:

crafted with love,
this table you made
from ash trees
planted for the children
we never had

deep canyon
our prayers sink
to the bottom

More shared family pain, more mourning and unanswered prayers, and a sense of home that's still tinged with sadness . . . Read together, the two pages thus encapsulate what could be construed as an entire family saga! This is only possible because of the combination of genres: the one-two punch of the longer, more emotionally explicit tanka leading into the terse containment of the haiku, like the two parts of an exclamation point. That a collection redolent of grief and loss could be thus represented as a series of exclamation points speaks to Strange's remarkable abilities as a poet. □■

REVIEWED BY TOM SACRAMONA

Aporia *haiku by Rebecca Lilly (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2021). 96 pages, 4.25″ x 6.5″. Four-color card covers, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-70-8. $15 from redmoonpress.com.*

Readers familiar with Rebecca Lilly's work know her to be genre defining and that remains true with her newest work *aporia*. I

wondered what the word "aporia" meant, and suspicious, I found a definition in *A Glossary of Literary Terms,* edited by M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, which opened a door for me to understand the choice of the work's title in one respect:

> as applied in the criticism of literature, [it] designates a theory and practice of reading that questions and claims to 'subvert' or 'undermine' the assumption that the system of language is based on grounds that are adequate to establish the boundaries, the coherence or unity, and the determinate meanings of a literary text.

The glossary lists "aporia" under deconstruction. In "Haiku and Deconstruction" in *Modern Haiku* 45.1 (Winter–Spring 2014), Mike Spikes asserts in his essay:

> at the heart of the deconstructionist view of language—that developed by de Man and Derrida, as well as others—is that language is open to multiple, contradictory interpretations. Texts are viewed as inherently unstable; no text ever finally settles into a single, consistent meaning.

Lilly's haiku straddle a divide and fine line of incomprehension to mean a great deal, although what that is can be hard to say exactly, at least every time. In the deadlock of our lives, when pausing to read her book, we wade in her poems like we would a river and there enjoy our found openness to accept new changes in perceived meaning:

> Pebbles broken off stones in the river I was born old.

"Pebbles" is one example from the book of over 40 S-shaped ku that strive to understand the limits of language and break down comprehension. Lilly is still masterfully able to communicate her experience in ways that often hit us in the gut, if because they

circumvent the rational intentionally so as to better convey a feeling or moment with impact:

> Writing life into its symbols missing years of wind

We talk of "butterflies in our stomach" or collywobbles—yet with *aporia*, Lilly asks us to consider if, at our core, humans instead really have snakes inside. Peter Newton's endorsement on the back cover of this book suggests her "serpentine, half-infinity symbol . . . verbal roller coasters are best when said aloud." With poem after poem like this, Lilly makes a serious effort to investigate the nature of grief:

> The dry woody look
> of old junipers—
> I thought, wrongly, I'd die first

Whether you prefer a Zen reading:

> Pamphlets at the shrine—
> an ant follows the curve
> of the Buddha's smile

or a deconstructionist reading:

> Fog blows from the trail bend—
> my anxiety
> without an object yet

you will not be disappointed: Lilly's book probes the meaning of existence. Between the experimental poems are traditional three-line and elegiac haiku that hold the center of this book in place. They mourn being human, other creatures, outliving parents, and even depression itself. Rebecca Lilly's *aporia* constructs itself like it wants to be taken apart to be whole, and the experience of reading this book is the truest haiku pleasure. □■

BRIEFLY REVIEWED BY LAURIE D. MORRISSEY

The Dry Bones *haiku by Paul Chambers (The Red Ceilings Press, Darbyshire, UK: 2021). 62 pages, 4" x 6". See theredceilingspress.co.uk.*

Paul Chambers's third haiku collection is published in limited edition by The Red Ceilings Press, which specializes in producing pocket-sized chapbooks. *The Dry Bones* is a slim, attractive little book that feels good in the hand and really does fit in a pocket (or purse, glove compartment, or envelope). The cover image by Adam David Taylor is a semi-abstract painting: a wash of pale pinkish gray with a glowing orange shape and a tiny cross near the top. The painting is called "Chapel, Land, and Sea," which are the settings of most of the poems collected here. As in *This Single Thread* (short-listed for the Haiku Foundation's Distinguished Book Award in 2016), the founding editor of *Wales Haiku Journal* presents poems that are inspired by the landscapes of south Wales and by the creatures with which he shares them. In *The Dry Bones*, Chambers focuses mostly on those creatures that are not human. I count 15 kinds of birds, as well as farm animals, deer, and sea animals. There is a slowness in these poems, a savoring of quiet moments. There is attention to shadow and light. Many poems, while rich in concrete detail, also have a mystical quality, as in (1) *quieter now / than before it came / first snow*; (2) *pre-dawn stars… / plumes of breath / from a cattle truck*; and (3) *just enough rain / to darken the scent / of the pine woods.* The book contains 86 haiku in four untitled sections separated by blank pages—an uncluttered format that fits the spare, atmospheric poems. They include his 2019 Golden Triangle First Place Award-winning *night bus… / a handprint fills / with moonlight*. These few words easily become a story. Whose hand is it and where is the passenger going? Is the traveler alone? A full bus or a nearly empty one? Immediately following this haiku is a masterful example using a pivot line: *after rain / the river unreeling / warbler song.* Interestingly, the words "the dry bones" do not appear in any poem—which makes me wonder. Is the title a reference

