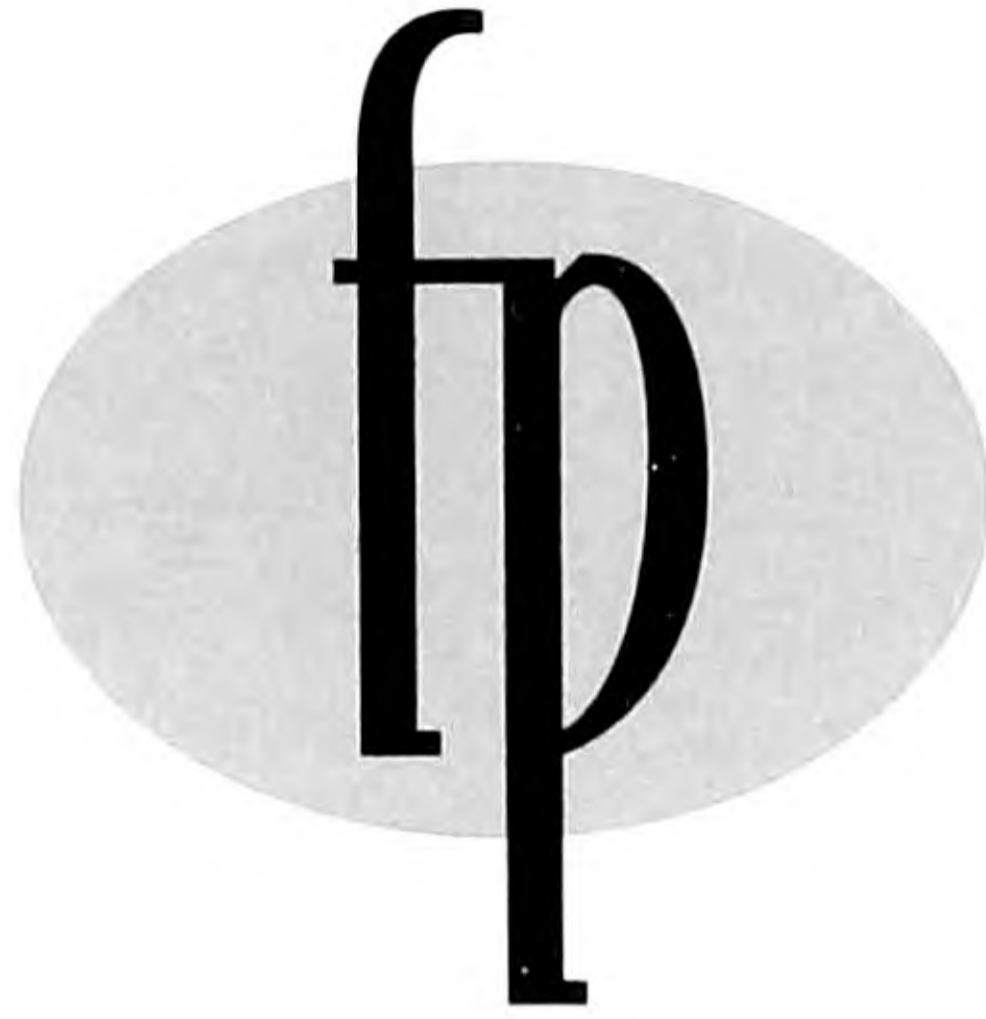


Volume 35:3

f r o g p o n d





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

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Literature Award
\$100**

for the best previously unpublished work appearing in the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

From Issue 35:2

summer heat
the strands of hair not captured
by her braid

Michael Ketchek
Rochester, New York



Haiku & Senryu

the ins and outs
of the Chinese finger trap
autumn equinox

James Chessing, San Ramon, California

undercurrents
children drift downstream
from another sky

DW Bender, Raymore, Missouri

departing swallows
muses can be counted
on one hand now

an'ya, Westfir, Oregon

silence . . .
a white butterfly
stutters across the meadow

Brad Bennett, Arlington, Massachusetts

lines of foam
over and over the sea
writes its story

Annette Makino, Arcata, California

grounded
she runs off
with her words

reading
till the stars come out
I mark my place

Tom Painting, Atlanta, Georgia

Japanese garden
a butterfly folds itself
into a flower

Seánan Forbes, London, England

summer storm
the tingle of white wine
by candlelight

Adelaide B. Shaw, Millbrook, New York

insect in a spider's web her lacey lingerie

Mike Spikes, Jonesboro, Arkansas

carnival sideshow—
staring at me
the mind reader yawns

John J. Dunphy, Alton, Illinois

spring moon
a vixen's cry ripsaws
through the forest

joan iversen goswell, Valencia, Pennsylvania

dawn swim—
making a butterfly of water
of light

Kristen B. Deming, Bethesda, Maryland

Forsythia

wet with spring rain—
she explains the game

it's the same message
clenched in the osprey's talons
and the lilac's scent

Mike Andrelczyk, Strasburg, Pennsylvania

snow fog
somewhere
the complaint of a crow

Alanna C. Burke, Santa Fe, New Mexico

shoveling snow
my heart requests
an audience

Joseph M. Kusmiss, Sanbornton, New Hampshire

a beggar
softly shod
nightfall

Michael McClintock, Clovis, California

Snow on the pine boughs—
feeling as though somehow
the answer has been found

Rebecca Lilly, Charlottesville, Virginia

genealogy:
the earth from
my grandparents' garden

S. Michael Kozubek, Chicago, Illinois

in pine shade
remembering dad
never sat much

Robert Epstein, El Cerrito, California

the trill of a wren
a petal falls slowly
into my tea

Sandi Pray, Robbinsville, North Carolina

deeper
into desert petroglyphs
the day moon

Bruce Ross, Hampden, Maine

hole in my sock
the starlight not as close
as it used to be

Stephen A. Peters, Bellingham, Washington

touch-and-go
the kiss
of a snowflake

Barbara Snow, Eugene, Oregon

grandma's kitchen . . .
a star-covered teacup
for the gypsy lady

Marion Clarke, County Down, Northern Ireland

a drip of grape popsicle
seeping into her pink shoelace
bay twilight

beach bonfire
the ancient sigh
of a teen

Bill Cooper, Richmond, Virginia

into her open book
what the flower
dropped

Kath Abela Wilson, Pasadena, California

evening breeze
the sky brushed
with roses

Dianne Koch, Dubuque, Iowa

raindrops drip your memory

Scott Glander, Glenview, Illinois

the last time we spoke tangled shadows of telephone wires

Elliot Nicely, Amherst, Ohio

salamander's skin
feeling
somewhat naughty

Marsh Muirhead, Bemidji, Minnesota

falling snowflakes
the foolishness
of grasping

Michael Ketchek, Rochester, New York

wilting clematis . . .
do I want to fall in love
again

Sue Colpitts, Lakefield, Ontario

wintry days
her old heart
well shuttered

Dawn Bruce, St Leonards, NSW, Australia

bamboo flower
once in one hundred years
you

Bud Cole, Ocean City, New Jersey

dry leaves
the way my heart rustles
when she walks

waning moon
our meals
shorter and shorter

S.M. Abeles, Washington, D.C.

at the bottom
of the scribbled goodbye note,
(over)

Joe Barbara, Metairie, Louisiana

forget-me-nots
last year's
haiku

Stella Pierides, Neusaess, Germany

transit of Venus . . .
a hint of patchouli
in her perfume

shades of winter—
my mother in the passage
between dreams

Lorin Ford, Melbourne, Australia

in the lake beyond the lake the mountains and the moon

John McManus, Cumbria, England

smudged ink
the wing beats
of the kingfisher

in the barber chair
running out of small talk . . .
autumn evening

Michael Fessler, Kanagawa, Japan

outside my window
two pigeons lock beaks
i avert my glance

miriam chaikin, New York, New York

rhubarb crumble
how granny used to make
grandpa cry

Tracy Davidson, Warwickshire, England

turtle tracks rerouted to ocean echoes in the night

Francis Attard, Marsa, Malta

ebb tide
my brother's last letter
his last letter

Neal Whitman, Pacific Grove, California

alpenglow
a side of the mountain
I hadn't considered

leafless elm the wind takes a bough

Johnny Baranski, Vancouver, Washington

eulogy . . .
through the open window
a breeze gentles me

Charlotte Digregorio, Winnetka, Illinois

April Fool's day
my mother calls to say
it's snowing

origami
all the buildings
folded by the quake

Brenda Roberts, Fort Worth, Texas

disturbed by night
tangle of tumbleweeds
gone with the wind

Barbara Tate, Winchester, Tennessee

knit one, purl one
she examines both sides
of the question

Susan Constable, Nanoose Bay, British Columbia

choices
within choices
decaf iced venti skim latte

Jay Friedenber, Riverdale, New York

nesting doll—
who she
really is

Kristin Oosterheert, Grandville, Michigan

winter lights softening folds of her crow's feet

Beverly Acuff Momoi, Mountain View, California

yard sale
a silver birch leaf
in a tea cup

Garry Eaton, Port Moody, British Columbia

they both had secrets
the utensils kept
in a crock

you let it go
too far . . .
winter stars

Dan Schwerin, Greendale, Wisconsin

the grain of his song tessellating the night

Susan Diridoni, Kensington, California

twilight—
my front row seat
for the farewell tour

Michael Henry Lee, Saint Augustine, Florida

Planting festival—
spinning out their ruffled skirts
our marigold women

Mark Kaplon, Honoka'a, Hawaii

if he calls me "darlin"
one more time . . .
heat lightning

Ferris Gilli, Marietta, Georgia

garden circle—
our discussion halts
at the honeysuckle

Francis Masat, Key West, Florida

All Souls' Day
a drop of rain falls
on my head

Ernest Wit, Warsaw, Poland

the boat's wash
follows it to shore
autumn dusk

Quendryth Young, Alstonville, NSW, Australia

Great Plains—
I watch a stone
be stillness

Jeanne Cook, South Bend, Indiana

without a sound
a frog
climbs out of the pond

first things first forsythia

John Stevenson, Nassau, New York

breast lump . . .
I scrabble around
for my whitest bra

Helen Buckingham, Bristol, England

high risk of fire in my bones the dance of pinecones

my name in a woman's tight hand yellow leaves

David Boyer, Stamford, Connecticut

her DNA evidence
still
on my lips

David G. Lanoue, New Orleans, Louisiana

tour bus
i lie about
everything

deep uncharted waters just past the boatman's smile

Roberta Beary, Bethesda, Maryland

early autumn frost
mother tells me of my
father's infidelities

Audrey Olberg, Chevy Chase, Maryland

torn rainclouds
the breath inside
the mourning dove's call

Jack Barry, Ashfield, Massachusetts

autumn sunset
a pen and her cygnet
quilt the pond

Scott Mason, Chappaqua, New York

cracked canyon floor . . .
the breeze a butterfly
carries

paul m., Bristol, Rhode Island

this simple meal
I dab my father's cheek
with a napkin

Haiku Elvis, Shreveport, Louisiana

twilight fireflies
the spell
of adulthood

first person singular breath plumes

Christopher Patchel, Mettawa, Illinois

reading obituaries
the here and there
of fireflies

from the hammock
birds fade into crickets
crickets fade into stars

Ben Moeller-Gaa, St. Louis, Missouri

starlight that left
at my birth, perhaps
in my eyes tonight

unsteady feet—
the increasing weight
of the past

George Swede, Toronto, Ontario

crest of the swing
over a mountain lake—
knowing when to let go

Deb Koen, Rochester, New York

dinner party
jalapenos start
a new conversation

Jeff Hoagland, Hopewell, New Jersey

autumn rain
what she spent all night
trying not to say

Rob Dingman, Herkimer, New York

eclipse
a piece of spinach
between his teeth

Kelly Bennett, Lafayette, California

dawn in the city . . .
in the crow's beak a piece
of carton packing tape

K. Ramesh, Chennai, India

economy class
just a sliver of moon
in the window

Bob Lucky, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

from the air
different shades of green
in the graveyard

Robert B. McNeill, Winchester, Virginia

thistle gone to seed—
talking around
the thorny question

Patricia J. Machmiller, San Jose, California

summer drought
the parched
sky

Jeannie Martin, Salisbury, Massachusetts

hot day—
half the dog
goes out

George G. Dorsty, Yorktown, Virginia

small town
too much of her dream
in the diner

Peter Newton, Winchendon, Massachusetts

rural sky—
what other planets
have a Beethoven?

Collin Barber, Memphis, Tennessee

windy day i think in music

in the pre-dawn mirror my darker self

Jim Kacian, Winchester, Virginia

hundreds of pages
between us
unfinished poetry

Helen Granger, Corunna, Michigan

low clusters
of black raspberries
her hidden talent

Anne Elise Burgevin, Pennsylvania Furnace, Pennsylvania

butterfly making a beeline to the garden phlox

Terri L. French, Huntsville, Alabama

the garden
after the closing—
someone else's roses

P M F Johnson, St. Paul, Minnesota

moonlit
forgotten places for games
of hide & seek

before written history
leaves to step on
where there is no path

Gary Hotham, Scaggsville, Maryland

summer school
fireflies scatter plot
the backyard

Aubrie Cox, Muncie, Indiana

shadowed light
through mosaic windows
I adjust my sins

Karen DiNobile, Poughkeepsie, New York

news of the bees . . .
forgiving them
their stings

sumi-e bamboo—
those stringers of bluegills
I used to drag home

Bill Pauly, Dubuque, Iowa

before our hearts
have opened
crocus

peach stone
against my teeth
thunder

Ann K. Schwader, Westminster, Colorado

stumbling on
the rabbit's bones—
the ache in mine

John Pappas, Brighton, Massachusetts

beach sunset the lightness of children at a distance

Ramesh Anand, Bangalore, India

cloudless sky
Dad asks if the roses
are roses

David Jacobs, London, England

whistling wind . . .
the things I only now
admit I've lost

the little girls
jump double Dutch
morning moon

Angela Terry, Lake Forest Park, Washington

concert crowd
waiting for the crossing guard's
downbeat

Judson Evans, Holbrook, Massachusetts

first day of school everything has a name

new love the up and down of her teabag

w. f. owen, Antelope, California

my best behavior—
a boiled artichoke
trimmed of its spines

among the bindweed flowers horse apples

Charles Trumbull, Santa Fe, New Mexico

spider web
his old baseball mitt
still catching flies

William Cullen Jr., Brooklyn, New York

poems I used to know—
a rabbit slips
under the hedge

Mary Frederick Ahearn, Pottstown, Pennsylvania

the last penstemon coloring me with their blues

Autumn Noelle Hall, Green Mountain Falls, Colorado

in and out
of moonlight
a dangling leaf

Sanjukta Asopa, Karnataka, India

egg white
slipping through my fingers
winter sunrise

Bill Deegan, Mahwah, New Jersey

fading contrails
a pheasant's tail tracks
in the snow

Marilyn Appl Walker, Madison, Georgia

old crow
still that tail waggle
in the walk away

Karen Reynolds, Greenfield, Massachusetts

In my memory
the black rains—
Hiroshima Day

Yasuhiko Shigemoto, Hiroshima, Japan

river fog—
a nameless ache
fills the page

Hansha Teki, Wellington, New Zealand

Insomnia—
I sense the night outside
the night within

Edward Zuk, Surrey, British Columbia

afraid of her
own shadow
afraid of her

Patty Hardin, Long Beach, Washington

knot of burrs . . .
the need
to nurse anger

Michele L. Harvey, Hamilton, New York

sudden hailstorm
the cluck and grumble
of free-range chickens

Margaret Chula, Portland, Oregon

returning the owl's call wind chimes

first day . . .
neither partridge nor pear
in his hands

Margaret Dornaus, Ozark, Arkansas

early spring sun I grate him finer and finer

three or four fingers deep red rose

Melissa Allen, Madison, Wisconsin

frayed cotton
she scrubs all-day color
off his collar

Mary Kipps, Sterling, Virginia

her string bikini
sinking below shifts
in the drawer

Sandra Sowers Platt, Columbia, South Carolina

Olympic gymnasts
I imagine touching
my toes

knee x-ray shows all the step aerobics

Anita Krumins, Toronto, Ontario

my coach seat . . .
through the night
so many positions

Tom Clausen, Ithaca, New York

midwinter:
lying still inside
the MRI

Tom Tico, San Francisco, California

our plans
mapped with care
the canals of mars

Roland Packer, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

water in the vase
on our daughter's grave—
a passing car

towhee's song—
we scan the meter
of a poem

Lenard D. Moore, Raleigh, North Carolina

singing a song
I almost know the words to
wind through the trees

Vivian MacKinnon, Tucson, Arizona

silence—
a frog pauses
before an encore

Asni Amin, Singapore

beer garden the sound of wild oats

John Soules, Wingham, Ontario

city bus
a diversity
of ring tones

Lauren Mayhew, Somerville, Massachusetts

summer deepens . . .
our talk leading us
to darker woods

Marjorie Buettner, Chisago City, Minnesota

Hiroshima Day
the ache
of knitting bones

J. Zimmerman, Santa Cruz, California

gathering dusk
the unanswered call
of a dove

tornado watch
something to talk about
at the viewing

Robyn Hood Black, Gainesville, Georgia

medical encyclopedia—
open at the page
he died of

Robert Davey, Dereham, England

long night . . .
another minute
clicks into place

Bill Kenney, Whitestone, New York

darkened sickroom
he tells me it's snowing
snowman snow

Billie Wilson, Juneau, Alaska

alone with the night
and so many stars—
inside i feel rain

Arch Haslett, Toronto, Ontario

the lilac in bud—
a storm swelling
out at sea

Brent Partridge, Orinda, California

tsunami—
her eyes search
for yesterday

once
in a blue moon
a blue moon

Raquel D. Bailey, St. Andrew, Jamaica

the
sound
of
the
rake
scraping
loneliness

a frog fills the garden of our attention

Carolyn Hall, San Francisco, California

quickenning breeze—
a stranger admires
my red scarf

rain on the skylight—
my reflection
cheeks wet

Jacqueline Pearce, Vancouver, British Columbia

her face
as she reads—
fireflies

Calvin Rambler, Prague, Czech Republic

watching the fire
my wandering mind
starting for home

Lynn McLure, Burnsville, North Carolina

Zen garden the waves don't move

haiku walk—
a flower pollinates
my notebook

Stanford M. Forrester, Windsor, Connecticut

a saxophone plays . . .
the slight percussion
of coins in a cup

David Caruso, Haddonfield, New Jersey

city sunset
the smile
you give others

Deb Baker, Concord, New Hampshire

repeating I love you mockingbird

Marian Olson, Santa Fe, New Mexico

steep cliffs
the splash of the guillemot's
red feet

Bruce H. Feingold, Berkeley, California

driving school
learning to let go . . .
of the brake

Matt Landon, Mineral Point, Wisconsin

wild roses
you can't tell her
anything

Michelle Tennison, Blackwood, New Jersey

wolf moon
after thirty years of deafness
mother hears voices

Alison Woolpert, Santa Cruz, California

april showers . . .
weeding
the bookcase

Julie Warther, Dover, Ohio

his wife's eulogy
a dryer sheet
clings to his pants

love again
we rename
a mountain

LeRoy Gorman, Napanee, Ontario

full moon
walking with her
chin up

John J. Han, Manchester, Missouri

rich ripe earth
deepening
dusk

Joan Morse Vistain, Antioch, Illinois

pickled plum
words I said
I'd never say

scattered sunlight
the trees that grew up
with my kids

Cara Holman, Portland, Oregon

trying on bras
the way she adjusts
her feet

her last week at home
the slow downward drift
of firework embers

Susan Antolin, Walnut Creek, California

stay
a little longer
hummingbird

Lucas Stensland, Brooklyn, New York

fade to black

pine
crickets

Eve Luckring, Los Angeles, California

In Memoriam

*Phyllis Walsh, Editor, Hummingbird
(1920~2012)*

morning glory
tendrils stilling
wind chimes

Frogpond 13:1, August 1990

Icy April night
my ah-breath rising
toward the comet

*To Find a Rainbow, 1997
Frogpond 22:1, Winter 1999*

*Cindy Zackowitz
(1965~2012)*

woodpecker—
the silence when my shadow
touches the tree

Frogpond 22:3, Autumn 1999

fresh snow
the last of the milk
saved for morning tea

Frogpond 23:2, Spring/Summer 2000

Autumn Seedpods

distant thunder . . .
a streak of blue
on the blackbird's wing

Chase Fire (age 17)
St. Claire Shores, Michigan

a crane
lifts its Giacometti
head

Matthew Pelletier (age 18)
Greensboro, North Carolina

Correction

Our apologies to Jim Kacian for misprinting his haiku in
Frogpond 35:2.

i hope i'm right where the river ice ends

Jim Kacian, Winchester, Virginia

Rengay

Stiletto Moon

Lucas Stensland, Brooklyn, New York
Gena Henrich, Eden Prairie, Minnesota

bending over
to adjust her stiletto
the moon looks back

*white Russians obscure
his view from the bar stool*

how long
she holds the umbrella
after the rain

*heart palpitations
in his coat pocket
a cell phone vibrates*

tonight her home feels
a million pavement cracks away

*red blue red blue
an ambulance parts
the sea of people*

Up in the Air

John Thompson, Santa Rosa, California

Renée Owen, Sebastopol, California

finding the words
to connect mind & sky
dragonfly wings

*from hand to hand
a frisbee surfs the currents*

darkening clouds
the fledgling crow's caw
out of range

*cross-country move
across the distance
my sibling's silence*

whirligig seeds
spinning in the canyon

*notes fly
from his desk to hers
paper moon*

The Sound of Empty

Julie Warther, Dover, Ohio

Angela Terry, Lake Forest Park, Washington

Cara Holman, Portland, Oregon

bullfrog twangs echo against high walls—the sound of an empty house	Julie
Costco size portions take five days to eat	Angela
someday we'll clean out those closets drifting leaves	Cara
all the bicycles hung on pegs	Julie
country road the space between winter clouds	Angela
bright red flowers on the yuletide camellia	Cara

Drifting Past

Ron C. Moss, Tasmania, Australia

Ferris Gilli, Marietta, Georgia

river light
a fly line cast deep
into the fog

*a pale gravel nest teems
with rainbow trout's eggs*

one leaf
and then another . . .
drifting past

*ice stretches
from bank to bank
curls call*

a schooling of tadpoles
in the half sunken dinghy

*above the estuary
a scarlet dragon kite
breaks free*

Haiku Sequences

Music to Work By

Edward J. Rielly, Westbrook, Maine

cow's tail
slapping my face
Dylan on the radio

slopping pigs . . .
the "Man in Black"
cautions me

Baez's voice
rising to the rafters
one more bale of hay

"in right field" . . .
cultivator rips weeds
from the corn rows

ankle deep in cow manure—
Seeger tells me
it could be worse

"all the flowers gone" . . .
corn crib bursting
with hard yellow ears

Seven Years After Katrina

Marian Olson, Santa Fe, New Mexico

even now
sudden tears . . .
“It’s okay, baby”

maddened
by oil and greed the man
struggles to talk

light summer rain
a feral cat peers
from a nailed-up house

appliance trash
a garbage truck misses
another pickup

sultry evening
neighbors on porch steps
joke and talk

the artist
with easel on Jackson Square
the mime

full August moon
new graffiti
on crumbling walls

building homes
to assist the displaced
Habitat for Humanity

coffee and beignets
good as ever
Café du Monde

hurricane warning—
from bars to shops
business as usual

Atlantic City

Barry George, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

off-season pier—
rows of seats facing
an empty sky

ocean view—
maids vacuuming
room after room

retirees
pushing their walkers
through the casino

at Starbucks
blackjack dealers
speaking Mandarin

slow night—
the boardwalk psychic
talking on her cell phone

how eagerly
the clerk looks up
in Cash Advances

casino
escalator down . . .
my shadow rises

lone slots player—
raising both arms
in triumph

ocean sunrise—
a mural showing
people at the beach

This World

Marian Olson, Santa Fe, New Mexico

where cows graze
on tender spring fields
and the rain rains

and the sun blooms
through soft brown-eyed days

where cows slip
on conveyer belts,
are put down, hosed off,

and wrapped in
neat plastic packages . . .

this world

Trinity

Charles Trumbull, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Human history changed in a flash on July 16, 1945, with the first explosion of an atomic bomb, which took place at the Trinity Site, a remote stretch of desert at the north end of the Jornada del Muerto (“Day’s Journey of the Dead Man”) in the Tularosa Basin east of Socorro, New Mexico. Located on the territory of White Sands Missile Range, the Trinity Site is closed to the public all but two days a year. Driving to the site proper, one passes through a guarded main gate and proceeds several miles south. About an acre of land around ground zero, simply a three-foot-deep declivity with a small basalt obelisk marking the spot, is cordoned off with chain-link fencing. Photographs from 1944–45 are hung museum-style along the fence. The McDonald Ranch, about three-quarters of a mile from ground zero, served as the headquarters and observation point for the scientists from Los Alamos who developed the device. A facsimile of Albert Einstein’s letter of August 2, 1939 to President Franklin D. Roosevelt advising him of the scientific feasibility of making an atomic bomb and warning him of a growing interest in the development of uranium in Nazi Germany is displayed in the McDonald Ranch house. A model of “Fat Man,” the bomb dropped on Nagasaki, is on display at the Trinity Site. (The first bomb, “Little Boy,” was used on Hiroshima.) Trinitite is the name given to the green glass-like mineral fused from sand by the intense heat of the atomic blast.

Sixty-five-plus years on, we all must contemplate how this event, the apotheosis of modern science, instantaneously shifted the political, economic, military, and especially moral landscape of the modern world. J. Robert Oppenheimer, chief scientist on the Manhattan Project, famously quoted a line from the *Bhagavad Gita*: “Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.”

This haiku sequence records, journal-style, impressions from a visit to the Trinity Site in October 2011.

October dawn
a fireball rises
over the mountain

Jornada del Muerto
autumn morning haze
fills the valley

looking for antelope
along the roadside—
DANGER signs

Trinity Site
in the guard's vehicle
fuzzy dice

I drive through the gate
feeling very American—
weeds through asphalt

small talk
“my father
was at Oak Ridge . . .”

children squabbling—
the grasshopper
hops away

ground zero
we walk into
a decades-old depression

black lava obelisk
like a tombstone
marks the spot

everyone wonders
about lingering radiation—
rattle of a locust

65 years:
the persistence
of trinitite

scraping the dirt
with my toe—
a grain of green glass

Trinity's garden:
snakeweed, Russian thistle,
yucca, sagebrush

Porta Potty
someone has scrawled
“Army”

visitors gawk
at souvenir mugs, hats, T-shirts, . . .
Fat Man

the Stars and Stripes stretched tight across a tourist's breasts

McDonald Ranch silence shattered by two sonic booms

“clean room”
at the ranch-house
the Einstein letter

empty magpie nest in a mesquite bush

we leave the site—
sand shifts slowly
in the *malpaís*

Slices of Light

A Cherita Collaboration

Ferris Gilli, Marietta, Georgia
Ron C. Moss, Tasmania, Australia

one bee sting

*the price of honey licked
from a fingertip*

*never sweeter
than his arms holding me
the morning after*

moon gathering

slices of light flicker
in the eyes of a dragonfly

a spent lifetime
with faraway dreams
in a rainbow sky

campfire

*an artist's knife conjures up
the wilderness of youth*

*still warm
the deer's free spirit
shaped in the wood*

lost pearls

a treasure map clenched
in the dying pirate's hand

the ghost ship
rides a dark storm
far out to sea

A Cherita Journey

Ferris Gilli

The cherita, a linked poetry form, consists of three brief verses that tell a story. The story begins with a one-line verse, continues with a two-line verse, and ends with a three-line verse. A cherita collaboration may involve a partnership that produces two or more stories. From beginning to end, “Slices of Light” seemed to have a life of its own, pulling its authors along with it, as is so often true of collaborative poetry.

Ron and I wanted to honor the natural world in each individual cherita, while presenting a clear season or sense of season. However, when I began with “one bee sting,” neither of us knew where that first group of linked, faintly erotic verses would lead. In the subsequent group, Ron revealed a fork in the path with vivid, concrete imagery, going well beyond the thrill of romance and physical love into an almost ethereal state of contemplation of one’s life and dreams.

With the third group, moving from a heavenly focus back to earth, I was inspired by Ron’s previous, pensive mood, which he expressed with natural images. I hoped to evoke memories of times past, while the idea of a wild creature’s spirit being reborn and yet contained in a simple piece of wood might be metaphor for humanity’s accomplishments and failures in our guardianship of nature. Finally, Ron shifted from the forest to the sea in the fourth group, with a lost treasure and implied desires that are quite different from those found in the first three groups.

And so, this cherita collaboration played itself out, finishing the journey from the beginnings of love and yearnings of the heart to the end of a life and a man’s longing for material gain, while making a thorough shift from the romantic and satisfied ambience of the first group to the dark, unfulfilled, chilling mood of the last. I should mention one of the major attractions of writing collaborative poetry—it often happens that at the beginning, we may think we know where we are going with a piece; but it is not until the last verse is written that we learn where we are and understand how we got there, how the work itself led the way. Ron and I certainly found this to be true with “Slices of Light.”

Renku

Sparrows' *Monogatari**

renju:

Hana Nestieva, Jerusalem, Israel

Valeria Simonova-Cecon, Cividale del Friuli, Italy

Origa, Okemos, Michigan

sabaki:

eiko yachimoto, Yokosuka City, Japan

New Year's Day—

not a cloud in the sky and
sparrows' *monogatari*

Ransetsu†

a silk ball ornament
made for the old man

eiko

timetable and
bare necessities in my bag
catching the first train

Valeria

a fast-talking baritone
hurrying out the gate

Origa

moon-viewing party
a note of lemongrass
in the tea vapor

Hana

the sheer shadow of mums
she placed in the alcove

eiko

* *Monogatari* derives from mono (things) and katari (to tell) and means the act of telling a tale or a story.

† Hattori Ransetsu (1654–1707), a samurai-turned haijin of Edo, was one of the ten renowned disciples of Bashō.

deep into autumn semester
the savings melting away
from the thrift box

Hana

a loud sneeze breaks
the silence of the library

Valeria

am I in love?
even the stained gargoyle
looks romantic

Valeria

sending off the courtesan
with a dragon tattoo

Origa

to write or not to write
a sense of agony
in the *Kreutzer Sonata*

eiko

these endless steppes covered
with snow and moonlight

Valeria

only crows
watch the mountain chapel
near the frozen falls

Hana

on dilapidated walls
the saints' austere faces

Origa

drafts from nowhere
carried to me a whisper,
"carpe diem"

eiko

a future father flies
a kite on the shore

Hana

oh, Princess Almond,
at last the sunbeams are bursting
on your fullest bloom

Valeria

all day long among branches the <i>uguisu</i> [‡] sings	Origa

with poignancy “we will always love you” Whitney Houston	Origa
he asked her name one night before the atomic bomb	eiko
under the umbrella I see grandpa kissing grandma why the tears?	Hana & eiko
almost vanishing, words on the black-and-white photo	Valeria
a sudden thunder shakes the water in the pond where soft reflections blur	Valeria
a great blue heron takes off with graceful fluency	Origa
from a <i>sumi</i> bucket her dripping brush lands on the paper-spread floor	eiko
the cook and the math teacher smoking together	Hana
stirring in his sleep a mongrel puppy sees dreams we’ll never know	Valeria

[‡]The *uguisu* is a grayish-green little bird noted for its springtime songs.

a boy with Asperger's
mumbling numbers eiko

through the city smoke
the sanguine moon appears
somewhat weathered Origa

do you hear a French horn
behind the chirping crickets? Origa

counting cockscombs
I watch the morning dew
just about to spill Origa

she stayed here for a while,
concludes the private detective Valeria

with her famous short hair
she gives a press conference
before leaving Rome eiko

the statue of Venus
naked under the rain Hana

by the rear porch
the garden wheelbarrow
full of gentle pink petals Hana

reflected in the soap bubbles
a fresh haiku book Origa

Tomegaki for Sparrows' *Monogatari*

eiko yachimoto

June 10, 2012, Yokosuka City, Japan

It was sometime last year when I received an invitation from Valeria to lead a *kasen*. Still feeling somewhat vulnerable after the East Japan Great Earthquake, I was not ready to accept. Being a *sabaki*, or a leader/facilitator/editor/director/poet in one, takes much energy, solid psychological footings, rich experience, and time. I did not decline either. We decided to start our *kasen* on January the first, 2012, via e-mail exchange.

Valeria in Italy invited Hana in Israel and Origa in the USA, which made a *renju* of four from four different countries. On top of our love of *renku*, we have one solid thing in common: we all feel attached to Russia and the Russian language. More, we share in the conviction that language must not be perceived as a convenient tool to get the surface meaning across. Language with its intricate life and its gradation of shadows is the expression of humanity loaded with elements of *monogatari* and nuanced feelings. In my high school days I spent a great many hours reading Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Dostoyevsky and when time came to select a college and a major, I chose to study Russian literature and language. For their part, Origa and Valeria have taken courses on Japanese; Hana's father, too, acquired the Japanese language after many years of effort.

Renku, with its distinctive charm and collaborative spirit, is a gift to humanity. In this on-line *kasen* we express our respect to past masters: to Hattori Ransetsu by borrowing his sparrows for our *hokku*; to Shiki by Origa's writing a subtle homage verse to his famous cockscomb haiku. And our *ageku* written by Origa celebrates the kind of trust we all put in the genre of *haikai*. These important positions of a *kasen* took on special meaning for us surrounded by witty, modern, and delightful links from Hana and Valeria. And I express my love and respect for Russian literary tradition through my verse on Tolstoy.

Writing a *kasen* with three Russian ladies with individual creativity was not necessarily smooth sailing, but we shared a celestial joy in completing the poetry on March 11, 2012, on which occasion Origa and Valeria had this to say:

“Japanese people have been an example and inspiration to all others when the world was watching how they withstood the disaster: with great spirit, endurance, and selfless interaction and feeling of communality. The feeling of collaboration lies at the basis of Japanese linked poetry—and that’s the most important thing that we learn when we compose *renku*, especially with our Japanese friends. With deep gratitude we look at them, learn from them, and collaborate with them.” ~Origa

“When we write linking poetry, we don’t link only words and verses—we link to each other. Each *renku* session is a precious moment of interpersonal (and in our case, intercultural) communication. I’m really grateful to our *sabaki* and other *renju* for ‘Sparrows’ *Monogatari*’ and to the Japanese people for inventing such a wonderful genre of poetry.” ~Valeria

Hana, Valeria, Origa, we have not yet met each other in person, but I now feel we are cousins.

Glossary

tomegaki, or a writing to stay, is a prose piece written by an individual often published with a text of poetry produced collaboratively.

kasen is the most popular form today of *renku* and/or *renga*, a genre of poetry in which multiple poets collaborate.

hokku, or a starting verse, is the engine of a long train of following verses in a *renku/renga*.

ageku, or a celebratory last verse, completes the chained verses.

haikai, an old all-but-forgotten term is re-emerging as a banner word to cover 1. *haiga*, 2. *haikai no renga* (which is now called *renku*), 3. *haiku* or independent *hokku*, 4. *senryu* (which evolved from train verses of *renku*), and 5. *haibun*.

Victorian Postcards

A Freeform *Jūnichō*

Annie Bachini, London, England

Steve Mason, London, England

blue baubles
on a white Christmas tree
still clouds

Annie

carollers' voices
reach a crescendo

Steve

something's
sizzling
in a huge pan

Annie

our favourite café
goes under the bulldozer

Steve

without mercy
lava rolls into
the abandoned city

Annie

a bucket of water
puts out the fire

Steve

rising tide
the sandcastle
slides away

Steve

Victorian postcards
fall from Grandma's bag

Annie

left over
place names
from an old empire

Steve

scrap metal
now the latest rage

Annie

so excited
he spills tea
over the carpet

Steve

the postman arrives
shaking off the drizzle

Annie

Tan Renga

Alison Woolpert, Santa Cruz, California

J. Zimmerman, Santa Cruz, California

digging up
the neighbor's blackberry shoots
on my side of our fence

*in the Afghan mountains
a drone strike goes astray*

Yotsumono

Peels

Susan Diridoni, Kensington, California

Eve Luckring, Los Angeles, California

tangerine peels
amidst the prospectus
New Year echoes

*brought back to shore
glimmering in the kelp*

en plein air
two painters aim
for speed

*talking a blue streak
to pass the time*

The Yotsumono is a four-verse sequence invented by John Carley. Two poets alternate in composing *hokku*, *wakiku*, *daisan*, and *ageku*. For more information, please see http://www.renkureckoner.co.uk/yotsumono_exercise.htm.

Haibun

These Days

Marjorie Buettner, Chisago City, Minnesota

These days lag behind like a widow turning just so, expecting her husband to come around the corner at any moment, hesitating in case. They seem to turn back on themselves—these days—reversing day for night, sun for moon, body for spirit. Dreams populate the minutes, the hours, the days one after the other and yet in this movement there is no progression; there is sound but no music. It is as if I have come upon my own funeral, my own well-dug grave, and now I must lie in it . . .

morning moon
the garden roses
leaning toward darkness

Bob Meyers

John Stevenson, Nassau, New York

I get mistaken for Bob Meyers again. Never knew him but he used to work here. Must have been more important than me. I'm told we could be twins. Sometimes I wonder if I really am Bob Meyers but have become befuddled with age into thinking otherwise. My mother had Alzheimer's and she used to take me for a cousin, a brother, a college classmate. I wonder if she also mistook herself. Perhaps in such moments, while confused about her own identity, she may have been right about my relationship to whoever she thought herself to be.

luna moth
on the window pane
all the jibber-jabber stops

A Little Extra

Susan Constable, Nanoose Bay, British Columbia

In 1965, my husband and I are on a teaching assignment in Ghana, West Africa. Many of the villagers live in small mud huts with earthen floors. Women carry water from the river and cook meals outside on open fires. Toddlers and roosters chase hens through red dust from the harmattan.