to the vision God gave Ezekiel? The words "Dry bones . . . I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life" might suggest something about words on a page.

Pixels *haiku by Simone Pansolin (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2021). 90 pages, 4.25" x 6.5". Perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-80-7. $15 from redmoonpress.com.*

Pixels is the first commercially-published, full-length collection by Simone Pansolin, an Italian musician and haiku poet. The volume contains 70 poems printed one to a page in Italian and English, with the original in bolder type. When I read haiku in translation, I try to resist the temptation to read the English language version first. I like to start with the original, savoring the sounds and rhythm without knowing (or only guessing at) the context. The payoff comes with musical lines like *primo appuntamento*, translated less musically as *first date*. Having the translation in light type helps direct the reader to the original Italian, which some might consider the "truer" version. Pansolin presents his poems in four sections: *il colore del nero* (the color of black), *madreperla* (mother of pearl), *polvere* (dust), and *la storia del futuro* (the history of the future). In the first section, I admire the strong visual qualities of (1) *in the stands / all the legs kicking / without the ball* and (2) *new year's day— / leaves fallen, I can see / the air.* The second section is short (nine haiku), and I particularly like the emotion released by (1) *first date / the sea too moves / along the beach* and (2) *again for the first time an unexpected love.* The third section, "dust," consists of a dozen haiku about the passage of time. Two favorites here are (1) *the ghost of water / on boiling asphalt— / no longer twenty* and (2) *silver wedding / two silences.* The final section contains a number of poems touching on the theme of war, ending with the title haiku: *discovering / among school desks / the history of the future.* Two-line haiku are relatively rare, yet Pansolin includes eight in this collection. The best of these duo-ku, in my opinion, is *a hundred thousand fallen / and other statistics.* Having finished my first read-through, enjoying many of

Pansolin's poems, I decided upon my favorite: *in a diamond / the mine / a single haiku* (reminiscent of Rumi's entire ocean in a drop). Then, I took my first glance at the back cover of the book and saw that, instead of blurbs by poets and editors, all it contained was this haiku. Whether chosen for this spot by the poet or the publisher, I do not know, but clearly this one resonates beautifully for writers and appreciators of haiku.

Keep Walking *haiku by Bill Kenney (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2021). 94 pages, 4.25″ x 6.5″. ISBN 978-1-947271-76-0. $15 from redmoonpress.com.*

keep walking is Bill Kenney's third collection published by Red Moon Press. Almost in his ninth decade of life—and his second writing haiku—the former English professor brushes up against some of life's big questions: those about illness, aging, perseverance, acceptance, and mortality. These haiku are his honest conversations with these questions, and I find myself comparing them with my own. In this collection, equally divided into "tense," "moving my lips," "the time it takes," and "tiny sips," nearly 80 haiku and senryu are presented one per page. They are intensely human, offering up small, subtle moments that hint at the irony we frequently overlook in minor occurrences. The poet's experiences are often somewhat melancholy, but Kenney sees the humor in them. His wry take on life shines in these haiku: (1) *old friends / we talk about the men / we used to be*; (2) *87 / going on 88 / I tell the child*; (3) *strumming the guitar / I never learned to play / autumn rain*; and (4) *winter day / shorter than / I used to be.* Many haiku in the first section of the book deal with illness, specifically cancer. It includes a gem that is polished to a mirror-like finish: *future tense / the doctor / will call.* Other strong and memorable poems in *keep walking* are minimalistic, nature-based haiku. Examples include (1) *raindrops / deciding / not to* and (2) *heron / the time / it takes.* The lovely *evening star / the hills / beyond the hill* just might be my collection favorite. *keep walking* contains two fine examples of

the *honkadori* technique, connecting the reader with Robert Frost (*passing by woods / on a snowy evening / my unkept promises*) and Emily Dickinson. The final section, "tiny sips," ends with the calm and beautiful *steady rain / might as well / keep walking.* This coda rests nicely with the cover photograph of an uphill path through a damp forest. At the top of the rise is a mist that just might be clearing.