On school days, children leave home early, often walking barefoot for long distances—a bottle of ink balanced on their heads, a pen tucked into their curly hair. Sometimes they arrive with a huge smile and place a gift in my hands. It might be an orange, a few groundnuts, perhaps a flower they find along the trail on their way to class.

cracking the dawn open to a heartbeat

First Date

Jianqing Zheng, Greenwood, Mississippi

A girl on the doorsteps held out her palms for snowflakes; a boy walked toward her, saying he came to build a snowman with her because he promised her a year ago. He held a carrot in his right hand and a tangerine in his left. The carrot was for the snowman's nose; the tangerine for the girl's smile. After he built the snowman, the boy inserted the carrot in its face, and the girl peeled the tangerine and split it into two segments, half for the boy and half for herself. The snowman melted that winter; the tangerine has remained in their memories. Years later they became husband and wife. And the man said she was his first date, his other half.

after a squabble
wife titters at
his grin

Of Stars

Michael Ketchek, Rochester, New York

Most atoms, except the very simple ones like hydrogen and helium, were created in the cores of ancient stars during their demise. Carbon and oxygen, the building blocks of life, were forged in stars that exploded billions of years ago. These stellar remains formed new stars and solar systems. One of them ours.

me and you
stardust
looking at itself

Gunnison

Tom Painting, Atlanta, Georgia

I am with my ten-year-old son at the overlook trying to explain geological time when he takes a step toward the edge.

updraft
he calls it
levity

Inside-Out

George Swede, Toronto, Ontario

The morning ritual begins—a blank paper, a pen and a latte. First to mar the pristine white are the starter ideas gathered during emerging consciousness: a faint scent of urine in an elderly neighbor's house and an odorous green pond.

a bumblebee
bumps the study window
reflecting begonias

Fortune

Carol Pearce-Worthington, New York, New York

At the Gypsy Tea Kettle on Lexington Avenue, a woman who looked like a Jewish housewife told me I had met the man I was going to marry. He's a brunette, she said. I couldn't talk her out of that even though I swore she had to be wrong. But life is strange and leaves harvested in Sri Lanka or Kenya or China or Japan that wound up on Lexington Avenue in New York City found some way to speak to a Jewish woman wearing hoop earrings and a bandanna and told her just what was going to happen to me. The shop is gone, she's gone, and I married the brunette she found for me in the bottom of a tea cup.

tree roots
the buckle
of paving stones

The Way Home

For Hortensia Anderson

Cherie Hunter Day, Cupertino, California

Our tour director, Roberta, pronounces our destination slowly: *boo RAH no*—the soft rolling R in Italian. It's a 40-minute water taxi ride in the Venetian Lagoon. The town is known for artisanal lace making and boldly colored houses. The story goes that fishermen painted their houses in bright colors so they could easily spot them on their way home at dark.

night sea
the three hearts of a squid
translucent

Journal Entry / January 1

Roberta Beary, Bethesda, Maryland

1) practice patience. (in italian it's *patienza*.) 2) relearn italian. 3) find in the house (check attic, closets, and basement) all 3 editions of *oggi in italia* including: a) half-finished workbooks & b) cassette tapes. (note to self: does anyone listen to tapes besides me?) 4) who am i kidding? note to self: you know it is: whom am i kidding?; don't get off topic. 5) this is too hard—throw everything out: i) textbooks—all 3 editions; ii) workbooks (w/n finished); iii) cassette tapes. (really do this, do not put anything back—use outside garbage can, not inside one!) 6) find top 3 online italian courses. 7) read all course reviews by real people only. 8) compare (italian) course prices. 9) put all info on spreadsheet. (if needed ask for help. in italian it's *aiutatemi!*) 10) practice patience.

first light
a paper rose unfolds
the new year

Dilemma

Marian Olson, Santa Fe, New Mexico

She studied the faces of men on the dating website, reading their general profiles. “U2’s” profile was insane, the gibberish of a demented man obsessed with guns. “Happy” was homely but what a sense of humor. He stood in a tight kitchen space leaning on the counter in his white chef’s apron, pots and pans hanging from hooks overhead. “Real” stared out with a sincere face. Too serious. “Modest Genius” with a “comfortable income.” Nerdy. “Bad Boy Gone Good” and “Just Another Beautiful Day.” Maybe.

afternoon indulgence
which to choose
truffle or ice cream cone

Randolph Scott

Lucas Stensland, Brooklyn, New York

Even though it was an amicable divorce, and we made efforts to stay in touch, I never look forward to my ex-wife's parties. I haven't lived in this apartment in nearly three years; it feels funny being a guest. I started receiving invites because many of our mutual friends attended, but I recognize fewer faces with each gathering. People, especially men, often ask me how I know Sonja, and I find myself smoothing over the awkwardness when I tell them. Randolph Scott brushes against my leg while I'm making my third vodka Diet. He's purring, and it vibrates my shin. I wonder if he remembers me and if this is a special hello. He sniffs my pant leg and meows a question. I abruptly decide to leave and never come back to this apartment—not out of spite, it just finally feels right. But first I lean down and scratch his ears the way Randolph Scott said goodbye to the movies.

galloping home
with a telegram of good news
slender speedwell

Late Rains

Ethiopia

Bob Lucky, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The “small” rains haven't come. The days grow warmer. A bridge has popped off one ukulele. Strings have popped on another and the *charango*. And now a slow warp of the fretboards is creeping down the necks of another two ukes. It's like watching the progression of a terminal disease. No matter what I do, the weather lays its claim on me and mine.

passing cloud
the stillness of a skink
in its shadow

Russian Sage

Aubrie Cox, Muncie, Indiana

In an online role-playing game, my character is a drug addict who can see the future. Although his addiction has led him to homelessness, poor judgment, and incomprehensibility, he remains kindhearted and bears little ill will toward anyone. He was inspired by my uncle, who at forty-five, still lives with my grandparents.

My mother says things will be better when he goes to prison again. His court date has been moved back five times over the last year, but he's finally due to be sentenced next week. Supposedly he'll get at least ten years for robbing the gas station with a box cutter. He stole less than fifty dollars, which he spent on drugs in an attempt to overdose.

iceland poppy
we guess the color
of new buds

On Father's Day, I cook lunch for the family. My uncle wanders in and out of the house, yelling that he's bored and can't find B, his cat. He's shaved his head and face, and there's still blood on his chin and neck. Unable to tell if he's high or simply manic, I stir the pasta. After another trip into the garage, he stops by the stove: "I'm going to miss B when I go to jail. You think they'll let [Ma] bring him in for a visit? Like on a leash or something."

Although I doubt it, I tell him I don't know, and my uncle traipses away. Meanwhile, my grandmother helps my grandfather. His walker creeps from the carpet to linoleum and takes up most of the hallway. My uncle yells at my grandparents by their first names, then squeezes past them to go upstairs.

My character would never do this.

russian sage . . .
my fishing line drags
across the clouds

Thursday

Dianne Garcia, Seattle, Washington

Saturday my father was told his diagnosis; by Sunday he says he's forgotten it. He cancelled Wednesday's doctor visit; sitting at his sunny breakfast table he eats lemon cake and chocolate. He complains that his lover no longer enters his bedroom—but, he tells me—"she might."

across the gate
to the cemetery
a spider's web

A Sunday Morning

Dawn Bruce, St. Leonards, NSW, Australia

Ripe peaches on the breakfast table scent the air with a false summer. Outside, the rain silvers the garden, spatters the patio to glistening grey. I hear the thud of someone in the upstairs flat, dropping shoes . . . or maybe a body, I laugh to myself. The cat pads in from the hall, curls himself around my feet and settles for a snooze.

leafing through
our last photo album
autumn mist

Evening

Jim Westenhaver, Tacoma, Washington

Light rain in the evening. You sit with your flowers. You can't come up with what makes you . . .

chemo your toenails are cut

Write Time

Thomas Chockley, Plainfield, Illinois

I'm walking. I'm waiting. Inspiration? Kernel of a haiku? Waiting. Inspiration? I keep an eye open as I go. It's a hot day, and walking in this direction, there's little wind, zero wind. Inspiration? Perhaps a gut check will help. What am I feeling emotionally today? Which experience comes up? Waiting. Waiting. Halfway point in my morning walk, and there's a bit of a breeze in this direction. Inspiration? What caught my eye so far? Check the gut again. Bit of anxiety. The clock is ticking.

notebook paper
the wind blows bamboo leaves
into wordless lines

Yosemite Recollection

Roger Jones, New Braunfels, Texas

His family stopped by a clearing in the park, set up their picnic baskets under some tall fir trees, and unpacked the food. The phrase "vernal light" kept coming into his mind. He reached into the basket and pulled out a roast beef sandwich and a black cherry soda. This was before pop tops, so he had to fish around a little more for the "church key" opener, with which he punched two triangular holes in the top of the can, psshht! Bright sunlight cast an aura on the fuzzy seed-heads of nearby meadow grass. A waterfall unfurled silently in the distance. In his memory, he sees a deer step out of the shade of the tree and venture cautiously into the grass towards them, though he can't be certain years later that this part isn't an imaginary embellishment.

mountain river
putting your finger
in the same current twice

Outfoxed

Autumn Noelle Hall, Green Mountain Falls, Colorado

I.

a copper leaf
hanging in the air
musk

My dog smells, but does not see, the vixen. She is a mosaic of ginger fur between the grout of gambol oak branches. The line from her eyes to mine pulls taught as his leash. In silent accord, I heed her plea not to reveal her hiding place.

his paw prints
masking her paw prints
in the mud

II.

sound
paving the pathway
it travels

We hear, but do not see, the vixen. She is marking her hunting grounds from waterfall to pond in a vocal downhill stream. The scream and its sentiment could be human, were its pitch more varied, its intervals less fixed. Like the moonless sky, her meaning is dark and clear: Mine.

rending
the garment of night
fox cries

III.

icicles
this row of needle teeth
biting cold

I see but do not see the vixen. A line of tracks tight as stitches quilts my sleeping garden. Here is the place she pounced, four feet landing as one, a back-breaking blow—one less deer mouse squeaking beneath the snow. In fox's gnawing belly, six kits begin to grow.

spring
a dream in the shape
of a duck egg

Solidarity

Shelly Chang, Oakland, California

March 23, 1847, in Scullyville, Oklahoma. Sixteen years since relocation by the Trail of Tears. News of the Irish potato blight in the papers. Collection taken up by the Choctaw Nation. A hundred and seventy dollars donated.

famine monument
one gaunt figure
carries another

Margins

David Grayson, Alameda, California

We're in his office. He writes names on the whiteboard. He pauses and takes a deep breath. "I've listed six team members," he says, tapping the marker on the wall. "By the time we leave, we will have removed three names. On Friday, these three will no longer be working here."

He snaps the cap on the marker, and sinks back into the chair. He drums the desk with his fingers, and then looks at me.

seeing each name
as if for the first time—
the soft eraser

Gone

Mike Montreuil, Ottawa, Ontario

For some strange reason, I was thinking of Mars. I'm not sure why. But the thought came to me that there isn't any more mystery to the planet. Rovers and scientific exploration have ruined its magic. The canals are gone and so are the tentacled Martians. Someone else's Garden of Eden is no more. Mars is now a celestial object of rocks and dust with a bit of ice and lots of wind.

cloudless night
one by one
her secrets revealed

She Tells It Again

Ellen Compton, Washington, D.C.

“... oh, and what-was-his-name, four times married and never even thought about divorce. Every so often a brother-in-law would show up and try to shoot ’im. . . . A backwoods mountain coal town. And us just married. Kerosene lamps. No ice tea—well, no electricity! If it was summer, when the train came through the hollow the conductor would throw your father a block of ice. . . . Well, the coal played out and the mine shut down, so. . . .” All these years, all the times she’s told it, and I thought I understood. “Mama,” I say, “would you really rather have stayed?”

sleet at the window—
a book of faded snapshots
with summer faces

The Yellow House on Conway Street

Margaret Chula, Portland, Oregon

is no longer yellow, the color of sunshine, of five towheaded children spinning marbles into a mud hole. Someone has painted it the gray of elephant’s breath, of dust kiddies, the acrid smoke of Daddy’s Camels. The porch is still there and the steps I hid beneath in the dirt that smelled of fear as I listened to Mother and Daddy argue before he left for work in the olive green Plymouth. No sign of us anywhere. No walnut tree or the nuts we hoarded in the pantry for winter. No hydrangeas to make “hamburgers” with and sell on the sidewalk. Not even a swing in the backyard.

a gnarled tree root
cracks open the sidewalk
Pop Goes the Weasel

Essays

The Life and Death of Chine

Jeff Robbins, Fukuoka, Japan

Assisted by Sakata Shoko, Fukuoka, Japan

Many are the joys in my study of the great 17th-century poet and essayist Matsuo Bashō; here is one—where we catch a glimpse of Chine, the fascinating yet retiring younger sister of Bashō's follower Mukai Kyorai. The final three haiku in this article, by Bashō, Kyorai, and Chine, will be familiar to many readers of *Frogpond*; they can be found in a number of books and sites on the Internet. From these three haiku we learn of Chine's death. From Kyorai's *Ise Journal*, however, we can discover her life. This journal is an absolutely unnoticed gem,¹ not only a literary gem, but also a gem of anthropology portraying this unique and vital young woman of 17th-century Japan. Also here we meet Kyorai, a 35-year-old man traveling with his 26-year-old sister, sensitive to her feelings, giving her good energy, paying attention to the poetry she writes (far better than his own verses), and enabling her to learn the wide-open world outside her parents' house.

In their biography of Kyorai,² Oichi Hatsuo and Wakaki Taiichi tell us that he was born in 1651 in Nagasaki and was the second son of a doctor of Chinese medicine. When he was 8 years old, he accompanied his father to Kyoto, where the family settled. At age 16 he was adopted by his uncle in Fukuoka, who needed a son to inherit the household. When his aunt gave birth to an heir, 25-year-old Kyorai went back to Kyoto. With his older brother taking over their father's medical practice, Kyorai had lots of free time. He helped out in the clinic, did things about the house, and was active as a follower of Bashō (another second son with leisure time). In the autumn of 1686 Kyorai took Chine on a pilgrimage to the Ise Shrine, central shrine of the Sun Goddess. He later sent a copy of his *Ise Journal* to Bashō.

In the following excerpts from the *Ise Journal*, prose and poetry by Kyorai are in italic font and **poems by Chine are in bold italic**. Commentary written by myself is in ordinary print. At essay's end, **the prose and poetry of Bashō are in boldface**.

From the *Ise Journal*:

*The sun hot yet wind cool on our heads,
I take my younger sister on a pilgrimage to Ise.*

*Until Ise
my good companions,
morning geese*

The beauty of Chine's verse is in her use of double meaning: "Kyorai is my good companion" along with "wild geese are our good companions." The feeling she has watching a flock of geese fly in the direction they are walking, and her feeling for her brother, become one. Rarely in history or literature do we see so affectionate a brother-sister relationship.

Kyorai and Chine stay at an inn:

The innkeeper's wife is such an uba

Uba, written with the characters for "old women," suggests a wet nurse, a rather earthy sort of woman (think of Juliet's nurse). I love the sound of *uba* (rhymes with "tuba") here.

*She turns her face toward us and shouts
"Fresh from the mortar! Before they cool down!"*

The innkeeper's wife was making *mochi* rice cakes—glutinous rice boiled and, while still warm, pounded and kneaded in a mortar, then molded into a cake with a surface as soft and smooth as a baby's bottom. To set the scene, it is also important to know that in those days, Japanese women used face powder containing white lead to fill in the wrinkles and make their skin as smooth as a child's *mochihada*. Kyorai says it is the innkeeper's job to advertise his wife's rice cakes, but Chine does it for him.

*Chine cannot stop laughing.
On behalf of the innkeeper she writes:*

*If you will not
remove that face powder,
when oh when
can we see the wrinkles
in your ubamochi?*

*Kōfun o
mi ni tayasanu wa
itsu tote mo
shiwa no miezaru
uba ga moci kana*

紅粉を
身にたやさぬは
いつとても
皺の見えざる
姥がもち哉

Chine uses the classical *tanka* form for her hilarious look inside women's concern for their aging skin. Change the final words "*ubamochi*" to "old woman's skin," and you will see what Chine means. Shoko comments that Chine's verse is *onna-rashiku*, "womanly, feminine." I, like Chine, cannot stop laughing.

Another night at another inn, Kyorai writes

*Chine's first time away from the realm of our parents;
in sympathy with her upset, I say what I can to divert her.*

Where else in the world is there a record like this from so long ago? Kyorai actually pays attention to his sister's mind and heart. Feminist Tokuzo Akiko says of this era in Japan, "criticism of women's intelligence, autonomy, and moral worth was essential to the total subordination of women that society demanded."³ A pretty grim prognosis, but Kyorai appears to have been an exception (as was Bashō). Tokuzo goes on, "Parents thus protected their daughters' chastity and morality by isolating them both from men and from rational and critical thought." Yet Chine's parents allowed her to go on this journey, and she seems quite adept at rational and critical thought.

Later on in the journey:

*In a house across the way, young and old women gather,
hulling rice and singing until late night, with the door open,
we hear them.*

*At each lodging
the rice-hulling songs
are different*

On her first journey, Chine learns of human diversity—that people only one day apart have the same traditions, but observe them in a different way. She pays especial attention to women at work. Near Ise, apparently at the place where Bashō, two years before, wrote a poem about women washing root vegetables in the river,⁴ Chine writes:

*Put in water
hands better be wiped,
the autumn wind*

Chine is so fundamental, so sensory. Where skin is wet, how the wind penetrates! All of us in the temperate zone who work in unheated water can appreciate the awareness in her hands of autumn and what follows autumn.

*We change our clothes and fix our hair
Then with deep respect go to visit the Inner Shrine.*

It is not appropriate to wear dirty travel clothes or loose hanging hair when visiting the home of the Sun Goddess.

*Our eyes could not be parted from the scene . . .
In the evening we buy souvenirs for everyone at home,
and so it becomes night.*

Thus ends our time within Kyorai's journal. Chine's journey with her brother was her final fling before marriage. She had one daughter in 1687, but in the summer of 1688 when Bashō was in Kyoto he learned that Chine was gravely ill (possibly

with complications from her second childbirth). Her brother used all his medical skill, but still she passed away—after writing her *jisei no ku* or “farewell to life” poem:

*Easily glows
and easily goes out
a firefly*

Kyorai responded to his sister’s poem with this verse:

*On my palm
sadly goes out
the firefly*

—plain simple words to express Chine’s humility and Kyorai’s grief.

From Kyoto, Bashō traveled east to Edo (now Tokyo). In 1691 when Kyorai edited the anthology *Monkey’s Raincoat*, he included the following headnote and verse by Bashō:

**While in Gifu I hear that Chine has passed away
so I send these words to the home of Kyorai.**

**Now the houserobe
of the one who is gone—
airing in the heat**

**Naki hito no
kosode mo ima ya
doyōboshi**

無き人の
小袖も今や
用干し

Clothing gets musty in the warm moist summer, so one sunny day everything is hung outside to “air in the heat.” Bashō cannot be with Kyorai’s family in their grief, but the image he

sends to them transcends the distance between Gifu and Kyoto. One of Chine's *kosode*, a simple kimono for household wear, is being kept as a memento and is hanging outside with the rest of the family's clothing. The traces of Chine's being linger in the fabric she wore, gently dispersing in the warm breeze.

In the first paragraph I said Chine was "unique and vital." Each of the four haiku and one tanka reprinted here convey this woman's own real-life perceptions; she does not just rewrite an old verse, but rather creates an entirely new poem. In patriarchal Japan young women were trained to stay quiet, smile, and nod at what the man says—but Chine puts her perceptions, her mind, right out there. Her laughter resounds through the centuries. May her light continue to shine in our thoughts.

Notes

1. I could only find the complete journal in one Japanese anthology, *Kōtei Kikōbunshū (zoku)*, edited by Kishigami Shiken, published in 1900, forgotten and falling apart in the archives of the Fukuoka City Library. Most of the journal along with commentary is given in the biography noted below, pp. 34–41.
2. Oichi Hatsuo and Wakaki Taiichi. *Mukai Kyorai*. Tokyo: Shintensha, 1986, p. 21.
3. Tokuwa Akiko. *The Rise of the Feminist Movement in Japan*. Tokyo: Keio University Press, 1999, p. 41.
4. *Women washing taro, / if Saigyō were here / would sing the song*



Jeff Robbins, the father of three adult daughters, has studied the haiku, prose, linked verse, letters, and spoken word of Bashō, as a hobby, for over thirty years, focusing on the works about women and children. Before he passes on, he wishes to leave behind an awareness of Bashō's reverence for women and children so far ahead of his time. Sakata Shoko, the mother of two small daughters and a certified instructor in Japanese Language, has for four years assisted Jeff in his research and corrected his frequent misinterpretations of Bashō's meaning. You can see more of Jeff and Shoko's work at <www.basho4women2youth.join-us.jp>.

Dog Star: An Interview with Akito Arima

by Michele Root-Bernstein, East Lansing, Michigan

At the Fifth Haiku Pacific Rim Conference, held September 5–9 in Pacific Grove, California, participants had the privilege of attending a reading by the well-known Japanese poet, Akito Arima. Author of thirteen books of haiku and haiku master of Ten'i, one of the most prominent haiku groups in Japan, Arima has served as president of the Haiku International Association and played a leading role in reaching across the borders of haiku practice. *Einstein's Century* (2001), a collection of his poetry in English translation, has been praised for "a certain traditional elegance and . . . delicate, confident cosmopolitanism."¹ A new selection of his haiku appears in English translation in *Bending Reeds*, the Yuki Teikei Haiku Society Members' Anthology for 2012 (see review, this issue).

In tandem with his poetic vocation, Akito Arima has also pursued a world-class career in nuclear physics, contributing notably to explanatory models of nuclear structure. He has additionally served education, science, and Japan as president of the University of Tokyo (1989–1993), president of Japan's Institute of Physical and Chemical Research (1993–1998), and Minister of Education, Science, Sports, and Culture (1998–2000). Among numerous awards from around the world, he has received the Humboldt Award, the Franklin Institute Wetherill Medal, the Bonner Prize, the French Legion of Honor, Knight Commander of the British Empire, and twelve honorary doctorates. Named a person of cultural merit in his own country, he has been awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Grand Cordon (2004), and the Order of Culture (2010), Japan's most prestigious cultural honor.

Intrigued by his extraordinary accomplishment in both art and science, I requested an interview with Dr. Arima, which in the mysterious machinations of conference planning became a public conversation directly after his reading and before his keynote presentation the next day on "A Poetry Called Haiku." I submitted my questions to Dr. Arima some weeks before our meeting. What follows is a condensed version of our exchange.

MICHELE ROOT-BERNSTEIN: Dr. Arima, *sensei*, there has been much recent discussion in the pages of English-language haiku collections and journals about the differences between traditional and modern haiku. For examples of both one might turn to your book *Einstein's Century*. As an instance of traditional haiku, I might suggest:

buying hydrangeas—
the river the color
of dusk (p. 74)

As an instance of contemporary or *gendai* haiku, I might suggest:

tulip petals dropping . . .
one of them the ear
of Vincent Van Gogh (p. 71)

Can you explain the poetic impulses behind these two poems? Do you see yourself as traditional or modern or both in your craft?

AKITO ARIMA: Both. [Laughter] I like to mix things up. I often mix up two theories to make one. So, my answer is, I like both traditional and modern. And if you have an extremely traditional haiku, a deep traditional one, it's very modern. Kyoshi² said new things can be found in the deep interpretation. So, traditional and modern are the same. Very simple.

MRB: Simple like haiku! Dr. Arima, perhaps you are familiar with the American poet E.E. Cummings, who also had some interest in haiku. He was not just a groundbreaking poet, he was also an enthusiastic painter. In fact, he initially wanted to be a painter, rather than a poet. And when asked whether his painting and his poetry interfered with each other, he had this to say:

Why do you paint?
For exactly the same reason I breathe.
That's not an answer.
There isn't any answer.
How long hasn't there been any answer?

As long as I can remember.
And how long have you written?
As long as I can remember.
I mean poetry.
So do I.
Tell me, doesn't your painting interfere with your writing?
Quite the contrary: they love each other dearly.³

You are known for your contributions to physics, to haiku, and to education policy. Are these activities, especially the science and the art, of equal value or importance to you? Do your physics and your haiku compete with each other or “love each other dearly”?

AA: First I wish to think about E.E. Cummings. I love his poems. They look like paintings. He organizes lines and line beautifully, sometimes short long short long and sometimes you see the lines become shorter and shorter, triangle shape. He's really a painter, an artist. So in that sense in his poems both paintings and poems are mixed up. Again mixing. Also, if Cummings writes a poem in three lines, it looks like haiku! So now, what is your question? [Laughter]

I will answer you. If I am interested in the physics at hand, I continue to work ten hours, one hundred hours, no problem. But sometimes I have trouble solving my own questions. Nature is very cunning in hiding her secrets. In that case, I go back to haiku. I look at the other side of nature. Then, she frankly tells me her beauty. I turn from physics and very detailed theory to gigantic scenery or the detailed beauty of flowers or the beautiful song of the insect. I write a haiku. Then my energy concerning physics comes back. Then I look at my problem again with different eyes. Then I can suddenly find the heart of a secret of nature.

Like symmetry. My specialty is the dynamical symmetry of nuclear physics. If anyone here has trouble sleeping, please tell me. I can easily make you sleepy by telling you about the dynamical symmetry of nature! How to make a universe, how to make a nuclear structure—and immediately, in minutes, you can sleep very well. [Laughter]

Sometimes I have difficulty finding little poems, little haiku, so even after two or three hours I cannot write a good haiku at all. Then I go back to my studio to study physics. So both of them help each other very much. Physics, or more generally science, and haiku, or more generally arts, both of them show us different faces of nature. One is the beautiful side of nature; the other is a very delicate fine structure of nature. There is no conflict between haiku and physics.

There is, however, another difficulty. My specialty in physics deals with many-body systems. More than sixty years I have been working in this field. So I thought I could be expert at the many-body theory of human beings. This was completely wrong. There is no way to solve the many-body problem in human beings; it's more complicated, more erratic. Politics and administration are more cumbersome, more tiresome. So don't go into administration; don't touch politics. There's no reward at all. That's my answer.

MRB: It sounds to me like the poetry is both a recreation and a re-creation that prepare you to go back to the physics and vice-versa.

AA: But don't touch politics. [More laughter]

MRB: Agreed. Shall we move on? The introduction to *Einstein's Century* tells us you were mentored in haiku by Seison Yamaguchi,⁴ a professor of engineering as well as haiku master. Though I also understand that you wrote haiku from a very young age at the knees of your parents. However, my question is this: Do you belong to a tradition in Japan of nursing concurrent interests in art and science? Or, is there a two-culture gap in Japan, as many people believe there is in the West?⁵

AA: Between art and science, there is not so much of a gap in Japan. For instance, Seison, my teacher, was as you said an engineer. And Torahiko Terada⁶—he was an expert in seismology and physics and the first to introduce x-ray physics to Japan just two years after the Laue spots caused by x-rays were discovered in Europe. He was also good at haiku and very good at essays.

Terada was father of my teacher, so I am his grandson as far as physics is concerned. So I follow his way to write haiku. He's my role model. However, he was better than I. Why? Because he never touched politics and administration! [Laughter]

MRB: So in Japan it's perfectly acceptable—even admirable—to pursue a dual vocation in science and art?! I'm looking forward to the day when an American physicist writes poetry and gets credit—and a reputation—for both passions.

AA: But in the U.S. there have been many physicists who were very good musicians, for instance Albert Einstein and Frank Oppenheimer (younger brother of Robert).

MRB: True, though these days in the U.S. we tend, I think, to ignore the synergies of art and science. Never mind that now, let's look to the next question. Dr. Arima, you have been an active proponent of the internationalization of haiku. Does haiku, as a developing tradition and creative practice, benefit from close interaction or association with the concerns of other cultures, other arts and sciences? Where does the future of haiku lie?

AA: Future of haiku? Please wait for my talk tomorrow morning, when I will explain why haiku is becoming so popular! Here's a preview: it's very short; the theme is fixed, something related to nature; and it's very easy for us to remember. In fact, even I can write an English haiku. Why? I don't need to have a big vocabulary. A hundred English words is good enough to write an English haiku. [Laughter] Two or three words in the first line, three or four words in the second line, and the third line, maybe two. Only ten words is good enough to write one haiku. And as far as theme is concerned, mainly we talk about the beauty of nature and human life directly related to nature. We don't talk about anything complicated. So haiku poets can be lazy. [Laughter] Please wait until tomorrow morning. Okay? Make the next question an easy question, please!

MRB: I was going to ask is that why, because it's so apparently simple, haiku is going to work its way around the world and we'll have haiku in every language?

AA: Seriously, I would like to say we need haiku in this century. In order to achieve global peace, we must understand each other. The best method is to make haiku.

MRB: About that making, can you tell us something of your creative and compositional processes? Where do haiku come from? Striking images? Given lines that drop into your mind? In bits and pieces or wholesale? Are you a Mozart (composing in your head, spontaneously) or a Beethoven (composing on paper, laboriously)?

AA: I am not a Beethoven. Intuition is most important to me. Imagination. And also creativity. Sometimes it takes many hours to make one poem. I wish to change this word and so on. But sometimes instantly I can make a haiku. For instance, I recited earlier a poem of mine about a golden temple.⁷ I went to this famous temple, which 400 years ago Bashō also visited, and I remembered Bashō’s haiku.⁸ Then, in one second, I wrote my whole poem, just after looking at water rushing, coming from melted snow. It was beautiful scenery. So, sometimes it takes time; sometimes it doesn’t take time. It depends on the situation. The important thing is how to concentrate myself in the poem. Always we must watch what’s going on.

MRB: In other words, be ready, whichever way the haiku comes. Dr. Arima, you may know of Sofia Kovalevskaya, a mathematician and poet of the 19th century. She argued that, for her, both pursuits—the science and the art—required “the utmost imagination.” She wrote: “[I]t is impossible to be a mathematician without being a poet in spirit.”⁹ So I’m asking you, might the reverse also be true? Is it impossible to be a poet without also being a mathematician (or a scientist) in one’s soul?

AA: As Kovalevskaya said, imagination is most important. In order to make a good haiku, in order to create a new theory, in order to create a new way of experimenting, it takes imagination. And, funny coincidence, in Japanese the word for imagination [想像¹⁰] sounds like *sōzō*. Creativity, creation [創造¹⁰] also sounds like *sōzō*. So in Japanese *sōzō* means two things: imagination and creativity. The study of

nature as well as art both require us to have two things—in lazy Japanese, one word, but for diligent Americans, two words. Creativity and imagination, both of them are very important.

MRB: If I may offer a paraphrase, you think there's an art to science. Is there also a science to haiku?

AA: Yes. As I said, in order to find a new theory in science we have to look at nature's fine structure, how delicately made it is. The delicacy of nature reflects its beauty. Physics tries to understand the delicacy, haiku or art tries to find the beauty, of nature. Both are the same. No question. [Laughter]

MRB: No question, both are the same? Or are we done?!

AA: No, you can have another question, if you wish.

MRB: I wonder, then, if you would comment on one of your poems in *Einstein's Century*?

the Dog Star:
Einstein's century
comes to an end (p. 26)

My question, what new age is dawning?

AA: New age? In physics? You ask me the most difficult questions! [Laughter] Last month a very important discovery was made; the origin of mass was finally solved.¹¹ But still in the universe there are many steps of development we don't understand yet. Particularly important in the life sciences, why is there life, why do living things have memories? Another important, if minor, question concerns the asymmetry of life. Do any of you have your heart on your right? One among 100,000 people has the heart on the right side of the body. If physical law were strictly obeyed in life then we would have to have the same number of people with hearts on the right as on the left—fifty/fifty. But living things seem to break the symmetry

very severely. Why is this so? Nobody knows. By the end of this century, however, those questions will be solved.

MRB: And, in the meantime, we may use haiku to contemplate the beauties of asymmetry in living things?

AA: Yes.

MRB: Arima *sensei*, we would be so honored if you would choose one your haiku and read it aloud and tell us something about it and what it means to you.

AA: Already I read so many haiku. Aren't you tired? [Laughter]

MRB: One of your favorites?

AA: About 40 years ago, I wrote a haiku while attending a small physics conference here at Asilomar. But it takes time to find it. So I'll read something else.¹²

fuyubae no sumiiru mahō no ranpu kau

winter fly
living in the magic lamp . . .
I buy it

I went to India and I bought a lamp. I hoped it was the magic lamp of Aladdin, but it was not. I made another poem there:

tōmin no hebi wo okoshite hebitsukai

arousing the snake
from its winter sleep—
the snake charmer

This guy showed his snake in the winter, when the snake would rather sleep. There are many interesting sights, when you go out from your own country.

Notes

1. Gary Snyder, jacket blurb. Akito Arima. *Einstein's Century, Akito Arima's Haiku*. Trans. Emiko Miyashita & Lee Gurga. Decatur, IL: Brooks Books, 2001.
2. Kyoshi Takahama (1874–1959), Japanese writer and poet, was a close disciple of Masaoka Shiki and guardian of traditional haiku style.
3. Forward to exhibition catalogue, *Paintings and Drawings of e.e. cummings*. Rochester, NY: Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, 1945.
4. Seison Yamaguchi (1892–1988), professor of engineering at Tokyo University, was the student of Kyoshi Takahama in matters haiku.
5. In 1956 the physicist and novelist C.P. Snow published an essay called “The Two Cultures” in which he argued that a gap between the humanities and the arts, on one side, and the sciences and social sciences, on the other, “has been getting deeper under our eyes; there is now precious little communication between them . . .” (Rpt. in *The Scientist vs. the Humanist*. George Levine & Owen Thomas, eds. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1963, p. 1.) The two-culture debate remains unresolved to this day, with some scholars and practitioners charting the differences between the arts or humanities and the sciences in educational, ethical, even psychological terms and others stressing the commonalities, usually in terms of intellectual and creative endeavor.
6. Torahiko Terada (1878–1935) was a physics professor at the University of Tokyo whose x-ray diffraction experiments, reported in 1913, independently confirmed European explanations of the observed phenomena (that is, the pattern of spots produced on photographic film when x-rays were beamed through a crystal, first recorded by Max von Laue and named in his honor). Terada set Japanese physics in this area on course.
7. The Hall of Light (Hikaridō) at Chūsoji Temple in Hirazumi: *a single thread / from the Hall of Light: / snowmelt water* (Arima).
8. *midsummer rain / has fallen and yet remains— / the Hall of Light* (Bashō).

9. Sofia Kovalevskaya. *A Russian Childhood*. Trans. B. Stillman. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1978, pp. 102–103.
10. From Denshi Jisho—*Online Japanese Dictionary* at <http://jisho.org/>. The two kanji for imagination denote, in English, thought /image. The two kanji for creation denote, in English, origin (start) /make (create).
11. In early July 2012 physicists working with CERN’s Large Hadron Collider announced the discovery of what many believe to be the Higgs boson, key to the origin of particle mass. According to *The New York Times*, “The finding affirms a grand view of a universe described by simple and elegant and symmetrical laws—but one in which everything interesting, like ourselves, results from flaws or breaks in that symmetry” (Dennis Overbye, “Physicists Find Elusive Particle Seen as Key to Universe,” July 5, 2012, A1).
12. From *Einstein’s Century*, p. 50.



Michele Root-Bernstein has one foot in the humanities and social sciences, another in the arts. Co-author of Sparks of Genius, The 13 Thinking Tools of the World’s Most Creative People (1999) with her husband and colleague, Robert, she studies creative imagination across the life cycle. She also writes haiku, appearing in a number of North American journals and in A New Resonance 6. Currently, she serves as associate editor of Frogpond.

Meaning in Haiku¹

by Charles Trumbull, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Often when I receive haiku submissions for the journal I edit I reject them because I feel that they lack meaning. They don't speak to me. What exactly am I saying? What does "meaning" mean? What meaning do I expect from a haiku?

This question comes up again and again in haiku discussions. While Lee Gurga and Scott Metz were discussing work to be included in *Haiku 21*, the major new anthology of modern haiku, Gurga told attendees at the second "Midwest: Cradle of American Haiku" conference in Mineral Point, Wisconsin, in 2010 that he is especially keen to find meaning in haiku. "For a long time my ideal has been haiku that convey a real experience transparently but that also have several other levels of meaning, metaphorical or symbolic or whatever, available to the reader. This is what I believe adds richness to haiku and makes them worth keeping as part of the poetic canon."

Trying to pin down "meaning" in haiku is like trying to nail Jello to the wall. One could delve into historical haiku and its predecessors. One could go deeply into semiology—the study of all kinds of signs, textual, verbal, social, etc. I'll try to steer a middle course. I'll start with a compressed version of what the online *Encarta World English Dictionary* has to say about meaning and its partial synonyms: mean•ing is defined as "1. what a word, sign, or symbol means; 2. what somebody intends to express; 3. what something signifies or indicates; and 4. psychological or moral sense, purpose, or significance."

Significantly, these definitions all objectify the notion of "meaning": it is the target of some sort of effort at communication; the referent of a word, sign, or symbol; the "what" that somebody intends to express or indicate, the purpose of an utterance. Well, then, if *any* utterance has *some* meaning, what is it that I'm missing in those haiku submissions that don't speak to me? Can there be such a thing as a haiku completely without communicative purpose? How about computer-generated random haiku? Consider this verse

generated specially for me on the *randomhaiku* Web site:

behind the gravel,
Brazil plundered happily.
Monkey stops peeking.

This bit of doggerel may be random, but is it really devoid of all meaning? After all, some person invested a lot of gray matter in selecting a lexicon from which the computer could choose words, worked out some form of grammar and syntax to make sure that prepositions precede nouns and participles work grammatically, and devised rules and algorithms to limit the syllable count to 5–7–5.

I would go one step further and say that it is almost impossible for a human who is confronted by a text not to *impute* meaning, even to what was created as nonsense. In that randomly generated haiku, maybe “plundered” is not a past tense verb but a past participle, so the line could be interpreted as “Brazil *was* plundered happily,” thus making it a heavily ironic, politically correct post-colonialist sentiment—or maybe it is suggesting that Brazil *welcomed* the European settlers. Then “the gravel” might be the fringes of the beaches after the Portuguese landed. The “monkey” who has stopped peeking might represent the indigenous population whose curiosity is satiated . . . and so on.

Nonsense aside, there is an important point here: when we read or hear something, we immediately *assume* it is a communication and *expect* meaning; if meaning is not readily apparent, we search for it and, if need be, provide it. Most likely we start by looking for first-level meaning—straightforward description, like prose—and then for deeper meaning, perhaps allusion, metaphor, or symbol.

So then, for the sake of argument, let’s say that any scrap of writing has *some* meaning. Haiku such as the random one we just saw unquestionably *exist*, even if we have trouble teasing meaning out of them. Probably my problem is that a given submission to the journal may not have *enough* meaning or the *right kind* of meaning to satisfy me.

Meaning in Poetry

Perhaps I am barking up a wrong tree in quickly rejecting those *Modern Haiku* submissions on the grounds that they lack intrinsic meaning. Some poets advise us not to look for meaning in a poem, but to accept the poem itself as the object. Witness Archibald MacLeish's 1925 poem:

Ars Poetica

A poem should be palpable and mute
As a globed fruit,

Dumb
As old medallions to the thumb,

Silent as the sleeve-worn stone
Of casement ledges where the moss has grown—

*

A poem should be wordless
As the flight of birds.

A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs,

Leaving, as the moon releases
Twig by twig the night-entangled trees,

Leaving, as the moon behind the winter leaves,
Memory by memory the mind—

A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs.

*

A poem should be equal to:
Not true.

For all the history of grief
An empty doorway and a maple leaf.

For love
The leaning grasses and two lights above the sea—

A poem should not mean
But be.²

I like the bit about the poem being wordless. It reminds me of Alan Watts's and Eric Amann's consideration of the haiku as "The Wordless Poem." I also like MacLeish's call for the poem to be not true. That reminds me of Yatsuka Ishihara's injunction that a haiku should tell about the truth as if it were false. Applied to haiku, this message as a whole can seem a bit radical, however. We have been taught that the purpose of haiku is for the poet to communicate a witnessed experience, or at least an image, to others. This must be done in a way that captures, condenses, and transmits meaning. We should make our haiku as "wordless" as possible by choosing plain, direct language.

In *How Does a Poem Mean?*, John Ciardi writes that a poem should not be dissected like a corpse and scrutinized for meaning; rather, he says, a poem should be viewed as a performance and analyzed in terms of how well the poet has mastered the words, images, ideas, rhythms, and forms at his or her disposal. He asks not *what* a poem means but rather *how* a poem means. He details devices used to bring power to poetry, not meaning per se.

The French literary critic and semiotician Roland Barthes considers haiku at some length and depth in his book *The Empire of Signs*. If I understand the gist of his argument, we would be yielding to a Western obsession if we were to examine a haiku closely for its meaning; rather, the haiku exists in and of itself. Barthes comments on this haiku of Buson's

It is evening, in autumn,
All I can think of
Is my parents

by saying, "While being quite intelligible, the haiku means nothing, and . . . it seems open to meaning in a particularly available, serviceable way"³ or again, "The brevity of the haiku is not formal; the haiku is not a rich thought reduced to a brief form, but a brief event which immediately finds its proper form. . . ."

So, does a haiku mean what it says, or does it mean something

else? Or both at once? Gurga discerns two aspects of meaning: “We all know that haiku is composed of two parts—perception and imagination. If we can keep these two in balance, perhaps we can create a contemporary haiku that has both spiritual and social meaning.”⁴ Gurga’s “perception” applies to the actual images presented in a haiku; “imagination” is about the efforts of one’s mind to jump the gap between a haiku’s images and their referents.