birth *haiga by Elizabeth McFarland (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2021). 100 pages, 6" x 9". Glossy covers; perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-75-3. $25 from redmoonpress.com.*

Elizabeth McFarland, an Irish poet living near the Black Forest in Germany, is co-founder of The United Haiku and Tanka Society and a regular contributor to the journal *Haigaonline.* Thirty poem-paintings appear in her first published collection, two of which were published previously in journals. McFarland's haiga are traditional in that they integrate the three elements of haiku, brush painting, and calligraphy (or in this case, handwriting). In the Japanese tradition, a haiga is created by one individual, and all three elements in McFarland's haiga are her own work. As in all well-executed haiga, the combination of the three elements creates a pleasing whole with a power all its own. Traditionally, both haiku and painting were produced quickly. In McFarland's haiga, her ink-brushed paintings and flowing handwriting have a spontaneous feel. The relationship between the painting and the poem may not be obvious. It can take several readings to fully sense the relationship and allow it to shift us into a new space. Happily, the haiga in *birth* expand with each reading. For example, the poem *November twilight— / the moon that was always there / begins to shine* is paired with a wispy dancing figure and a pyramidal shape. This could be a reference to her daughter, whom the poet says (in her introduction) "appears in several guises but wouldn't necessarily recognize herself." Each haiku appears in type on the left-hand page with its corresponding haiga on the facing page. McFarland's paintings, black ink on white pages, vary in tone and density,

adding depth to the haiku. The paintings range in appearance from bold to delicate and from representational to abstract, and they often incorporate collage. One of the most striking haiga is *winter jasmin…*[sic] */ he apologises / in his sleep.* In this case, the hand-brushed words are slightly hard to read, so the typeset words are helpful. This is also helpful in those haiga where words are layered over the painting (or vice versa). Another artistic element of each haiga is the position of the words on the page. McFarland uses vertical and horizontal lines, sometimes framing the image or threading through it, and not always corresponding with the line breaks of the typeset haiku. Just as there is a disjunction between the elements of a haiga, there is a disjunction or "leap" between the title word and the content of this book. The word does not appear, although there are birthdays and daughter references. My favorite haiga here is a five-word haiku paired with a mysterious devilish figure: *midsummer's night / a thing / running.* There is high drama in these few, simple words. The overall effect is both humorous and creepy, open to myriad interpretations. It turns me into a child outside at night, at the mercy of a too-fertile imagination. Midsummer is the season of fertility. A fertile imagination is at work in this haiga. □■

BRIEFLY REVIEWED BY RANDY BROOKS

Carrying Sunrays *haiku by Bakhtiyar Amini (Velvet Dusk Publishing, Sacramento, CA: 2020). 68 pages, 6″ x 8.25″. Four-color card covers, perfect bound. ISBN 9798579804822. $8.99 from amazon.com.*

Bakhtiyar Amini lives in Germany and writes primarily in Persian-Tajik and Russian. As the editor/publisher Christine L. Villa writes, "this haiku collection . . . reflects the brighter side of the poet's everyday experiences and surroundings. From the first to the last page of this book, you will discover that he carries no excess baggage, such as resentment, hate, or anger, despite all of his misfortunes in life. Instead, he takes with him his rose-

colored glasses" (v). Probably the "darkest" haiku in the book is one selected as a Reader's Choice Award in *The Heron's Nest*: *refugee camp / pork and beef cooking / in the same pan.* Most of the haiku are about relationships, dreams, hopes, and the good life. Here are a couple more examples: *divorce / your name is no longer / my password* and *fresh newspaper / the editorial / smells of kerosene.* The book is illustrated by Hemapriya Chellappan.

Contemplating Nature: Pictures, Passages & Haiku *by Robert Epstein (Middle Island Press, West Union, WV: 2021). 212 pages, 6″ x 9″. Four-color card covers, perfect bound. ISBN 9798701616118 $15 from amazon.com.*

Contemplating Nature: Pictures, Passages & Haiku is a book of prompts for writing haiku. Robert Epstein gathers quotes about nature and matches them with photographs. Then, he uses them to imagine, speculate, and write a resulting haiku. In this book, he offers all three prompts—the original quote, the photograph, and his haiku—and invites readers "to embark on his or her own journey of poetic inquiry" (xvii). One example is when Epstein pairs a quote from Marie Curie, "All my life through, the new sights of Nature made me rejoice like a child," with a photo of a girl in a meadow of cone flowers. Here is the adjacent haiku: *rifle barrel— / the perfect place / for a long stem daisy.* Another example is when a photograph of a waterfall is matched with a quote from Leonardo da Vinci: "Water is the driving force in nature." And here is Epstein's haiku: *the answer is yes no yes breaking waves.* □■