Creating Meaning in Haiku

Meaning-making in haiku might be of three types, or occur on any of three levels:

- in *plain-sense writing* and the straightforward statement of perception, to be taken at face value;
- in the poem as imaginative object shaped by *poetic devices*;
- in the poem as imaginative subject of *outside referents, metaphors, and allusions*.

Plain-sense Writing

Plain-sense writing is straightforward description, essentially prose, just words and punctuation, with no embellishment and no extra meaning intended or received. To plain-sense descriptive writing can be added various kinds of coloration, which will deepen the meaning of the haiku without changing the singularity of the image:

- **Feeling**—awe, tenderness, anger, amusement, etc. Randy Brooks has written many haiku about his family that are fairly dripping with feeling:

tonight’s origami:
a stork and baby
appear in her fingers⁵

- **Tone**—attitude towards the reader: confidential, appealing, etc. Roberta Beary is a master of irony and sarcasm:

andropause . . .
an inchworm nuzzles
the rainspout⁶

These aspects do not imply much, if any, outside reference. In some cases, however, the reader may detect, infer, or supply a larger framework for the poem, such as:

- **Subject**—for example, love, death, family, nature, the city, the country, age, youth, war, civilization, pestilence.
- **Theme**—better to have loved and lost . . . respect your elders . . . absence makes the heart grow fonder . . . the rolling stone gathers no moss . . . etc.
- **Intention**—what is the poet trying to say?
- **Moral**—is some kind of a lesson being taught? If the haiku smacks of propaganda or presumes to tell readers how to think, it can be heavy-handed, too “messagy” as are these two haiku by Saitō Sanki and Martin Shea, respectively:

A machine gun—
in the middle of the forehead
red blossoms bloom⁷

caught shoplifting—
crying, she beats her child
for wanting the toy⁸

Starting off to write a haiku *about* something is always dangerous for this reason.

On the other hand, strict plain-sense writing is essentially prose and will usually lead to pretty dull haiku, such as:

Abandoned farm house
among the weeds
a single rose

This poem is descriptive, even amiable, but says little to me. In the end, haiku, like any kind of poetry, has to deliver more than simple description or everyday speech. There has to be more than just base-level meaning or prose to make a sentence a poem.

Shasei

Let’s head off on a tangent for a moment and talk about *shasei*. The term was originally developed by Masaoka Shiki

on the basis of the realistic style of painting that was influencing the Japanese in the last years of the 19th century. According to one interpretation, *shasei* means “writing exactly what you see so the reader could also experience the scene and understand what had moved you.”⁹ That is, the meaning of the writing needs to hew closely to reality, and from that the reader can best understand what you have experienced—your meaning. What you write is supposed to trigger resonance—meaning—in your reader based on his or her experience. But at its root, this comes pretty close to falling into the definitional plain-sense writing. In fact, *shasei* has become something of a four-letter word these days, often used to describe gutless, purely descriptive English-language haiku.

Shiki himself discovered that purely descriptive poems often fail to convey much meaning to a lot of people. A sentence like “The boy paints the fence white” is not a haiku. It has meaning, true enough—and it might have a great deal of significance for the poet, but not enough meaning to make it a haiku, even with the implicit challenge to the reader somehow to supply more meaning—as we tried to do with the Brazilian monkeys above.

Too Much Meaning?

• *Wordiness or overuse of poetic devices.* Is it possible to have too much meaning in a haiku? Perhaps the haiku with morals or messages that we just saw fall into this category. Certainly haiku that use too many words and lack concision do, as do those that overuse poetic devices. When too much meaning is provided, all the joy of discovery evaporates, as in this poem by Rengé:

scores of birds
on a staff of wires
—autumn symphony¹⁰

This is clever use of language—the puns on “scores” and “staff”—but in the end the poet spoon-feeds meaning to us, and thereby kills the haiku.

• *Titles*—titles for haiku also usually provide too much meaning. The poets may simply be copying the usual practice of

titling long poems, but they may also intend to provide a framework or environment for the poem or haiku. You can see the cheat in this example when translator Harold Stewart supplies a title for Nakao Gakoku's haiku:

AFTER THE FISHING-BOATS DEPART

The tall white sails emerge above the bay's
Low and level veils of morning haze.¹¹

• *Footnotes*—footnotes, too, tend to provide too much or at least misplaced meaning. Sometimes poets are aware that readers won't have a ghost of a chance to understand a haiku and feel they need to explain it. Such a didactic approach might be acceptable for translations, such as what Fay Aoyagi is doing on her *Blue Willow* blog, for example with this haiku by Sugino Kazuhiro:

a hawk into a pigeon
the basement light
turns on

Fay's Note: 鷹鳩と化す (鷹鳩に) "taka hato to kasu taka hato-ni" (a hawk changes itself into a pigeon) is a spring kigo. Chinese divided a year into 72 sub-seasons. This is mid-spring (after Groundhog Day) when the temperature gets warm. It is believed that even a murderous hawk becomes mellow and changes itself to a kinder pigeon.¹²

If Aoyagi's cross-cultural explanations have their place, intra-cultural explanations do not. I would suggest that if the meaning of a haiku is not readily graspable by a fellow haikuist—or if the average reader cannot at least make out the most important characteristic of the puzzling item (for example, that it is a mountain, a Mayan god, or whatever)—it is a failed haiku. Such is the case, I feel, with this verse by the late American poet Ronan,

In Lassen's shadow
sulphur streams and fumaroles;
Tehama whispers still.¹³

which needs—and provides—the footnote, “Lassen Volcanic National Park in northern California, originally called Tehama by Native Americans. The final line of this haiku comes from a Parks Service information sign.”

Poetic Devices

Many devices common in Western poetry have been applied to English-language haiku. I don't want to get sidetracked into a discussion of the effects of rhyme, alliteration, onomatopoeia, alliteration, metonymy and synecdoche, and the like. Let me just say that these all can be effective meaning-enhancers in haiku—some devices more than others—but over-reliance on them, rather than adding meaning to a haiku, usually takes haiku composition in a wrong direction, away from the integrity and significance of the images. Let's examine a few other poetic devices that have a contribution to make to haiku writing.

• **Repetition**—Repetition of a phrase or word is a well-tested way to add meaning to a verse. Usually this would be done to emphasize the feeling rather than the purely descriptive aspect of meaning. For example, Ciardi calls attention to the last stanza of Robert Frost's “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening,”

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

The first time Frost writes “And miles to go . . .” he means it literally, but the repetition makes the phrase into a symbol . . . of what? . . . something much darker and more poignant.

Steve Addiss published a short essay in *South by Southeast* in which he advocates repetition as a device to enhance meaning in haiku as well. Here is one of his haiku that uses this technique:

slowly slowly
November sunlight
ages the rocks¹⁴

Addiss's verse echoes Issa's famous

O snail
Climb Mt. Fuji,
But slowly, slowly¹⁵

and the “slowly, slowly” gives a hint of a sigh as the haiku is spoken, adding to the depth of feeling—and meaning.

• **Synesthesia**—The perception of one physical stimulus by another—e.g., “feeling” color—synesthesia is one of the more popular devices in Western haiku. Causing a poetic leap in the reader's mind from one sense to another, it is perhaps the most disjunctive of the poetic devices, as in these two haiku by Elizabeth Searle Lamb and Caroline Gourlay, respectively:

a black cat's eyes on us watching the silence in reeds and water¹⁶

listen!
the skins of wild damsons
darkening in the rain¹⁷

• **Rhyme**—Rhyme causes an association between two words in a poem, which sometimes can be unexpected and yield extra meaning. Many early haikuists end-rhymed their work, not very often successfully, as in this case, a haiku by Nicholas Virgilio that also features assonance with the word “hare” and consonance in the first words of lines 1 and 3:

dawn on the prairie:
a hare has drawn the eagle
down from its aerie¹⁸

Internal rhyme works better in haiku. Lee Gurga used it in his

rumble of thunder—
boy still searching for the ball
in the tall grass¹⁹

which also gains meaning from other poetic devices such as onomatopoeia and consonance (“rumbling thunder”) and

perhaps an oblique reference to Robert Spiess's classic, *Muttering thunder . . . / the bottom of the river / scattered with clams*.²⁰ I tried rhyming the first and last words of one of my haiku to suggest pressure against both edges of the drawing paper:

whale done in crayon
she needs another sheet
for its tail²¹

Tricks like this, however, can easily leap over the wall into empty wordplay.

• ***Nonsense language***—Used judiciously, on the other hand, wordplay or nonsense language can provide another tool for creating meaning in poetry. By definition “nonsense language” lacks meaning—or does it? The effort to add meaning to one’s writing by stretching the meaning of words can sometimes go one step beyond, into the realm of made-up words and nonsense language. Edward Lear was a famous practitioner, as was Lewis Carroll, whose poem “Jabberwocky” opens with the stanza:

’Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.²²

Ciardi points out that the “nonsense” here is not exactly “nonsense.” “First, many of the apparently nonsensical formulations turn out to be portmanteau words—i.e., a concatenation of two other words—of which perhaps we can ferret out only half, e.g., “Jabber•wock,” from “jabber,” to talk very fast and incomprehensibly + “wock” = ?? Recognizing the form—the ballad stanzas—with a little effort the reader soon catches on that this is a sort of mock heroic ballad, and the meaning, albeit fuzzy, emerges. The reader is creating meaning.

Dr. Suess was another poet who reveled in invented words and wild rhymes. These are a lot of fun, but the technique would be too much for a delicate haiku:

A flock of Obsks
From down in Nobsks

Hiked up to Bobsks
To look for Jobsks

Then back to Nobsks
With sighs and Sobsks . . .

There were, in Bobsks,
No jobs for Obsks.²³

Mark Brooks's reference to Dr. Seuss's birthday in a sort of mock-*kigo*, plus the Seussian rhyme, repetition, consonance, and alliteration, all make for a winning senryu:

Seuss's birthday
a dad and two lads plant
a plant in a planter²⁴

• ***“Bent” language***—Invented words and unusual grammar, what we're calling here “bent” language, have their place in haiku. Canadian haikuist Anne McKay was a brilliant creator of lush portmanteau words that made her haiku into Western-style poems of the highest order, for example:

small prints
nightmade in snow . . .
leave me listening²⁵

through the narrows
seamen
towing moons and nightcargo²⁶

James W. Hackett's verses, too, are speckled with words that he alone has used in haiku, for example:²⁷

The wakeless way
of the Jesus bug is revealed
by lunging minnows.

Resplendent peacock
flappingly guards his throne—
a mound of manure.

Words like “wakeless” and “flappingly” don’t appear in my dictionary, at least not in these senses, but the meanings Hackett intended are easy enough to grasp from the context. Such inventions are used in other haiku of Hackett’s, for example: “Puppy lies wag-end up,” which brings a cuteness that I both like and dislike, and a mosquito’s knees that are “consolingly white,” seemingly a judgment that doesn’t belong in a haiku at all. What Hackett means in *Noisy woodpecker / is gummed-up by the old pine, / to stopping silence* is a mystery to me, as is “doling” in the haiku *Still going strong / after blocks and blocks of stops: / my doling dog*.

Further, in order to plump up his poetic meaning, Hackett not infrequently twists intransitive verbs into transitive and turns nouns into verbs that are not recognized as such by Mr. Webster, e.g.: *As Nile dusk deepens / egrets blizzard to the same / solitary isle; Come! The mountains / have hazed into a painting / and tea is served . . . ; Swords of the iris: / all so alike, yet some bend, / talling the others.*²⁸

Bob Spiess was also not above inventing language and using unusual words and expressions. In

gently odd
a noddy
in tumbly digs
trying words
mumble mumble²⁹

he refers to himself as “Noddy” and his house as his “tumbly digs.” The meaning of both of these made-up words is somehow quite accessible, especially if you knew Bob and ever visited his tumbly digs!

Externality, Metaphor, and Allusion

Note that in all cases of inventive language here, the reader /listener is prompted to reach outside the word itself and

supply his or her own meaning. This all seems to suggest that meaning is not normally found intrinsically in the words or images themselves but rather resides—if indeed meaning is not completely homeless—somewhere outside the poem. As Humpty Dumpty informed Alice in a rather scornful tone: “When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.”³⁰

Ironically enough, that external meaning is variable, even subjective. When I say “river” do you envision the Mighty Mississippi or the tiny Santa Fe River, which is dry for all but a few days of the year? A raging Alpine stream or a placid Louisiana bayou? In haiku especially, the poem relies on the reader/listener to provide a large share of the meaning.

• **Externality**—External reference is often accomplished by asking the reader to reach into his own experience for information. The poet relies on incompleteness, suggestiveness, and ambiguity to create interest—and to involve the reader in making meaning. This is, in fact, the basic mechanism of classically constructed haiku: presenting two images, with enough left out to supercharge the meaning and enhance the reader’s interest by directly involving him or her in the interpretation. Here are two examples, the first from Bashō, the second from Tanya McDonald:

On a withered branch
a crow has settled —
autumn nightfall.³¹

all our differences
forgotten—
full moon³²

It’s interesting to note that one of the images can be absent altogether in some cases. The poem’s environment can provide the missing element, e.g.,³³

tundra

Cor van den Heuvel's poem, one word written in the center of a single blank white page, is a dramatic example of the interaction of one image with its background, in this case something approximating the white space—pun definitely intended here—that is so crucial to the haiku.

There is a difference, however, between leaving something out and its not having been there in the first place. For me, van den Heuvel crosses the line into meaninglessness with some of his other haiku.³⁴

a stick goes over the falls at sunset

the shadow in the folded napkin

Both of these, I think, are too spare and lacking in external references that could enhance the imagery to make them much more than a phrase or a sentence of prose. What they need is a soupçon of suggestion, or understatement.

• **Understatement**—Much in the way the reader searches for meaning in a poem that doesn't dish it out on a plate, he/she will automatically amplify a little meaning into a lot. Gary Hotham is a master of understatement:

cooler air
the grey hairs show
after the haircut³⁵

• **Kakekotoba, zeugma, syllepsis**—Related poetic devices that are especially appropriate to haiku are *kakekotoba*, in which multiple meanings are suggested by one Japanese *kanji*, much like the haiku we have in English that pun on homonyms like “fall” or “still.” In zeugma and syllepsis, one word modifies two phrases in different ways, thus enriching the meaning of the modifier. Spiess was a fan of zeugma:

from a hill i watch
earth's shadow eclipse the full moon
—my shadow, too³⁶

• **Pivot**—Also popular among poets today is the pivot line, in which the middle part of a haiku may be read as connected either to the first or third. In this haiku by Ferris Gilli, for example, the position of the moon—above or below the heron—changes depending on how the reader attaches the middle line.

minnows dart
beneath a poised heron
the daytime moon

Such syntactical shifts work well in one-line haiku as well, for example, this one by Patrick Frank:

in the cafe alone you in my heart³⁸

Extra meaning is milked out of “alone” by positioning it between two quite different phrases.

• **Metaphor**— Many pages could be spent on metaphor in haiku. Gurga sums up the contributions of critic Paul O. Williams to the discussion in an important essay³⁹ as follows:

While poetic devices can increase the depth and power of individual haiku, it is also true that the use of overt simile or metaphor can have a limiting rather than expanding effect. In my own experience, the poems that have the greatest depth are those that operate successfully on the literal level as well as being potentially metaphorical. This more subtle kind of metaphor has been discussed by Paul O. Williams in a talk titled, “The Question of Metaphor in Haiku,” presented at the Haiku North America Conference in 1993, and published for the first time in his new book, *The Nick of Time: Essays on Haiku Aesthetics* (Press Here, 2000). In his talk, Williams coins the term “unresolved metaphor” to characterize the kind of subtle metaphoric suggestion that he finds most effective in haiku. The technique of juxtaposition makes it nearly inevitable that haiku will have some implied comparison between the elements of the poem. That these elements can be interpreted metaphorically as well as literally adds depth and resonance to many of the finest haiku.

Let me point out a few ways in which metaphor is used to provide meaning. As Williams says, the whole haiku can be considered an “unresolved metaphor.” Consider the following:

thinking about you—
the remarkable redness
of this tomato⁴⁰

This haiku by Williams is chock-full of meaning but difficult to access, and the reader is asked to expend some effort to interpret the poet's intentions. The two parts separated by the dash are perceived to be in some sort of relationship to one another—not a direct metaphor, which would say plainly “my thinking equals the tomato's redness,” nor a simile that would read something like “my love is like a red, red tomato,” but rather an implied mutual resonance left to the reader's own interpretation. The key to enhancing a poem's meaning through such metaphoric writing lies in how the parts are presented—i.e., their juxtaposition.

• ***Juxtaposition***—Juxtaposition of two images in haiku, or “internal comparison” as Spiess liked to call it, is perhaps the single most important source of meaning in haiku. This is a device, according to Ciardi, that is characteristic of poetry and good writing generally. In drama it is called “the foil”—a second character, perhaps a villain or a sidekick, is created to set off or call attention to or provide a sounding board for the hero. Linguists call the literary technique “parataxis.” Wikipedia says:

[Parataxis is] used to describe a technique in poetry in which two images or fragments, usually starkly dissimilar images or fragments, are juxtaposed without a clear connection. Readers are then left to make their own connections implied by the paratactic syntax. Ezra Pound, in his adaptation of Chinese and Japanese poetry, made the stark juxtaposition of images an important part of English language poetry.⁴¹

In haiku, of course, juxtaposition of images is traditionally the basic structure, the relationship between what Koji Kawamoto has called base and superposed parts, Jane Reichhold characterizes as phrase and fragment, and Randy Brooks—in music-like terminology—calls ground and figure. Both parts of haiku have their meaning in the terms we have been talking about, then they are forced together to cohabit in a single verse. It is that act that makes the haiku a haiku.

In the space between the two parts—physically called the *kire* or caesura—the haiku is conceived. Meaning is multiplied many-fold.

Conversely, it stands to reason that verses that do not have that juxtaposition, or internal comparison, or *kire* need to be vetted carefully as to their credentials as haiku.

Much has been made recently of “disjunction,” which is simply the other side of the coin from juxtaposition. Juxtaposition describes the act of putting two images together; disjunction characterizes the distance and space between them.

The greatest measure of success for a haiku, one might say, is when the gap between the two parts is set exactly right by the poet so that with a moderate amount of effort the reader is able to experience an “aha!” moment and suddenly be smothered in extra meaning that was not present in either part. The proper regulation of the gap in a spark plug is often used as an analogy to the mechanics of the haiku. A functioning gap will vary for various people, of course.

• **Kireji: a digression**—Parenthetically we might say a few more words about *kire* and *kireji* (“cutting words”), which are of paramount importance to the expansion of meaning in Japanese haiku and, in a derivative way, in English-language haiku as well. *Kireji* are usually described in the West as syntactical particles that punctuate a haiku and cause a caesura. This definition is slightly misleading in that some *kireji* come at the end of the haiku and cannot, of course, cause a caesura there. In fact, *kireji* do much more than break the haiku into phrases. They actually tell the Japanese reader the emotional weight and tenor of the foregoing phrase. This haiku of Issa’s, *akikaze ya mushiritagarishi akai kana*, actually has two *kireji*, *ya* ending the first phrase and *kana* ending the last. *Ya* signals that the foregoing phrase is what it’s all about: reader, pay attention! This particle is often translated as an exclamation mark in English. *Kana* is a sort of a written sigh or indication of resignation, an emotional commentary on the

foregoing phrase, as Walter Cronkite might have said: “and that’s the way it is.” Often an ellipsis will be used for *kana* in English translations.

Blyth translates Issa’s haiku, thus:

The autumn wind;
The red flowers
She liked to pluck.⁴²

but he transposes the second and third phrases and perhaps downplays the importance of the *kireji*. I would pay more attention to the two *kireji* and render this haiku as:

autumn wind!
the flowers that she so liked to pick
are red now . . .

trying to bring out the bittersweet irony blown in on the autumn wind, that the dead girl’s favorite flowers are now red and in full bloom.

• **Transference**—Rather than directly comparing or contrasting the haiku’s two images, haiku poets often deploy another particularly felicitous and useful metaphoric device in which one image of the poem informs the other. Transference essentially involves coloring the reader’s perception of one image by the presentation and treatment of the second image.⁴³ For example, there can’t be much doubt about the warmth of his lady friend’s feelings in Marsh Muirhead’s senryu,

her cold martini
the olive
looks at me⁴⁴

• **Allusion**—At this point, I’ll turn to allusion, which is another important device for haiku, especially in its garb of *kigo* and *utamakura*. Literary allusions are still popular in Japanese haiku and are a fertile field for haikuists in English as well. Some literary allusions are nearly exhausted, however; it is

almost a cliché now to refer to William Carlos Williams’s “The Red Wheelbarrow” or Wallace Stevens’s “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” in haiku. It is definitely trite to allude to, or parody, Bashō’s “old pond” haiku. But Raffael de Gruttola packs a peck of allusions to Robert Frost in this haiku:

walking by woods, slowing
where a broken birch
blocks the path⁴⁵

Allusions to other art forms are also a good way to expand meaning in haiku. Here are verses by Elizabeth Searle Lamb and Marlene Wills (Marlene Mountain) that make allusions in the realm of music:

colors of Bartok clash in the dim room⁴⁶

alone—
bessie’s last
gin song⁴⁷

• **Seasonal words: *kidai* and *kigo***—The Japanese poetic convention of *kidai*, season topic, and *kigo*, season word, is a special kind of metaphor or allusion. When a Japanese poet uses a *kigo* in a tanka or a haiku, he or she multiplies his meaning many times by keying into thousands of years of tradition and a substantial corpus of poetry, all of which is suggested by the season word. Moreover, each season topic is held to have its own “essence” and both the *kigo* and the haiku as a whole must be consistent with that essence. *The Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* holds that

precise matching of scene and season is imperative if the seasonal theme is to be more than a mechanical convention.... In a poem where the seasonal theme fulfills its true evocative function, there must be reciprocity between the season which expands the scope of the haiku and creates the atmospheric background of associations for the specific scene, and the specific scene which points out a characteristic yet often forgotten aspect of the season and thus enriches our understanding of it.⁴⁸

Seasonality has never been a big deal in Western haiku, and those poets who do use it tend to insert a season word as part of a perceived requirement of the haiku form. This is most likely not the shortcoming of the poet, but rather a given—that Western culture and literary traditions are simply different from Japanese and we do not have the tradition of seasonal reference in our poetry. That’s a shame, because the *ki* system is a convenient way to multiply meaning: a *kigo* is the tip of a very large iceberg.

Here is one of my favorite examples of a Japanese season word not used in a traditional way in an English-language haiku:

moonlit camellias
café conversations spilling
into the street⁴⁹

I asked poet Paul Miller why he had used “camellias,” which in Japan are red and whose petals are usually falling in poetry, reminding Japanese of men dying young in battle. Paul told me that he used camellias here simply to have a lush, moonlight-colored shrub that might be, like the conversation, spilling out into the street. Clearly he was using the plant for purposes other than to mark the season. Do you think Paul got adequate meaning out of his “camellias”? Is it possible to develop (and enforce) a system of season words in English-language haiku that will function in any way similar to the Japanese?

• **Utamakura**—Closely related to *kidai* is *utamakura*, using the name of a place or thing that possesses an aura of significance, presumed to be understood by a reader. The old masters used *utamakura* frequently to magnify the meaning of their haiku, as did Bashō here:

Nara’s Buddhas,
one by one—
essence of asters.⁵⁰

Japanese readers would immediately conjure up the image of

the huge bronze Daibutsu whose nostril was said to be a path to enlightenment. The technique of *utamakura* would seem to have more promise than *kigo* for Western haiku because words that are outside the literary tradition—i.e., historical and geographic places—can be used. Here are two examples, the first by L.A. Davidson, the second by Scott Galasso:

The Mississippi
a mile wide at Winona
and still rising⁵¹

fireflies
in the wheat field
. . . Gettysburg⁵²

These haiku assume—yea, depend on—the reader knowing what the Mississippi and Gettysburg are, but owing to that assumption, bucketsful of meaning are added to the haiku.

Is Meaning Necessary?: *Gendai Haiku*

Some folks have begun to question whether there really needs to be meaning in haiku. Much of what is being written today deliberately subverts meaning in the traditional sense, or avoids it. *Kigo* and traditional form are often abandoned completely. Characteristics of postmodernism—rejection of previous cultural standards and authorities; advocacy of the indeterminacy of meaning; avoidance of meaning beyond the poem itself; regarding life and art as equally fictitious; clamoring for equality of subject matter; and elevation of the commonplace and vapid to positions of prominence⁵³—all this has come to haiku.

I don't want to go into a full discussion of surrealism, postmodernism, or L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry here—nor am I intellectually equipped to do so—but I do want to expend a few words on *gendai* haiku because of its prominence on today's haiku scene. *Gendai* haiku is the manifestation in haiku of postmodernism. A definition of *gendai* haiku is difficult to come by; literally it means “modern haiku,” and it refers to at least one movement that cropped up in Japan during or after World War II. When I was struggling to understand what is meant by the term for poets today I asked among others Ban'ya Natsuishi, a well-known exponent of the subgenre.

His tautological reply: “*Gendai* haiku?—that’s what I write.” *Gendai* poets make much of “freedom of expression,” thereby apparently tarring the hidebound rules of the past. Abandonment of form, rules, and *kigo* characterizes the sharp reaction against *shasei*, especially the *kyakkan shasei* of the Kyoshi /Hototogisu variety. Several American and British haikuists have allied themselves with *gendai* haiku poets and are now writing works in models similar to the Japanese.

Although probably not listed as tenets of *gendai* haiku, much “modern” Japanese haiku is abstract, surreal, heavily disjunctive, and seemingly intended primarily to shock or puzzle the reader.

The embrace of plants
depends often on
rumors⁵⁴

unable to find
the cry of the nextdoor boy
spring rain⁵⁵

in the basement
of a snowflake
blackbird and i⁵⁶

In the case of haiku like these—by Ban’ya, Richard Gilbert, and Scott Metz respectively—I have to confess that I am challenged beyond my abilities to find meaning and very quickly become impatient. I am back to the Brazilian monkeys and shadows in folded napkins—trying to make up some meaning, either of the plain-text variety or of some extra meaning residing outside the haiku, but failing. Haiku, like other forms of poetry, are vehicles for transmitting meaning. If they fail to mean, they fail as poems. I don’t need to be spoon-fed my dose of meaning, but neither am I willing to spend an inordinate amount of time analyzing a poem, researching its allusions, marveling at the metaphors and other manipulations of words. Please bring me my poems cooked medium rare.

A Personal Checklist for Meaning in Haiku

By way of summing up allow me to present a personal checklist of questions, a sort of mental protocol that I use to help determine whether a haiku I am considering for publication

has an adequate measure of meaning and if that meaning is appropriate to the haiku:

- ✓ Are there two distinct images? Is this a one-image haiku?
- ✓ Is the language purely descriptive? Do the words themselves use any devices to augment meaning? Which kind? *Kigo*, *utamakura*, metaphor, simile, allusion, rhyme, wordplay? Are they appropriate? Is each one essential to the haiku—or do we have a “date stamp” or a “place stamp” haiku here?
- ✓ Do the images relate to one another as “figure” and “ground”?
- ✓ Are the two images too similar to one another in content or weight? Do we have a “shopping list”?
- ✓ What can be said about the distance between the two images? Too great for the reader to discern any meaning? Too close? Is one image or statement explained by the other? Just right for the reader to perceive meaning?
- ✓ Is the separation of the images too great? Is the juxtaposition too stark, the disjunction more than the haiku can bear? Does the haiku become surreal?
- ✓ Would you accept this poem for publication in *Modern Haiku* or *Frogpond*?

Notes

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3. Roland Barthes, *Empire of Signs*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1982; quotes are on pages 69 and 75. Barthes examined haiku again in another book, recently translated, *The Preparation of the Novel: Lecture Courses and Seminars at the Collège de France (1978–1979 and 1979–1980)*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, which is discussed in Jon Baldwin, “Qualities of Haiku (from Roland Barthes),” *Modern Haiku* 43.3 (autumn 2012), 48–66.
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 13. Ronan, in *HSA Frogpond* 3:2 (May 1980).
 14. Stephen Addiss, in *Frogpond* 22:1 (1999).
 15. Issa, in R.H. Blyth, *Haiku. Volume 1: Eastern Culture*. Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1949, 221.
 16. Elizabeth Searle Lamb, in *Frogpond* 4:2 (1981).
 17. Caroline Gourlay, *Reading All Night*. Spalding, Lincs.: Hub Press, 1999.
 18. Nicholas Virgilio, in *Frogpond* 5:1 (1982).
 19. Lee Gurga, in *Too Busy for Spring* (HNA 1999 anthology).
 20. Robert Spiess, *The Turtle's Ears*. Madison, Wis.: Wells Printing Co., 1971.
 21. Charles Trumbull, in *Shiki Internet Kukai* 3/9/97 (free-format: "whale"), first place.
 22. Lewis Carroll, "Jabberwocky," from *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*. London: Macmillan, 1872.
 23. Dr. Seuss, from *If I Ran the Zoo* (1950); reprinted on *Poems of Dr. Seuss* Web site, <http://dr-seusspoems.blogspot.com/2010/02/short-dr-seuss-poems.html>; accessed Aug. 24, 2012.
 24. Mark Brooks, *A Handful of Pebbles*. Liverpool, England: Snapshot Press, 2006.
 25. Anne McKay, in *Frogpond* 9:1 (February 1986).
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29. Robert Spiess, *Noddy*. Madison, Wis.: Modern Haiku Press, 1997, #1.
30. Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, Chapter 6.
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34. Both from Cor van den Heuvel, *Dark*. New York: Chant Press, 1982.
35. Gary Hotham, in *Modern Haiku* 24.2 (1993).
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37. Ferris Gilli, in *Haiku Harvest* [Web] 2:1 (2001).
38. Patrick Frank, in *Still* 3:4 (1999).
39. Gurga, “Toward an Aesthetic for English-language Haiku.” Williams’s essay “The Question of Metaphor in Haiku” was published in Paul O. Williams, *The Nick of Time: Essays on Haiku Aesthetics*. Foster City, Calif.: Press Here, 2001, 104–5.
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41. “Parataxis,” *Wikipedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parataxis>; accessed Aug. 24, 2012.
42. Blyth, *Haiku 2—Spring* (1950), 15.
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52. William Scott Galasso, in *Frogpond* 25:3 (2002).
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55. Richard Gilbert, in *Roadrunner* [Web] VIII:2 (May 2008).
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Reviewed

Robert Epstein. *Checkout Time is Noon: Death Awareness Haiku.* Shelbyville, KY: Wasteland Press, 2012, 78 pp., perfect softbound, 6 x 9. ISBN 978-1-60047-750-8, US \$10 (includes domestic shipping) from taylor/epstein@earthlink.net or US \$12 + shipping from Amazon.com.

Robert Epstein. *A Walk Around Spring Lake.* Shelbyville, KY: Wasteland Press, 2012, 65 pp., perfect softbound, 6 x 9. ISBN 978-1-60047-729-4, US \$10 (includes domestic shipping) from taylor/epstein@earthlink.net or US \$12 + shipping from Amazon.com.

by Marjorie Buettner, Chisago City, Minnesota

Before my mother died she confessed to me that she was being called home. This statement reminded me of an old Chinese proverb: All of life is a dream walking, all of death is a going home. Two collections of Robert Epstein's haiku, *Checkout Time is Noon* and *A Walk Around Spring Lake*, resonate deeply with this proverb. Many of Epstein's haiku center upon an awareness of death and share that tender perception which comes with seeing the finite in all things. In fact, Epstein coined the term "death awareness haiku," using the most intuitive poetic form (as he said in the preface of *Checkout Time is Noon*), in order to "see more vividly what life has been about."

In this "death awareness haiku" Epstein has given himself a Blakean freedom to "see the world in a grain of sand":

sun-bleached sand
no beginning
no end

We are, in this world of dew, a world of dew:

a single raindrop
in a single puddle
evaporating

And yet, and yet, beauty abounds:

deathbed window
moonlight through
trembling aspens

For Epstein, death is a coming home:

when it's time

open the window I'll follow
the songbird home

In this homecoming the poet realizes that both life and death
are present, both beginning and end are here:

on the same branch
a blooming and a dying rose
never touch

indigo night
in the cricket's song
no birth no death

Epstein steps outside of ordinary time and listens to the beating
of his own heart: it is the pulse of the world:

listening to water
lap against rock
I'm ready

Here in the pulse of the world lies the ineffable beauty of life
itself, of light itself:

no sky bluer this dying day

And yet there is still something of life to live by, to count on,
to celebrate:

it won't last
I won't last
blue moon

tonight
I become a button hole
the wind passes through

We inevitably become wind, become a shaft of light, become
a morning star; can it ever be erased? Our butterfly dreams
will reveal the mystery:

shaft of light
I look around and see
my shadow gone

morning star
lighting the way for
butterfly dreams

Checkout Time is Noon is a fine collection of haiku to add to
your personal library; you have nothing to lose and everything
to gain.

nothing to lose
I ferry across the river of dreams
and disappear

A Walk Around Spring Lake describes another kind of going
home; it is that second place of birth, as the Chinese say—one
of your own predilection. For me it is Green Lake in Minne-
sota. Robert Epstein's second place of birth—which is always
a homecoming—is Spring Lake. There he is able to meditate
and converse with nature, entering into a conversation with
the soul as well. As a dedication to Thoreau, Epstein cites a
passage in *Walden*: "The lake is the earth's eye into which the
beholder measures the depth of his own nature." Spring Lake
is a refuge for Epstein where he can go home and be himself,
where he can explore the depth of his own nature and find

himself, in his own words in the preface, “closer to some kind of inexpressible truth.” That truth is much like his death awareness haiku in *Checkout Time is Noon*:

in pine shade
for a while I forget
this life will end

There we realize that life is a gift—temporary and transient—yet beautiful nonetheless. Embracing this truth allows us to breathe more deeply, allows us to live more fully:

breathing in
breathing out
the lake

This truth that Epstein comes closer to at Spring Lake is inexpressible and yet we listen, look, and learn:

Spring Lake god included

the pine tree over there
and the pine tree over here
both mentors

The nature of the lake will cleanse all perception of what “I” means:

on a park bench
in pine shade
I float away

It is truly a homecoming for Epstein, reminding the reader, too, that nature at times speaks louder than words:

dragonfly
not another word

that woodpecker
knocking on a nearby pine
knows I’m home

And in this ineffable beauty the poet and reader understand and appreciate that second chance, which only a walk around the lake can give:

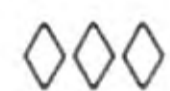
cut grass
I too am ready
to start over

August acorn
I too am ready
to be planted

again the lake
did something—not sure what—
with my grief

In *A Walk Around Spring Lake* Robert Epstein helps us to understand the hidden truths of nature. The lake is alchemical magic shaking our complacency, helping us to see that life is circular—it is that snake biting its tail—and the beginning and the end are one. Epstein celebrates this truth in his new collection of haiku and it is something we can celebrate, too:

Spring Lake
in September . . . for sure
death is not the end



Marjorie Buettner lives in Chisago City with her family. She has taught at the Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis and is a frequent book reviewer for Gusts, Simply Haiku, Modern Haiku and Moonset. Her first book of haiku and tanka, Seeing It Now, was published in 2008 by Red Dragonfly Press.

Mark Harris. *burl*. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2012, unpag. (64 pp.), perfect softbound, 4.5 x 6.5. ISBN 978-1-936948-04-1, US \$12 <www.redmoonpress.com>.

George Dorsty. *The Space Between*. Sound Beach, NY: 2012, 48 pp., perfect softbound, 5.5 x 8.5. ISBN 978-0935252-75-0, US \$10, George Dorsty, 1314 Showalter Road, Yorktown, VA 23692.

by J. Zimmerman, Santa Cruz, California

Recently I took pleasure in reading and comparing *burl* by Mark Harris and *The Space Between* by George Dorsty. Though these are the first full-length books for each writer, most haiku practitioners will have noticed work by these poets frequently in *Frogpond*, *Modern Haiku*, and elsewhere. Dorsty, in addition, was selected over a decade ago as a *New Resonance* 3¹ poet; his two-page micro-book (or “pinch book”) *Making Way* was published² and well received;³ and his work has appeared in at least eight Red Moon Press anthologies of English-language haiku.

Both *burl* and *The Space Between* are subtitled *haiku*. Rather than fuss over delimiting haiku, senryu, ku, and so on (such boundary disputes being handled with more finesse in the world of “Jurisfiction”⁴ than in our own), I accept the authors’ claims that their poems are haiku, close enough. I am more concerned with what each poem means and what is the significance of the assembled books.

To a non-haiku poet the books might seem very similar: slender with tiny poems on about 50 pages with one poem per page in *burl* and between one and three poems per page in the larger-paged *The Space Between*. But to a haiku poet the books are quite different.

In appearance Mark Harris’ *burl* (2012) is a beautiful and inviting book, from the warm pale orange and yellow cover (art by Harris), through the clear printing on ivory paper, to the varied layouts and placements of the poems presented singly on unnumbered pages.

Many poems look and sound close to traditional English-language haiku, written in three lines, often with a longer second line, a juxtaposition, and a seasonal reference:

the way back
a burl born wood wasp falls
into sunlight

and the wrenching:

autism
the tree we took for evergreen
loses its leaves

Apart from three vertical poems, one diagonal poem, and a haibun (presented untitled with its prose and poem on opposite pages), almost two-thirds of the 52 poems are written in three lines. But almost a third are a single horizontal line, and these contain some of the most remarkable, haunting, and memorable poetry of the book. For example:

a burl's knotted core the cure the cure
and

bur burr burl she echoes why do you bite yourself

Of his poems, it is especially his one-liners that have mystery and music. In this first one-liner above, the consonance of “c” and “r” in “core” and “cure” links these words while permitting the reader to feel that the core may be the cure for something and that concurrently a cure is sought for the hard and knotted core of whatever or whomever is the “burl.” The poem is like a trapeze artist, inviting you to jump and take its hands and swing lightly out into air: a thrilling ride.

The second one-liner uses the consonance of “b” and “r” to link the first three words. These words are used in various versions of English for what in the USA is called “burl” and signifies primarily a knotted lump in growing wood that results (according to its entry in Wikipedia) when a tree experiences “some form of stress.” But a “bur” is also a thing that clings; and a “burr” can be a rough edge or a lump of rock

within softer material or even a halo around moon or star. These meanings refract and shimmer through the poem. The consonance of the three opening words with the two closing words “bite yourself” encourages many ideas about the relationship of the “she” and the “you” in the poem, as well as of the “you” to him/her/itself in this brief rich poem.

Harris delights the reader with the sounds of words. And once one has entered each poem, one finds that it is full of echoes of poems that went before and poems to come, as in this vertical poem:

heart
wood
her echo
lalia

with its enriching line breaks in the midst of heartwood and echolalia.

The structure of *burl* is cumulative rather than linear, the book being filled with different trees and their coming-and-leaving leaves, with wounds and with grief and with what comes next. The sense of the book accretes much as a burl accrues around an injury on a tree, or as time accrues around the heart of a bereaved parent:

under the understory
our daughter harbors
a worm in her mouth

and

rain, rain . . .
we let her unborn twin
return to loam

The Wikipedia entrance for “burl” adds that a burl can be “filled with small knots from dormant buds.” Perhaps this is how a parent feels, filled with the loss of the unrealizable moments with the now-gone child, and yet facing the light as in Harris’ final poem:

all spirals
these larch cones
we turn and face the sun

Turning to Dorsty's *The Space Between*, I find many poems here are similarly about the hidden, the unseen, the missing, and the lost. Dorsty writes his three-line poem in a minimalist style, with only two or three words in most lines. His style is relatively mainstream, direct, and familiar to most haiku poets. Of the many pleasing poems in *The Space Between*, a favorite is

the mountain
behind the monastery . . .
just sitting

A sense of grace and spaciousness fills the poem, as well as a pleasing ambiguity as to whether it is the mountain that is “just sitting” in meditation or if it is the practitioners inside the monastery or the poet himself—or some combination of these. And indeed whether the mountain is, as Paul Miller³ suggests, a “what” or a “who.”