BRIEFLY REVIEWED BY TAOFEEK AYEYEMI

Finding the Other Door *senryu by Adjei Agyei-Baah. (Mamba Africa Press, Ghana, West Africa: 2021). 23 pages. Available for free download from africahaikunetwork.wordpress.com*

How do you take bitter pills smilingly? Let's assume the maker sugar-coated it. Adjei Agyei-Baah did just that with this collection

by employing humor that sanctifies the soul, as it is with the spirit of senryu. *Finding the Other Door* motivates poets to keep producing in spite of rejection: *morning garden / reading my rejected haiku / to a little sparrow.* While sharing a coping mechanism, the above verse equally creates a connection between humanity and nature in a deeply interactive and harmonizing manner. With it, the author says, when you mock your failure, it fades away. However, the sense of subtlety (*hosomi*) coupled with the feeling of melancholic loneliness (*wabi*) seem to share an aura of abandonment. Editors are therefore implored to soften the blow of rejection with kindness: *spring freshness / almost terminating my ginko walk / a rejected haiku mail.* This simple verse reveals a universally shareable and understandable human experience (*kidoairaku*) which could have unfriendly effects. Most times, rejection has nothing to do with quality, but other factors, such as an editor's inability to resonate with it. Poets are thus advised to keep revising and submitting their work until they find their homes: (1) *rejected submission / finding the other door / to the editor's mind* and (2) *clear blue sky… / my rejected haiku moves on / to win a contest.* Be that as it may, therapeutic and refreshingly so, this new collection by Adjei Agyei-Baah will make a succour for poets at every point of rejection: *filling the cracks / of my rejected haiku / falling cherry blossom.* □■

BRIEFLY REVIEWED BY KRISTEN LINDQUIST

Wasp on the Prayer Flag *haiku and senryu by Maeve O'Sullivan (Alba Publishing, Uxbridge, UK: 2021). 60 pages, 5.75" x 8.25". Glossy cover, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-912773-39-8. $15 from albapublishing.com.*

Irish poet Maeve O'Sullivan's assured, comfortable style reflects the fact that she has been writing and publishing poetry for over 25 years. This fifth collection with Alba Publishing contains haiku and senryu from the years of 2018–2021. *Wasp on the Prayer Flag* is divided into three sections—Seasons, Sequences, and Senryu. The Senryu section is further divided into themes such as "Wanderlust,"

"Home Sweet Home," and the moving "A Year and a Day," a series of responses to the death of her sister in 2017: *barista art the heart slowly disintegrates.* The title poem is found in the last section, "Pandemic": *my friend tells me more / about his cousin's passing— / wasp on the prayer flag.* I enjoyed hearing O'Sullivan read from this book on a recent podcast, bringing some of her poems to life and offering a little context for their creation. As an educator, she typically spends her summer breaks traveling and writing, and her work is often inspired by that change of scenery: *walking tour / under this nondescript car park / Hitler's bunker.* During the pandemic, however, O'Sullivan was forced to remain closer to her Dublin home, so this book is more Ireland-based than her previous collections. Nevertheless, the collection as a whole doesn't feel pandemic-heavy and is nicely leavened with humor: *bored with lockdown / I wear the sandals in which / I travelled the world.* O'Sullivan's poems share actual, ruminated moments. A few favorites, from among many, illustrate this sense of "being there": (1) *I sneak a blackberry / with each lap of the path— / walking meditation*; (2) *this little moorhen / navigating alone / canal walk*; (3) *Horn Hill / a bare-chested farmer waves / to an unseen being*; and (4) *a swan flies west / under Capel Street Bridge— / rainy rush hour.* She herself has described the ku featured in this book as "aide-memoires," touchstones to feelings as much as to physical places. The unassuming, authentic nature of O'Sullivan's work, with no flashy word play or structural distractions, makes the reader feel as though they are walking alongside her through a garden or along a city street. We all benefit from looking as she points out the birds, flowers, and people that catch her keen poet's eye along the way.

Window Seats: A Contemporary Anthology of Cat Haiku & Senryu *edited by Stanford M. Forrester/sekiro (bottle rockets press, Windsor, CT: 2021). 110 pages, 5.5″ x 8″. Glossy cover, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-7366037-1-0. $21 from bottlerocketspress.com.*

Although there are several parody "haiku" books about cats out there, this anthology is no joke. Editor Stanford Forrester states

his intention for this book in his introduction:

> This anthology is a celebration of life, cats, and poetry; a celebration of the ordinary because that's where we spend most of our lives . . . [W]e aren't high on the mountain meditating or gazing off into the clouds and sky every day. No, we are home feeding our cats and cleaning out their litter boxes. It doesn't get more Zen than that.