The above poem and almost half the poems in *The Space Between* are adept season-less haiku—poems of space, time, and spirit. One of Dorsty's best poems for me is

dead hamster—
my son invents
a religion

This converts the “my child deals with a dead pet” cliché into a tremendous and concise poem about coping, consoling, and creating in the face of loss. Indirectly it overlays the huge sociological issue of how religions arise. Another favorite is

a year later . . .
even her leaving
has left

Again the sentiment moves into and on from a sorrow. The sounds enrich this poem, especially the “ee” assonance in the second line (with the palimpsest-like resonance of the word “grieving”), the “t” consonance that links the first and last lines, and the liquid “l” linking all three lines.

Just occasionally the minimalism of Dorsty's style leaves too much to interpretation. An example is

sidewalk crack—
forgiving
my mother

The reference to the childhood “step-on-a-crack” game is followed by a nice reversal of my expectation that the mother would be the one doing the forgiving. But “forgiving” and “mother” are such freighted words. No other poem in the collection informs this one. So I wobble between thinking this is a joke (a senryu, as I would have intended it) and thinking this is dire. An additional phrase or a season word could have saved me from such radical confusion.

Dorsty is an avid user of juxtaposition flagged by an em-dash. This punctuation appears so often (in 4 out of 5 of these poems) that I question whether it is always needed. For example I find that an unpunctuated version:

summer cumulus
a neighbor's
harmless threats

reflects better the rising and passing by of a cumulus cloud and a neighbor's threat than does Dorsty's version:

summer cumulus—
a neighbor's
harmless threats

Traditional in sensibility as Dorsty's haiku feel, fewer than half of his poems use the short-long-short pattern of syllables. Nonetheless his line breaks usually serve his poems well. A rare exception is

ice storm—
the great buck's
antlers devoured by mice

The word “devoured” is intriguing and deserves a more prominent placement. If we change the second line break by moving the predictable “antlers” up a line, we give the more interesting “devoured” better emphasis:

ice storm—
the great buck's antlers
devoured by mice

Dorsty's book does not have sectional divisions or a developmental sweep of topic or seasons. On the basis of limited research I hypothesize that his sequence reflects the order in which poems were published. If this were the case, I would encourage the poet to say so as it could give a reader the opportunity to perceive and appreciate developments in the poet's style.

In conclusion, what is the value of these books? Both are recommended for reading and study. *The Space Between* is a solid and valuable contribution, assembling excellent poems from a decade of work by a poet skilled in a mainstream English-language style. And with *burl* we see a different animal: poetry that a few traditionalists might be unwilling to call haiku, assembled into a resonant and integrated whole, a book that has the potential of becoming a breakout book, beloved not only among haiku readers but more generally among readers of poetry.

Notes

1. Jim Kacian and Dee Evetts, eds. *A New Resonance 3: Emerging Voices in English-language Haiku*. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2003.
2. George Dorsty. *Making Way*. Greenfield, MA: Tribe Press, 2004.
3. Paul Miller. Book review of George Dorsty's *Making Way*. *Modern Haiku* 36.1 (2005). Archived on-line at <http://www.modernhaiku.org/bookreviews/Dorsty2004.html>.
4. Jasper Fforde. *One of Our Thursdays is Missing*. New York: Viking, 2012.



J. Zimmerman is a poet, editor, reviewer, and physicist born in Windermere, England. She has worked in the USA, UK, Germany, and Greece, where her favorite jobs remain archaeological surveyor and falconry apprentice. Her 2011 tanka chapbook is nectar untouched. She won the Mary Lonnberg Smith Poetry Prize and co-edits Ariadne's Poetry Web at <http://www.baymoon.com/~ariadne>.

Briefly Reviewed

by Michele Root-Bernstein, East Lansing, Michigan
& Francine Banwarth, Dubuque, Iowa

Patricia J. Machmiller (ed.). *Bending Reeds, Yuki Teikei Haiku Society Members' Anthology 2012*. Sunnyvale, CA: Patsons Press, 2012, 100 pp., perfect softbound, 6 x 9, US \$14, <http://youngleaves.org/publications/>. The Yuki Teikei Haiku Society has once again put out a handsome anthology, including not only representative work of its members, but newly translated haiku by two distinguished Japanese poets of today, Akito Arima and Kai Hasegawa. The book as a whole is nicely framed with photographs and haiga by Edward Grossmith, who seeks in image and word “separate clues” to awareness. In this collection we also find “separate clues” to meaning-making in haiku practice past and present. As June Hopper Hymas suggests on the back cover, the haiku pond is not composed of any one thing—reed, water, wind, or light—but of the interactivity of the whole, the symbiosis of forms, purposes, and intuitions. Those who value tradition in haiku do not necessarily copy what went before; they wrestle with what else comes of the play of light on water, the dream of wind in reed. Both Arima and Hasegawa ground themselves in a traditional approach to haiku; both push beyond easy understanding of that tradition. Indeed, as translated by Fay Aoyagi and Patricia Machmiller, the haiku of both masters serve as timely reminders that change, either subtle or severe, invariably comes from within. In English rendering, the older Arima, now in his 80s, brings to haiku the fresh eyes of a scientist cum cosmopolitan innocent: *comet— / it surprises / the hazy sky; to change into a clam / a sparrow wets / its wings; narcissus grows / from an egg / in Dali's painting*. In his fifth decade Hasegawa, contemporary of Ban'ya Natsuishi, pulls 5-7-5 on in equally fresh directions: *a hawk disappears / leaving a rip / in the snowy sky; imperceptible / the snake's eyelid's / skin; sky of dew— / I destroy my haiku / I rebuild my haiku*. ~MRB

Victor Ortiz. *Into Borrego Valley*. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2012, 10 pp., stapled chapbook, 4 x 5.25. US \$10. Inquire from the author at <fogpeople@att.net>. This chapbook of twenty-one poems, only a handful of which have appeared before in print, presents a compelling meditation on the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park in southern California (and in fact, all proceeds from the book go to the Anza-Borrego Desert Natural History Association). In this spare and arid landscape Ortiz finds space for optimism, no matter the emotional weather: *when everything seems possible winter stars*. Within a contemporary haiku aesthetic, he honors ancient ways and mores: *splintered from night . . . raven; a cool breeze / in the warm sun / twin morteros* (bedrock mortars or grinding holes). The valley is a beckoning song coupling us to the essential rhythms of humanity and nature. Those who listen deeply, as does Ortiz, emerge with renewed vision of the connected self: *Sirius / the howling of a coyote / echoes in me*. ~MRB

Jim Kacian, Bruce Ross, and Ken Jones (eds.). *Contemporary Haibun, Volume 13*. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2012, 106 pp., perfect softbound, 5.25 x 8.25. ISBN 978-1-936848-11-9, US \$17 <www.redmoonpress.com>. As those who have engaged in and with the recent flowering of English-language haibun must know, this series proposes to gather in one place the best haibun and haiga of each year. Indeed, some of the best—64 haibun and 20 haiga—are certainly represented here, as culled (almost exclusively) from the files of *contemporary haibun online*. Love, death, memory, dreams: the haibun in these pages touch on the most elemental of themes and in a variety of forms and styles from memoir to short story, from the cryptic to the elliptic and lyrical. Book in hand, readers will want to hunt for remembered favorites, even as they discover additional treasures for reflection and study. (Contributions by Glenn C. Coats, Ray Rasmussen, and Penny Harter struck this reader as especially fine.) Readers will also find delights in the varied landscape of haiga, whether traditional match-up or modern mash-up of symbol and sign. They may be less happy with the quality of the reproduction—in more than a few instances the words are

so small or washed out as to be unreadable; in other cases, the grayscale rendering does the image a distinct disservice. (Haiga by Pamela A. Babusci, Bruce Ross, and Lidia Rozmus shine nevertheless.) That quibble aside, this volume is a worthy resource for connoisseurs and practitioners alike. ~MRB

Marinko Kovačević. *Sincerity of Trees*. Translated by Graham McMaster. Zagreb, Croatia: SKUD “Ivan Goran Kovačević,” 2011, 126 pp., perfect softbound 4.75 x 7.75. ISBN 978-9-536126-32-3. <www.igk.hr>. Proposition: European haiku purposefully cultivate different elements of the tradition than their English-language counterparts. In this collection the Croatian schoolteacher and poet, Marinko Kovačević, as translated (somewhat unevenly) by Graham McMaster, offers intense one- and two-phrase haiku in conventional three-line format that eschew juxtaposition for insistent focus of attention. *A winter’s night, / the abandoned dog gnaws / the dark of night*. Certain themes and images dominate (the pairing of good and evil, peace and war, solitude, loneliness, silence, dogs, trees, ears), allowing for a compression of the world to single points of awareness: *In a winter’s night— / how icy is the breathing / of the stars*. In craft and content, Kovačević explores permeable membranes—between figure and ground, between animate and inanimate consciousness—and arrives thereby at the furthest reaches of thought and feeling: *The first cricket / fine tunes / the ear of the universe*. ~MRB

Jim Kacian and the Red Moon Editorial Staff (eds.). *Carving Darkness, The Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku 2011*. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2012, 176 pp., perfect softbound, 5.5 x 8.25. ISBN 978-1-946848-10-2, US \$17 <www.redmoonpress.com>. [Full disclosure: both *Frogpond* editors have pieces in this compendium.] The 15th volume in an indispensable collection of what the folks at Red Moon Press consider the best in show from around the world, *Carving Darkness* offers up 146 English-language haiku, 16 linked forms, and 6 critical essays. Readers may expect to find reward throughout: in the probing reach of haiku written within the dominant aesthetic; in a generous

diversity of haibun, renku, and rengay; in a thought-provoking array of reflections on craft, practice, and tradition. From an outstanding field: Roberta Beary reviews haibun submission do's and don't's in the essay "The Lost Weekend." Melissa Allen ruminates on death's shadows in the haibun "Wave and Particle." Sue Antolin mulls over the changing self in the sequence "In Pieces." Haiku poets one and all scan the moment for presence, poignancy, and humor. *Noise of the sea / The stars' / odour of sardines* (Philippe Quinta); *the newborn's hand / brushes my breast— / white camellias* (Kathy Lippard Cobb); *after defining haiku / each of us at our / own urinal* (George Swede). Students of the haiku arts will want this book on their shelves. ~MRB

Kaneko Tohta. *Selected Haiku, With Essays and Commentary, Part I: 1937–1960*. Translated by the Kon Nichi Translation Group. Winchester VA: Red Moon Press, 2012, 256 pp., perfect softbound, 4.25 x 6.5. ISBN 978-1-936848-11-9, US \$12 <www.redmoonpress.com>. This is the third volume in the "Kaneko series" produced by Richard Gilbert and the Kon Nichi Translation Group of Kumamoto University (see review of volume two in *Frogpond* 35:2). The critical and biographical essays and, above all, the 125 or so haiku presented here in English translation and accompanied by individual commentary all provide a difficult, yet essential, introduction to a major philosopher-poet of contemporary Japan. As one of the foremost pioneers of *gendai* haiku, Kaneko rejects traditional constraints. There are no censored topics here, no fixed conventions of style—only the dogged pursuit of presence, raw reality, and relevance: *spider lily— / every kid shows their belly / in Chichibu*. As translator, Gilbert exposes the seams that inexactly sew one language to another and struggles with "how to indicate those bold and ingenious leaps of thought and language which break with . . . history" (p. 169). In separate commentary we learn that "spider lily" was composed in 1942, that Chichibu is the poet's hometown, that the pure red flower is of great significance in Buddhist thought, that the exposed belly, too, is symbolic of the happy Buddha. We also learn that the spider lily is poisonous in its roots, that the villagers plant it around graves and rice fields to protect

against predation—and that in times of starvation they are forced to ingest it. The flower and the belly clang with multiple, diametrically opposed connotations. This sort of interpretative ambiguity, along with literary as well as scientific allusion and political conscience, reverberates throughout this haiku collection, as Kaneko grapples with his experience of 20th-century war, repatriation, and post-war fallout: *nights in a foxhole / night: my body naked / wiping & wiping; life, bitter clear / as from kindergarten / a midnight song; green flowing cat / in deep twilight / hill of the executed.* ~MRB

Janak Sapkota. *Whisper of Pines: Cogar na nGiúiseanna* (Irish language version by Gabriel Rosenstock, translator). Original Writing, Dublin: 2012. Format: eBook, 78 pp., 561 KB. ISBN-13: 978-1-9088174-2-6. Available at online booksellers.

Janak Sapkota, born and raised in Nepal and currently studying science and writing haiku in Europe, may be relatively unknown to an American audience, but not for long. He writes in English, rarely reworking his haiku but keeping himself “alert for haiku snapshots which I simply transform into words” (p. 71). The result, as this collection (a continuation of a previous book, *Full Moon*) attests, is a fluid, natural, consistently excellent showcase of talent. According to Susumu Takiguchi, chairman of The World Haiku Club and editor of *World Haiku Review*, Sapkota’s “distinct sensibility has added to haiku spirit something new the like of which cannot be found among most of American-led haiku” (p. 65). That is for readers to discern. Certainly, Sapkota speaks from a particular, non-Western experience, yet in a voice that many Western devotees of the haiku arts will recognize and appreciate: *long days of rain— / the gurgle of frogs ripens / the little rice field; on a windy night / the candle in the room / tries to be still; reading a poem out aloud / I pause in the field— / grasshoppers take up the words.* ~MRB

William E. Cooper. *The Dance of Her Napkin*. Allahabad, India: Cyberwit.net, 2012, 105 pp., perfect softbound, 5.5 x 8.5. ISBN 978-81-8253-316-5, US \$15 from the publisher at <info@cyberwit.net>. Bill Cooper, an established author of books and articles in cognition science, higher education, and international relations, began writing haiku and

senryu in 2009. *The Dance of Her Napkin*, his first published collection, features work culled from 23 print and online journals. His style often leans toward the minimal, 7–12 syllables, with longer pieces interspersed. Some of Cooper’s strengths are fine attention to detail and refreshing surprise in phrasing and juxtaposition: *steady rain / the dog forgoes / his daily news; slaveship / smaller shackles / for the young; day lily / the sun too / is dying*. A few fall short for this reader, as in *zoo bend / suddenly / flamingoes*, but overall a strong collection from a voice worthy of your time and attention. ~FB

Jim Mantice. *To Chase a Butterfly~Moments in Haiku*. Self-published, 2012, 34 pp., perfect softbound, 4.75 x 6.75. No ISBN. Inquire from the author at 152 Timber Ridge, Barrington, IL 60010. This is a second collection of haiku published by 87-year-old Mantice who prefaces his first collection, *A Spoonful of Words* (2004, see ordering info above), with insights on the “unique challenge” of this poetic form: “It’s about rubbing a few words together to produce a spark, an *ahhh*-so response. . . . Its voice is direct, human, one-on-one. Its focus is entirely on the familiar, tapping into our oneness with the cosmos.” The haiku and senryu in both collections range from three to six lines and address our connections to nature as well as our entanglements with the human condition: *mother / smiling at me / on fading / Kodak print; my dog-eared / address book / graveyard of names*. ~FB

Steven Carter. *ripples*. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2012, 80 pp., perfect softbound, 4.25 x 6.5. ISBN 978-1-936948-10-2, US \$12 <www.redmoonpress.com>. Thirty haibun that vary in length from one paragraph to just over six pages do not skip a heartbeat in this collection by Steven Carter, a retired professor of English and award-winning author of more than twenty publications. His approach to the genre is impeccable as he navigates the waters from title to prose to haiku (well-controlled at one haiku per selection). His voice, in memoir style, speaks to us in the present of ghosts past, of meetings and partings, of loss and redemption, of a life lived above as well as below the current. In the haibun “Pink Horse Ranch,” which recounts a day remembered after arriving at

his first foster home, he follows the text with this haiku: *shimmering— / eyes wide open / underwater*. As it is so often in life, we may not know for sure where we are going, but we know where we have been. A recommended collection of depth and resonance. ~FB

Geraldine Hartman. *Haiku Reflections: The Four Seasons*. Privately published, 2012, 60 pp., perfect softbound, 5 x 8. ISBN 978-1-477452-80-6, US \$10 from Amazon.com. *Haiku Reflections* features a first collection of 120 poems (in the traditional 5/7/5 format, the author's preferred style) that celebrate the "wonder and beauty of the four distinct seasons." Hartman's creative spirit comes through with now-and-then commentary and sentimental expression in phrasing and imagery coupled with poetic devices more conducive to longer poetry: *Dusk of a snow day. / Lamp-lights glow like fireflies. / Twilight draws us home*. ~FB

Terry L. Allison. *CSU Haiku*. Pasadena, CA: Typecraft Wood & Jones, 2011, 55 pp., perfect softbound, 4.5 x 7. ISBN 978-0-615-42837-6, no price given. Inquire from the author at 949 Gardner Rd., Flossmoor, IL 60422. Unique in approach, this collection of haiku was inspired by the twenty-three campuses that comprise the California State University system. Most of the haiku are written in traditional 5/7/5 format, and all are titled and arranged by season. Each season is preceded by an exquisite illustration of the sky (artist Mika Cho). No doubt the author has a love of the landscapes in and around the CSU campuses as expressed in her writing, but too often the haiku include commentary, which dampens the overall effect. One that caught my attention: *Mockingbird— / a radio being tuned / never settling on a song*. ~FB

John E. Carley et al. *The Little Book of Yotsumonos*. South Africa and Ireland: Darlington Richards Press, 2012, 45 pp., perfect softbound, 4.25 x 6.75. ISBN 978-0-9869763-1-5, US \$16 <darlingtonrichards.com>. If you're itching to try something new in the art of haiku writing, investigate the Yotsumono (see this issue, p. 63). John Carley and writing

partners Hortensia Anderson (see memorial, in *Frogpond* 35:2), Lorin Ford, Carole MacRury, Sandra Simpson, William Sorlien, and Sheila Windsor demonstrate the poetic possibility of this condensed form of renku in which two partners alternate voices in four verses. In the last section of the book, Carley, who developed the form, explains the nuances of the Yotsumono—the “what” and the “how”—including genre, aesthetics, association and disassociation, components, and vibrations. Like a good recipe, everything you need to whet your appetite is presented in this collection. ~FB

Robert Epstein (ed.). *The Temple Bell Stops: Contemporary Poems of Grief, Loss and Change*. Baltimore, MD: Modern English Tanka Press, 2012, 251 pp., perfect softbound, 6 x 9. ISBN 978-1-935398-30-1, US \$19.95 <www.themetpress.com>. In our lifetime, most of us won't win the lottery or the Nobel Peace Prize, run a marathon or travel the world. But one thing that is universal and that none of us can escape is personal loss. Epstein, a licensed psychologist and haiku poet (see review of his recent publications in this issue, pp. 119–123), has gathered more than 300 poems on grief, loss, and change by a wide and seasoned range of haiku voices. In the introduction, he discusses universal points of awareness on the broad spectrum of loss: “death of a loved one, job loss, financial hardship, divorce, miscarriage, and changes due to aging” among them. Can haiku, these one-breath poems of awareness, help us face, cope, and come to terms with loss and grief? Epstein opens our minds and hearts to this possibility and then lets the poetry speak for itself. “Haiku sees into what is *immediate* . . . enables us to glimpse past a door which looks closed to the mind that is beset by grief or sorrow” (p. 38). *fishbowl / telling a child / about death* (Collin Barber); *jasmine scent / wishing back / time I've wished away* (Janelle Barrera); *carnival exit / my friends disappearing / one by one* (Fonda Bell Miller); *whale songs . . . / when did we stop / talking* (Bud Cole); *again / my childhood ends— / snowflakes in my palm* (Tyrone McDonald); *funeral procession / even the trees sway / in a jazz way* (John Zheng). ~FB

Other Publications Received

Rebecca Lilly. *Shadwell Hills*, published by Birch Book Press in 2002 as a letterpress hardcover and softcover, is now available for e-book. This collection features several woodblock prints by Frank C. Eckmair, who recently died. It can be downloaded for a Kindle for \$7.99 at Amazon.com, as well as for The Nook at the Barnes & Noble website.

Mike Montreuil (ed.). *Playing a Lullaby: The Betty Drevniok Awards 1998–2011*. Ottawa: Éditions des Petits Nuages, 2012, 199 pp., 5.25 x 7. ISBN 978-0-9869669-3-4, US \$15 from <mikemontreuil@sympatico.ca>. A complete compilation of the Betty Drevniok Awards, the annual contest sponsored by Haiku Canada, including poets, poems, judges, and commentary.

Steven Carter. *After Blossom Viewing~Zen Parables with Haiku*. Uxbridge, UK: Alba Publishing, 2012, 36 pp., perfect softbound, 5.75 x 8.25. ISBN 978-0-9551254-7-8, US \$10 from the publisher at <www.albapublishing.com>. This chapbook of twenty-three parables is written in haibun style.

Elsa Colligan. *Wordwaves: Poems with Haiku*. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2011, 71 pp., perfect softbound, 6 x 9. ISBN 978-1-4620-3926-5, US \$9.95 from the publisher at <www.iuniverse.com>. Thirty-three longer poems, each preceded by one haiku, are presented in this publication.

David G. Lanoue. *Frog Poet: A Novel*. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2012, 181 pp., perfect softbound, 5 x 7.75. ISBN 978-1-936948-03-4, US \$17 <www.redmoonpress.com>. This novel is the fourth and last in a series that features the adventures of Buck-Teeth and his companion poets.

Re:Readings

From *Frogpond* 35:2

Joan Vistain, Antioch, Illinois, on the essay “Healing Nature” by Nancy Corson Carter, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

As the daughter of a World War I veteran, who died when I was a year old, I often looked at his troop picture and wondered what went through the mind of the man who gave me life. I do know that he was in the cavalry, loved horses, and the land, as do I. As I read “Dear Daddy,” I felt the tug of that “bodymindspirit” connection with the father I never knew.

Bruce H. Feingold, Berkeley, California, on the essay “Song of Himself” by Scott Mason, Chappaqua, New York.

The review by Scott Mason on *Turquoise Milk* (Ban’ya Nat-suishi) was excellent. I liked his definitional emphasis on whether a haiku is engaging and the continuum from “Bore” to “Bewilder.” While at first *Turquoise Milk* can be a challenge, I think it’s worth the effort. I’ve pored over *Turquoise Milk* several times and finally I got a gut feeling of the Flying Pope and some sense of its meaning. I really liked “Right Eye in the Twilight,” especially how he uses body experiences and sensations in a primitive, creative, and funny way: *Illness in one eye / I’m walking / like a goldfish.*

Tom Painting, Atlanta, Georgia, on the haibun “Spin the Bottle” by Jeff Stillman, Norwich, New York.

I found the haibun “Spin the Bottle” by Jeff Stillman to be most compelling. Stillman’s writing disarmed me with its honesty and led me to reflect on rituals. When taken to extreme or left unchecked, ritual morphs into habit and habit may segue into addiction as Stillman adeptly points out.

Bernard Lionel Einbond Renku Competition 2012

Judges

Yu Chang, Schenectady, New York
Paul Miller, Bristol, Rhode Island

Grand Prize Stolen Pearls

Ron C. Moss, Tasmania, Australia
Paul W. MacNeil, Onawa, Maine
Matthew Paul, London, England
Ferris Gilli, Marietta, Georgia

oh frogs! you sang all through the frosty night	Ron
<i>Adeste Fideles</i> loudly from the shower stall	Paul
along the pavement the old bull terrier strains on the leash	Matthew
confetti and high-fives as Wall Street celebrates	Ferris
a boy and his dad burn leaf piles under a southern moon	Ron
I pack up for the day in cover of darkness	Matthew

hunks of husks ripped to get precious kernels wrapped in silk	Paul
when she unlaces her bodice the stolen pearls drop out	Ferris
greeting me with “the kids are staying with friends” and a kiss	Paul
last ride in the Tunnel of Love free with spooky horror	Ron
Mother maintains there’s plenty more fish in the sea	Matthew
rich-smelling lamp oil made from blubber	Ferris
could that be sweat dripping from the Man in the Moon	Paul
the towpath shadowed by purple loosestrife	Matthew
on every page this author’s extravagance with ornate phrases	Ferris
our verbal stoush as we fight for the football	Ron
the twister leaves a pale magnolia petal waving on its branch	Ferris

not drowning, but hard-going: the year's first dip	Matthew
nesting swallows in the kayak shed soaked with rain	Ron
the magician's sword high above his open mouth	Paul
I conjure up a mental picture of her loveliness	Matthew
we hold hands softly as the lights dim down	Ron
from the ceiling below the honeymoon suite a chandelier trembles	Ferris
frozen fog evenly spread through the churchyard	Paul
hard to believe that she went to Hell, Michigan, to escape the cold	Ferris
I enter a room filled with strangers	Matthew
the librarian points to a sign: "Shhhhh"	Paul
the glow of an ipad in the parking lot	Ron
the moon's corona pours its whiteness over the heath	Matthew

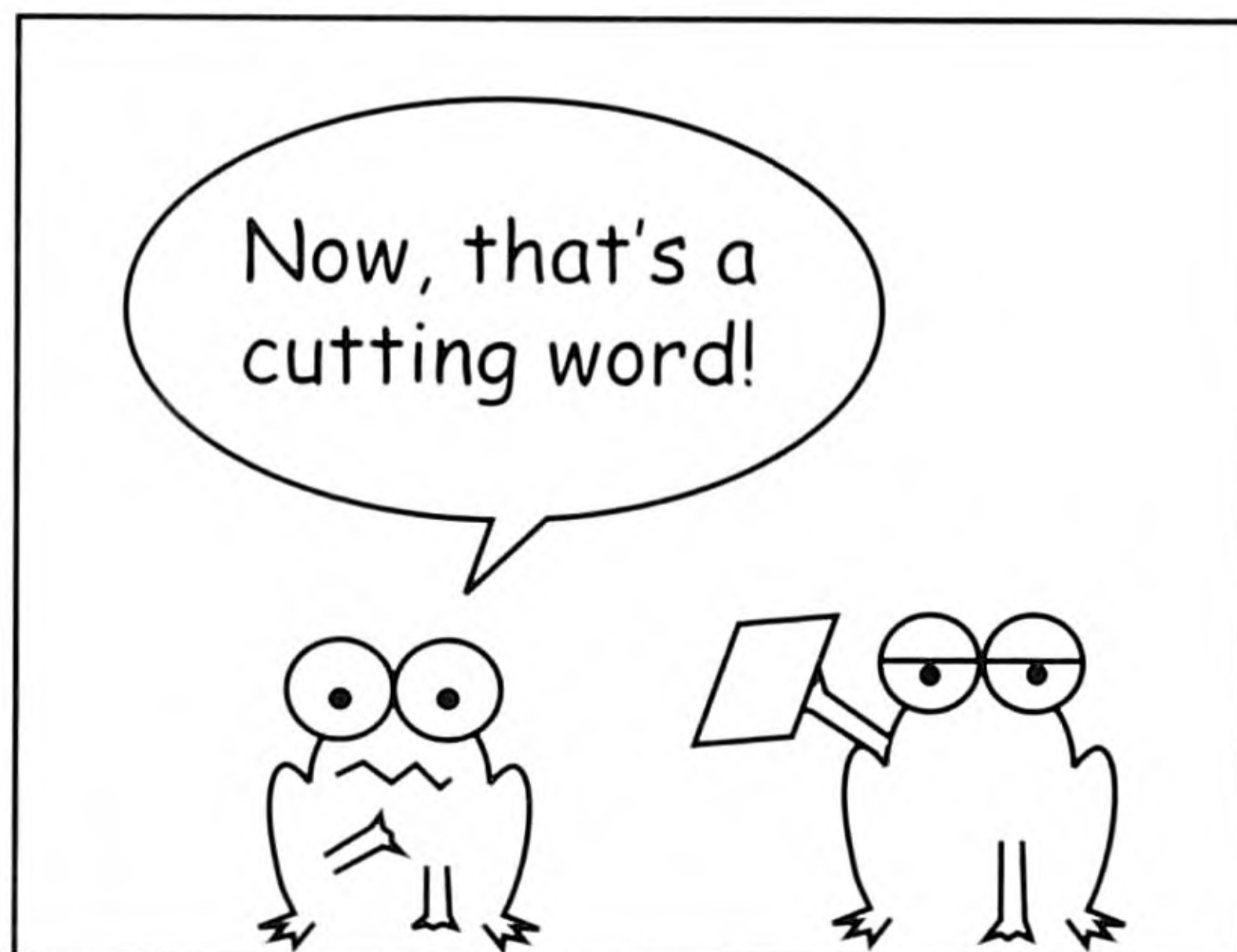
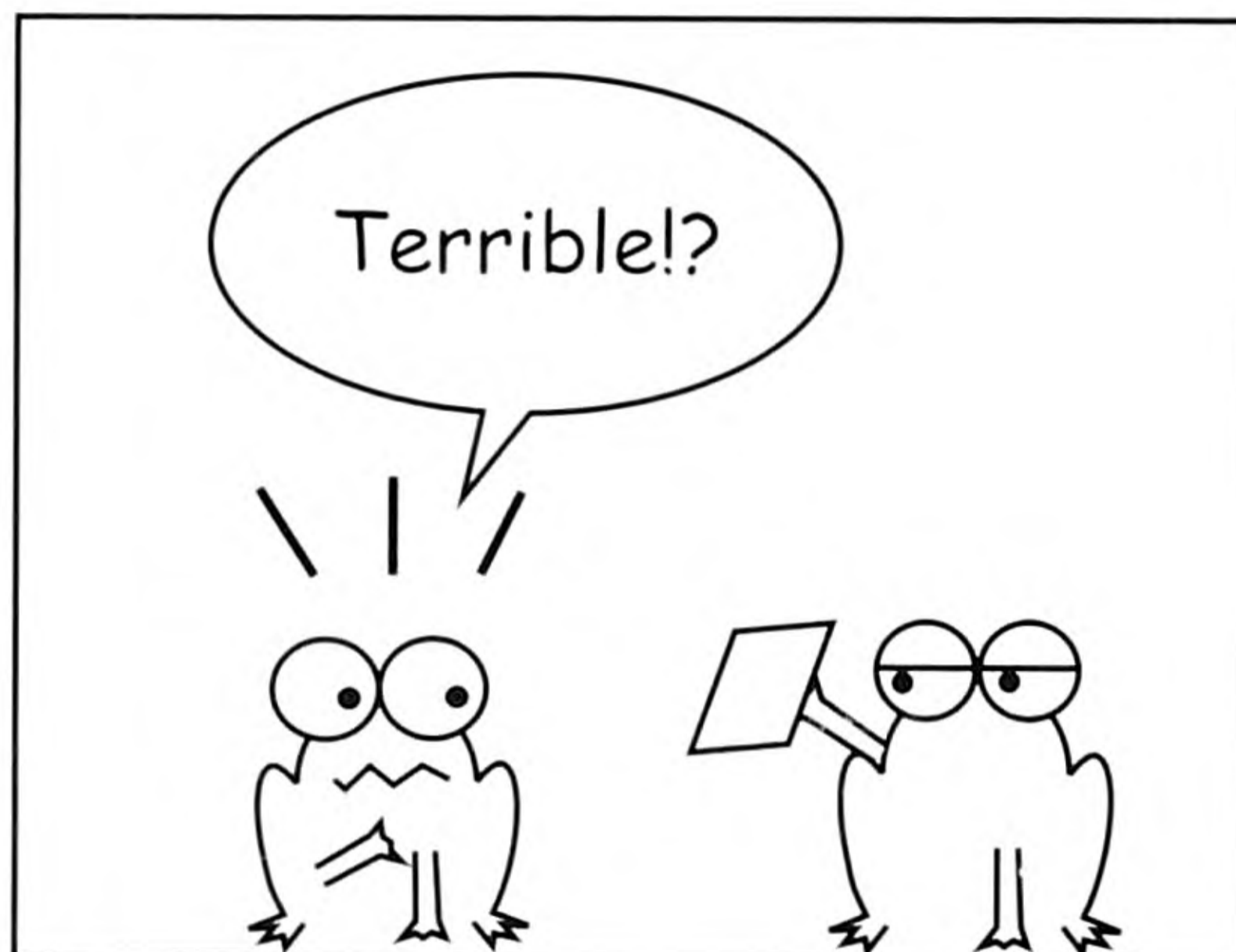
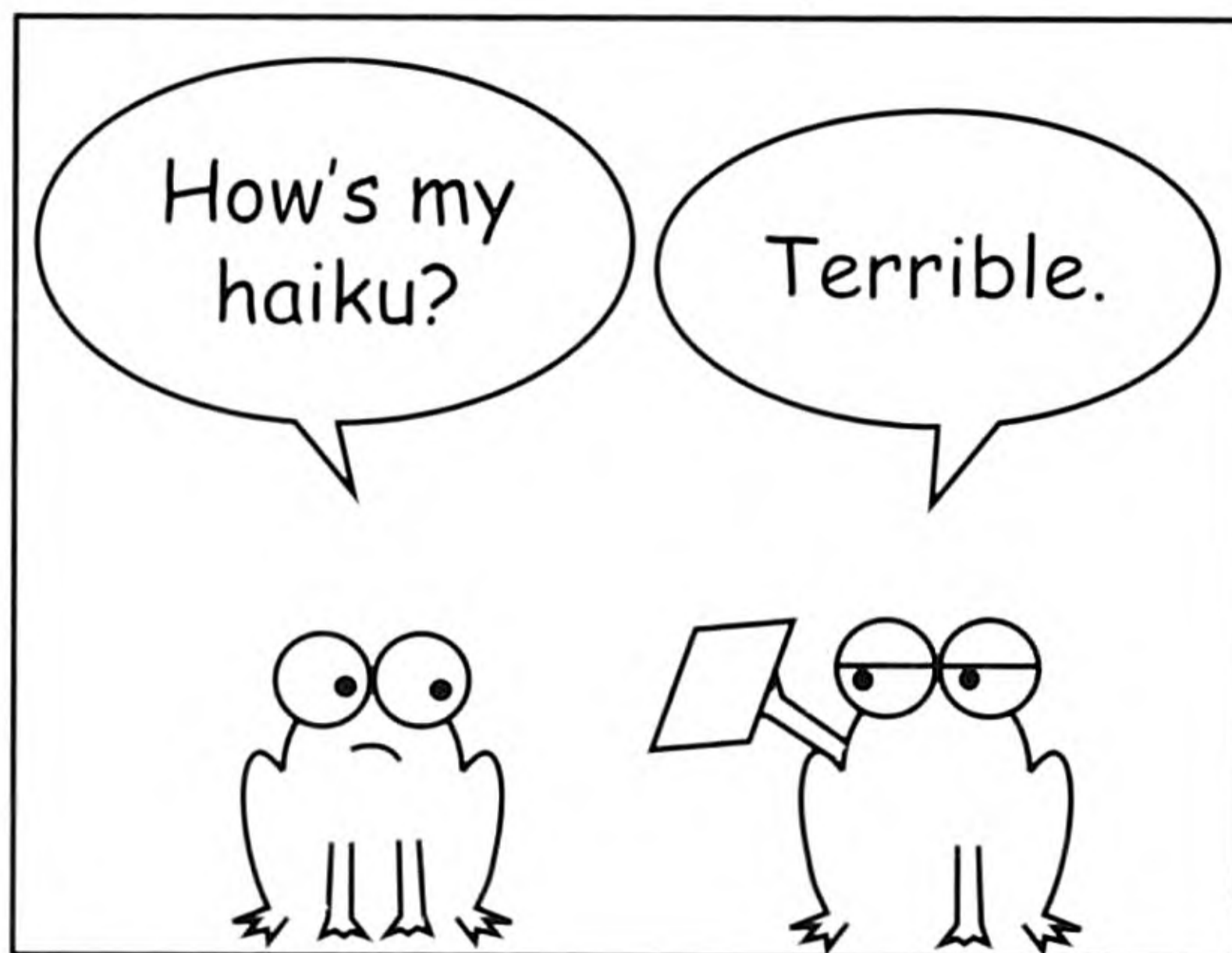
we play dice for money as the scarecrow stares	Ron
dreams and snake eyes mingling in the witch's mortar	Ferris
new building rises a course of brick after another	Paul
the giant contrails of space shuttle Atlantis for the final time	Ron
a pine needle drops from a scrolled fern	Paul
in the shade of the plum blossom she resumes her knitting	Matthew
another tale spun from the garden swing	Ferris

Comments by Paul Miller and Yu Chang

It was a pleasure to judge the 2012 Bernard Lionel Einbond Renku Competition. While there weren't as many entries as we would have liked (something that will hopefully be addressed with next year's changes to the contest) there was something to like about each entry. Renku's dynamism is in its variety—both in its topics and linking—and we enjoyed examining the variety of both in each entry. However, one renku stood out, so our congratulations go to “Stolen Pearls,” a winter kasen by Ron C. Moss, Paul W. MacNeil, Matthew Paul, and Ferris Gilli.

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by Jessica Tremblay



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The HSA gratefully acknowledges a \$100 donation from Billie Wilson in memory of Cindy Zackowitz.

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From the Editors

I was working on the proof of one of my poems all the morning, and took out a comma. In the afternoon, I put it back in again.

~Oscar Wilde

This droll expression of wit from a master wordsmith brings up much of what we'd like to convey to the poets, writers, and readers we serve. The quote is especially applicable to haiku and senryu in which every word, every mark of punctuation carries weight.

With these "little" haiku and senryu often comes the misconception that they can be finished off easily and quickly without all the careful attention to detail that writing longer pieces requires. But even more so, for this briefest of written forms, exact attention to detail is what sets fine and excellent pieces above the rest. As editors, we'd like to pay homage to that process and urge all of us to push harder, deeper.

Some of the questions we ask ourselves as we pore over the thousands of haiku and senryu submitted for each issue are these: Does the poet go with a standard kigo, a well-worn opening line? Or does he reach for a novel articulation of the season or strange, possibly arcane description of time of day or experience? What if the cliché is exactly the right image? Does the poet overburden the lines and images with too many words? Or does she deliver only two-thirds of a poem in three lines? Does the poet experiment with juxtaposition and write for surprise? Or does he fall prey to complacency? There are no easy answers to these and other questions. What we do know is this: Words chosen by the poet matter. The punctuation a poet takes out or puts back in also matters. Indeed, the fine attention to the smallest details invariably makes the difference between haiku selected for publication in *Frogpond* and haiku regrettably turned down.

(Continued on p. 152)

There is, in addition, the great care that we have tried to take as editors, not only in our selection of haiku, haibun, linked forms, and essays, but also in their presentation. Our job is simple yet complex—to facilitate the transfer of images and ideas from the page to the reader’s mind. In an essay, for instance, a misplaced comma can render that passage opaque. Conversely, a felicitous pause can suggest just the right tone and lighten the way to immeasurable nuance of thought.

With that said, we are grateful for every submission we received as well as for the poets and authors who are published in the autumn issue. Our appreciation to Charlie Trumbull and Bill Pauly for assistance in the final proofing and editing stages and to Joan Iversen Goswell, whose “Bullfrog” adds a touch of whimsy to the pages. We are especially indebted to Chris Patchel, whose artistic and design expertise adds a touch of class beyond our inaugural issue, with the excellence he brings to the masthead, cover art, and title page for *Frogpond* 35:3.

We look forward to receiving, reading, and publishing your work and leave you with the same challenge we bring to our own writing practice: read, study, write, edit, consider, edit, consider again, and again, edit, then publish!

Francine Banwarth, Editor
Michele Root-Bernstein, Associate Editor



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