Something about cats—and our relationships with them—has inspired centuries of poets and writers to extol this little animal that deigns to share our space. Cats have been depicted in haiku from the beginning; Bashō, Buson, and Issa all wrote about cats, often using the early spring kigo "cats in love." This anthology showcases the latest examples following that long tradition. Featuring the work of 102 different poets, many of them noted and well-published, this collection offers a wide selection of good haiku that all happen to be about cats. (Full disclaimer: I am a contributor.) Like some haiku, the inscrutable cat can perfectly embody the Japanese aesthetic of *yūgen*, or mystery: (1) *midnight waking . . . / the cat's face / studying mine* (Bonnie Stepenoff) and (2) *my cat / looks so many places / beyond me* (Tom Clausen). And, yet, the everyday quirks of cats will also resonate in these poems—the cat's love of sleep: *midmorning — / the sleepy cat / calls it a day* (sekiro). That proverbial curiosity: *trapped beneath a paw / curiosity / frees the fly* (Julie Schwerin). The playfulness that so easily flips to killer instinct: *robin's-egg sky — / the cat bats around / the last feather* (Carolyn Hall). Cat and dog adoptions skyrocketed during the coronavirus pandemic. When we need a companion, we turn to pets: *the calico cat / we talk about isolation / or at least I do* (Alan Summers). And we grieve when we lose that beloved family member: *the children bury / a taped shoebox / newly hallowed ground* (Barrie Levine). This anthology celebrates well these ordinary creatures that have such power to transform our lives and inform our poetry.

Crumb Tray *haiku by Jay Howard (Privately printed: 2021). 84 pages, 5" x 8". Glossy cover, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-00-693846-7. $10 from author at jayhoward@gmail.com.*

Jay Howard's first collection *Crumb Tray* is jam-packed, typically six poems per page. That's a lot of crumbs on this toaster's crumb tray. This is perhaps, in part, reflective of the poet's enthusiasm for the form; he shares in his introduction that, in 2019, he had written more than one thousand haiku by May! But, for the reader, it's a bit too much to take in, even over several sittings. Howard's better, often humorous, observations get lost amid the crowd: (1) *a long drive / I come to the end / of my patience*; (2) *through green a wisp of cloud am I happy*; and (3) *discussing which mom's / chicken and noodles is best / first snow*. Howard states in his introduction that he "tried to stay out of the way" in arranging this collection. But the book would have benefited from more thought as to arrangement, along with heavier-handed pruning and curating to create more white space on each page and introduce some much-needed pauses. Also, while a reader new to haiku might appreciate the guidance of the random explanatory notes throughout, they felt unnecessary and distracting to me. At the end of his book, Howard includes an apologia that offers a basic explanation of some principles of haiku construction using his own poems as examples, providing useful information for a reader unfamiliar with the form. □■

BRIEFLY REVIEWED BY TOM SACRAMONA

Across the Full Moon *haiku and senryu by Taofeek Ayeyemi. (Mamba Africa Press, Ghana, West Africa: 2021). 59 pages. Available for free download from africahaikunetwork.wordpress.com*

"To everyone who has held the torch as I take this haiku journey," Taofeek Ayeyemi begins in the dedication of his eChapbook *Across the Full Moon*. These are poems of the nighttime, Bryan Rickert observes in the foreword, priming the reader to look for the

"wonder," "romance," and "possibilities" that exist in this world. Ayeyemi's collection includes haiku in English with a Yoruba translation below, done by Oni Tomiwa. The English haiku *the cat's shadow / spills into the plate . . . / full moon* has its cut after the second line; this is one of the few instances where the Yoruba translation is rendered differently, and instead the cut between phrase and fragment comes after the first line: *òṣùpá kooro . . . / òjìji ológbò / nínú àwo.* We can learn from the author's sensitivity how to always be open and receptive to the haiku moment, and we can delight in being wholly invited into his world: *chilly wind . . . / even the blanket / is cold*; *wedding night . . . / the gifts covered / in dew-laden dust.* As we make our journey guided by Ayeyemi, we increasingly learn more about our fellow travelers: *making a bed— / the man in a hat spreads / a fishing net.* While able to write personal poems and do romance justice, as a lawyer by profession, Ayeyemi mostly thinks about others. In this one in particular, he references Bashō's famous 'autumn deepens' haiku: *rainy night . . . / a neighbor fills her buckets / with dirty clothes.* We appreciate that the haiku section runs twice as long as the senryu section, although Taofeek Ayeyemi is skilled at both types of verses by virtue of his powers of observation and kind heart: *first dinner / watching her dimple / through glass cups.*

Personal Myths: Numbers 2, 3, and 4 *haiku by Thomas H. Chockley (Lulu, Raleigh, NC: 2021). 96 pages, 4.25" x 7". Four-color card cover, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1716321993. $15 from online booksellers or $2.58 eBook from lulu.com.*

In the opening pages of *Personal Myths: Numbers 2, 3, and 4*, Thomas H. Chockley recounts that the idea for this book stemmed from a walk he took with his granddaughter and wife at Hadrian's Wall in England back in 2016. Making good on his artistic vision, Chockley brought out *Personal Myths I: Born in Mystery* from Red Moon Press in 2018. Chockley's second collection has 156 haiku and is the companion piece to his first on the mystical function of myth.

This book continues to cover the remaining functions of myth, as posited by Joseph Campbell: the cosmological, sociological, and pedagogical *vis-à-vis* the book's haiku are grouped into these as section headings. Cosmological: *before during and after me / Niagara Falls.* Sociological: *politicians speaking in bumper stickers.* Chockley's thoughts show he has an active mind attentive to a lot of different things from geocaching to quantum foam and mound builders. Many are cerebral poems. Chockley tells us walking at Hadrian's Wall: "Any hiker is constantly aware of the present and the historical in the landscape." The nexus of present day and the historical line up well in this one: *a Dublin pigeon / on Oscar Wilde's head / tour stop # 5.* What stays in my mind is Chockley's introduction to the pedagogical function and Campbell's definition of it as "how to live a human lifetime under any circumstances." Two of Chockley's from that section: (1) *foggy moon / the first time he calls me / step-dad* and (2) *egg timer / at our age / over is easy.*

Dream Tree *haiku by David Watts (Cyberwit.net, India: 2021). 50 pages, 5.5" x 8.5". Four-color card cover, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-81-8253-714-9. $15 from online booksellers.*

David Watts's debut collection is here fast. He wrote his first haiku mid-August 2020, and in less than a year, has had 81 accepted in numerous publications and released this collection, offering 76 poems through the India publisher Cyberwit. Thematically, *Dream Tree* touches on many subjects from the more general field of owls, dragonflies, and bonsai to the specific, such as gluhwein, the alphorn, and the San Gabriel River. They hold together as remembrances of the poet's life, re-seen and re-imagined by the close attention the form demands: (1) *potato sprouts / my son asks / about reincarnation* and (2) *barn dream / picking sparkles of hay / from her hair.* Memories and loss alternate as dominant subjects and sometimes combine: *places / my father took me / river mountain sky.* My favorite: *her face / ignites goes out ignites / passing firefly.*

The Wild Beyond Echoing: James Hackett's Haiku Way *by Paul Russell Miller (2021, Grandad Publishing, Painswick, Gloucestershire) 146 pages, 5.75″ x 8.875″. Four-color card covers, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-9995931-4-8. $15 plus postage ordered directly from the publisher by email to: pr.miller@live.co.uk*

Paul Russell Miller's book studies the essential elements of haiku composition as the form was understood by the late James W. Hackett through his many published works over a half century of writing. The book was released on what would have been Hackett's ninety-second birthday (August 6, 2021). Well known to many, Hackett is a first-generation haiku poet whose beginning work appeared as early as 1963 in the journal *American Haiku*. Miller puts together a wonderful study of Hackett's 'Haiku Way' that will please any haiku aficionado for its passion regarding the form. This will also interest readers for the comparisons between Hackett's Way and the way English-language haiku has evolved. "By his own admission," Miller says in the preface, Hackett was a "fiercely independent spirit . . . and one who held firmly to certain principles which the rapidly-developing genre quickly marginalised, his withdrawal from the American haiku scene began long before his retirement to Maui and the appropriately-named township of Haiku in 1999." The scholarly research that went into this book was supported by Hackett's literary estate, which provided the author with Hackett's private journals. Miller shares some interesting earlier drafts of how Hackett classics arrived in their end form. Hackett made extreme use of punctuation, and Miller expertly gives close textual readings on how punctuation furthers Hackett's poems. Chapters are grouped around the "Suggestions" section (e.g., writing tips) with which Hackett traditionally concluded his books, so this study intends to also serve as an instructional volume for those seeking to write haiku the Hackett Way, which is inseparable from his Zen approach. Hackett's own poetry serves as the best example to his method: (1) *A bitter morning: / sparrows sitting together / without any necks*; (2) *The child's dish of mud, / by her own calculation, / took a year to cook*; and (3) *Blocked, the line of ants / just broadens until it can / go around.*

Season's End *haibun by B. A. France (Kelsay Books, American Fork, UT: 2021). 34 pages, 6″ x 9″. Four-color card cover, perfect softbound. ISBN: 978-1-954353-11-4. $16 from online booksellers.*

Although *Season's End* is a slim book, it is full of haibun and tanka that pay such close attention to the details that the collection feels much larger on the whole. The opening tanka has lines B. A. France attributes to Takuan Shoto, a Rinzai Zen Buddhist: "forget the mind / so you can do all things." France's technique works by slowing down and narrating events that seemingly would have occurred in a split second's time—he does this in the haibun "Foxtrot," where he watches a fox until she drops out of view, as well as in "Tunnel Vision," where he observes the changing play of leaf shadows as twilight closes in around him. The tanka and prose are often flowery; the connection between a haibun's prose and its capping verse is sometimes obscure. For a collection containing almost exclusively natural imagery, France manages social commentary in two haibun "Hybridization" and "White Wings." In the first, we learn a tree in his yard has undergone a hybridization with another, and the two types of trees have become one. The significance of this for France is that it also applies to people—to quote from the piece: "Not cataclysm. Not havoc. Not revolution. Change, one being at a time. One soul at a time." "White Wings" ruminates on the flight of a cabbage moth. France laments the staggering path of modern society where capitalism is inseparable from the previous centuries' colonialism:

> Busy white wings, dollar-sized, in constant motion. Not as big as silver dollars, instead those new ones, with Jean Baptiste hoisted on Sacagawea's back and her knowing, world-wise gaze over her shoulder, looking back at you as if thinking: I see what you're going to do to this place.

The piece concludes with the verse: *under the maple / summer ivy claims space / crawling over stones.*

Grandmother's Pearls: Dream Anthology *by Alexis Rotella & Friends (Jade Mountain Press, Greensboro, NC: 2021). 117 pages, 6″ x 9″. ISBN 979-8529608227. Available from amazon.com and $9.99 from Kindle.*

Every word and page of Alexis Rotella's newest collection, *Grandmother's Pearls: Dream Anthology*, is put to its best use, including its fine art illustrations. I was already engaged from examining the back cover with this comedic line from Connie Kaplan, author of *Dreams Are Letters from the Soul*: "Introductions are usually boring and I often skip them, but the intro to *Grandmother's Pearls* is amazing, inspiring, and informative." This kind of writing truly does bare one's soul. There are plenty of wonderful haibun, along with select haiku, tanka, and cherita in this dream anthology. In the introduction, Rotella recalls a talk she gave at Haiku North America Winston–Salem about how the moon affects our dreams: "Even if we don't correlate the moon with dreams, the moon plays an unconscious part in our everyday life. She represents the unconscious, and our everyday and night life is colored by what sign of the zodiac she is traveling through. Dreams are filtered through twelve different lenses (signs), the moon being the magnifier." Readers are privileged a peek into Rotella's and her friends' dream realities, including Roberta Beary, Margaret Chula, Terri L. French, Penny Harter, Kala Ramesh, Alan Summers, and Billie Wilson, among others. My favorite pieces are (by Rotella unless otherwise noted): "No Escape," "Glass Ceiling," "Tequila Moon," "Preordained," "Eerie Night," "Being Green," "Pompeii" by Roberta Beary, "It's 1952 Again" by Barbara Kaufman, and "Back to First Grade." Only five pieces have prior publication credits, meaning there is much in print to enjoy for the first time. I will end with Rotella's shortest haibun, "Easter Lily Time," regretting that I cannot quote from more pieces at length, as all are intriguing: "I receive a handwritten letter from my father on the anniversary of his death and although I understand it, I have no idea what it says. *taste of darkness on my tongue*."

Sound of a Leaf: 2018 Seabeck Haiku Getaway Anthology *edited by Carole MacRury and Vicki McCullough (Haiku Northwest Press, Bellevue, WA: 2020). 74 pages, 6″ x 9″. ISBN 978-1-953092-01-4. $15 from online booksellers.*

Sound of a Leaf mourns Johnny Baranski who died in January 2018. There is much to appreciate in the anthology, and the introduction mentions that a memorial reading for Johnny was led by his daughters, Margo Williams and Amy Baranski, as well as Amy's partner, Bob Redmond, all of whom are poets. It opens with a haiku by John Stevenson, an attendee from the East Coast: *night train / we all think we know / where we're going.* While I enjoyed the somber poems most, such as this fine haiku: *shorter days / a mudshark thrashing / in the shallows* (Michele Root-Bernstein), there are plenty of upbeat poems which touch on solace: *still air / still trees / still me* (Amy Baranski), as well as those that playfully touch on the art of haiku itself: *at the haiku meeting / the wood floor planks / short long short* (Seren Fargo). One rengay, and a brief account by Garry Gay remembering how he created the form, is also included. A book you can get lost in: *labyrinth / facing myself / with each turn* (Chandra Bales).

Joining the Conversation: 2019 Seabeck Haiku Getaway Anthology *edited by C. R. Manley (Haiku Northwest Press, Bellevue, WA: 2020). 97 pages, 5.5″ x 8.5″. ISBN 978-1-953092-02-1. $15 from online booksellers.*

C. R. Manley edited this 2019 Seabeck Haiku Getaway anthology and provides an introduction in enough detail that readers feel included in the magic of these West Coast haiku gatherings. It is clear from the cover that this was a special year, featuring artwork by Ion Codrescu. A rengay composed by poets traveling from afar opens the collection. The rest of the anthology is paced two to three haiku per page, interspersed with Codrescu's beautiful haiga of seven choice poems. This layout divides the anthology into its smaller parts and allows readers ample space to stop and mull over favorite haiku: *morning after / reconsidering / the taste of sake* (Jacquie

Pearce), *whitecaps— / one breaks / into an eagle* (Tanya McDonald); *twenty steps / into the forest— / the things I can't name* (C. R. Manley); and *some deer ignore / for a few moments / the traveler* (Ion Codrescu).

***Ever Forward** haiku by Claire Thom (Privately printed: 2021). 67 pages, 8.5" x 11". Four-color card covers, perfect softbound. ISBN 979-8505146293. Available from online booksellers.*

Claire Thom is a poet and teacher originally from Scotland who has been living in the south of Spain for the past 15 years. Her interest in haiku stems from visiting Japan in 2019. Profits for this collection are being donated to a Guide Dogs charity in the U.K. (*https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/*). Colin Thom is an artist and retired architect, and he's responsible for the watercolor illustrations between each of the intentionally-titled haiku. Without observing formal elements of haiku composition except adherence to 5-7-5, the resultant poems are awkward—*coffee bean brown eyes / soft cappuccino feathers / sprinkled with cocoa*—and others read as whole sentences: *cautious pin cushion / carrying hitchhiking fleas / weaves its way through leaves.* □■

Errata

In the previous issue 44:2—

- *Heart Springs* by Michele Root-Bernstein should have read "the rules are not to look away from each other and not to stop ever until." (It incorrectly read "<not to ever stop until>").

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Santa Cruz, CA

HSA Membership and *Frogpond* Submissions

The Haiku Society of America (HSA) is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1968 to promote the writing and appreciation of haiku in English. The Society's journal, *Frogpond*, founded in 1978, features work by the HSA members and others, as well as essays, articles, and book reviews. The HSA has over 1,000 members across the country and around the world. Membership is open to all readers, writers, and students of haiku. The HSA maintains a website with additional information about the Society, archives of winners of the HSA contests, and other haiku activities at *https://www.hsa-haiku.org/*. The HSA has been meeting regularly since its inception and sponsors open lectures, workshops, readings, and contests. Details of locations, times, and programs will appear in the HSA e-newsletter and website, as will announcements and details of regional, national, and international meetings and events. Reminders of national meetings, HSA contest deadlines, and occasional other news or announcements will also be sent by e-mail. Inquiries regarding regional meetings can also be addressed to the appropriate regional coordinator.

HSA Membership: For adults in the USA, $35; in Canada/Mexico, $37; for seniors (65 or over) and students in the USA, $30; all other countries, $47, or international PDF-only membership, $35. Pay by check on a USA bank or by International Postal Money Order, payable to Haiku Society of America, Inc. All memberships are annual, expiring on December 31, and include three issues of *Frogpond* as well as newsletters, the members' anthology, and voting rights. You can also subscribe online by PayPal or credit card at *https://www.hsa-haiku.org/join.htm.* All correspondence regarding new and renewed memberships, changes of address, back issues, and requests for information should be directed to the HSA secretary.

***Frogpond* Submissions:** There are three issues of *Frogpond* each year with month-long submission periods per issue—all of March for the spring/summer issue, all of July for the autumn issue, and all of November for the winter issue. Replies are sent as soon as possible but can take 4-6 weeks. Please see our full submission guidelines online at *https://www.hsa-haiku.org/frogpond/submissions.html.* E-mail submissions are preferred and can be sent to *frogpondsubmissions@gmail.com.*

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